



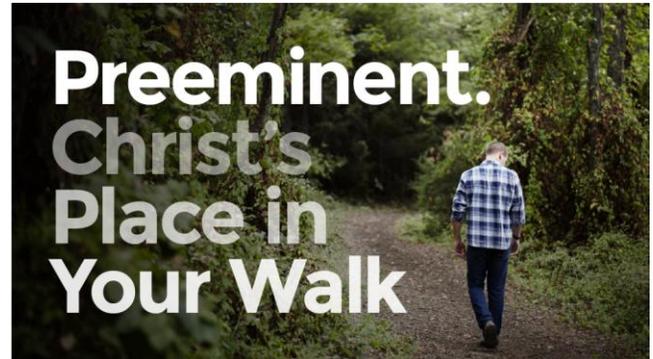
VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH

SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS

God's 5G Network

Preeminent. Christ's Place in Your Walk | Part 13

Tim Badal | March 15, 2015 | Colossians 3:12-17



Please take God's Word and turn to the book of Colossians. Today, we are continuing in our "Preeminent" series. Last week, we shifted from looking at Christ's preeminence in the world to how His preeminence affects our walks and relationships. We talked last week about Christ's preeminence over our sin and the importance of putting our sin to death so that we might faithfully walk with our God. He must be first and foremost in all that we do. Today, we are looking at Christ's preeminence in the church. A transition has taken place between Colossians 3:5–11 and Colossians 3:12–17. Paul had addressed individual Christians and now he speaks to the corporate body. The church of Colossae was dealing with a lot of struggles because their view of Christ had ceased to hold Him as preeminent. The Colossians didn't understand the importance of Christ's preeminence in their Christology. Christ's preeminence had no effect on their relationships: husbands and wives, parents and children, employers and employees. In Colossians 3 and 4, Paul reorients the Colossians' thinking on Christ's preeminence.

It is amazing how a first century letter could have such deep application to our lives in the 21st century. We are 2,000 years removed from this letter and yet Paul's words ring true for us today. Colossians 3:12–17:

Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

I have a confession to make. I am fast approaching my 39th birthday. I won't tell you when it is, but it is coming quickly. Get your gifts ready. It is hard for me because this is the last year that I will be in my 30s. People say that 40 is the new 20, so I'm feeling better about getting older. However, my children tell me that I'm old. I wasn't old before, but once you have a teenager in your house, everything you do is "old." My son asks me, "Dad, what was it like to live without a TV?" I'll tell him, "Son, I'm not that old. We had a TV." "Well, how about electricity?" "How could I have a TV without electricity, son? I had electricity as well." So then he'll ask me, "Well, what didn't you have?" I told him, "Well, we didn't have cell phones." Noah, in his twelve-year-old wisdom, gasped and said, "How could you live without cell phones?" As if having a cell phone was like breathing oxygen. I told him that for a majority of my life, people didn't have cell phones. It wasn't until I was in college that having a cell phone was common.

The amazing thing about technology is that it moves at such an incredible pace that it is easy to feel old quickly. I am going to help some of you feel old today by reminding you how technology has changed over the last thirty years. In 1981, only the "cool" businessmen owned cell phones. These phones had a 1G network which was a voice-only network. You could make phone calls and they sounded like a CB radio conversation. That conversation would cost you an arm and a leg at \$4.99 a minute. If you were going to use that cell phone, it had to be important.

In 1992, technology became smaller and cell phones had a 2G network. This allowed people to have minimal data, voice calls on an analog network and the ability to surf the Internet at the rapid speed of 14.4k. That meant you could download one of your emails in about 45 minutes.

In 2001, technology advanced again, this time to 3G networks which allowed people to communicate digitally. People could use text messaging and an Internet speed faster than dial-up. We enjoyed these advancements. We felt like things were lightning fast. Even on 3G, you could watch one of your old shows with bad resolution. At the turn of the century, we were enjoying life.

Then, four years ago, we started using 4G networks. We were flying on the Internet highway. We were streaming movies, making Skype calls from our phones and doing anything we ever needed. This was the start of the mass production of smart phones. If you have a smart phone, you have more technology at your fingertips than NASA had when it sent Neil Armstrong to the moon in 1969. That is pretty impressive. By 2020, with the dawn of a 5G network, we will do things that we never thought possible.

As the networks have developed, cell phones have changed as well. Phones have gotten bigger. Flip-phones became Blackberries. Now we have iPhones and the Samsung Galaxy. Our cell phones have become minicomputers right at our fingertips. As exotic and amazing as a phone might be, if you don't have a proper network, you won't be able to do anything. Have you ever been somewhere where the network doesn't work? Have you ever been to a place where your phone can't do anything? It becomes nothing more than a paperweight. If we don't plug into the right network, all of that technology is meaningless.

In our passage today, Paul will talk about the network. He will talk about the "hidden things." You can't see the network that God runs on, just like you can't see the signal that is transmitted to your phone. As churches continue to move into the 21st century, they continue to create flashy ministries. Our programs are better than ever from a human standpoint. We have all the technology. We have all the bells and whistles that you could ask for, but are they hooked to the proper network? A church that has all of those bells and whistles without a proper network is just a big paperweight. When a church is connected to the right network, when it is connected to what God has intended, the church is amazing. The sky is the limit on what that church can do for the glory and praise of God.

In our passage today we can see a 5G program for the church. There are five things—five "G's"—to connecting to God's network. If we don't do these things, it doesn't matter how great our worship team is, or how great the preaching is, or how great the children's ministry is, we will waste our time. Colossians 3:12–17 tells us that we must:

1. Rely on God's Grace Every Day

This first "G" is found in Colossians 3:12: *"Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts."* God's goal for us is to put on compassionate hearts. Paul identifies who we are. We as a church have received grace. The first thing that we need to recognize is God's grace in everything that we do. Only then will we be connected to God's network, fulfilling the calling that He has given to our church.

We are God's chosen ones

In our 21st century, Western minds, this phrase may bring to mind terms like predestination. However, this passage isn't talking about that deep theological term. Paul's audience would have considered this a description of race. In Colossians 3:11, Paul says, *"Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all."* If Paul hadn't said these words before Colossians 3:12, the Jewish people in the Colossian congregation would have thought, "He's only talking to us. We are the chosen ones. We have the Patriarchs. Abraham is our father. We are the circumcised, covenant individuals. We are the precious people of God. We are the ones whom God brought out of captivity, not only from under the Egyptians but also the Babylonians. Our nation is the apple of God's eye. God has loved us and set His favor upon us." When Jewish people heard the term "chosen ones," it gave them the opportunity to be racist toward other people. They thought, "We're in and you're not."

To the entire Colossian church—Barbarians, Scythians, circumcised, uncircumcised, slaves, free—Paul says, "In the body of Christ you are all chosen of God. You are all part of a special people. You are a people whom God cares about and loves. You are the people whom God has saved." We must remember this because there are people in our churches whom we might think are out of the reach of God's grace. Paul reminds us of a truth that we must affirm: we are the worst of sinners. He says, "I don't care how bad you have lived. I don't care what's on your resume before coming to Christ. All I know is that on the road to Damascus, I

was changed. I was a man who persecuted the church. I made sure that Christians were put to death. When I met Jesus Christ, the old was gone and the new had come. It wasn't because I made a decision. It wasn't because I had something to offer. I was chosen by God because of His unmerited favor toward me." Just as God reached out and grabbed us, He can reach out and grab the most despicable sinner. We need to live in light of that. Relate to one another with that grace in mind.

We are holy

We need to understand God's grace and that He has made us holy. Being holy means that we are a peculiar bunch. Some of you can be called peculiar, but that has nothing to do with your Christianity. You're just weird. That's okay. We like weird people. However, when Paul talks about being holy, he's saying that you're different. Not only are you chosen by God, but also now you are different. People are going to see you differently. What makes a person holy? What makes them different? You are different from an unbeliever because your life has two volumes in your autobiography:

1. Life before Christ
2. Life after Christ

Unbelievers around you may experience a lot of the same things: the same upbringing, the same job, etc. However, they do not have the dichotomy between volume one and volume two. They only have "Life Before Christ." They can't say, "This is what I was doing before Christ and this is what I'm doing after Christ." When we begin to live holy lives, we can't put a bunch of awards on our lapel as if to say, "Look at how good I've become." Every time we grow in our holiness, we need to be reminded that our salvation wasn't because of something we did; it was because of God. God has made us holy. It is by His grace. Why would God do this? Why would God take sinners and make them holy?

We are beloved

Colossians 3:12 says that we are beloved by God. How could God save sinners? How could He take people who have no inherent good and make them holy? Colossians 1:21 says that we are alienated from God. How could He take a person who is alienated from God and make him or her family? How could He take His enemy and make that person a friend? Is it because of something that we've done? No. Is it because there's something inherently good about us? No. It is like the songwriter says:

How deep the Father's love for us
How vast beyond all measure
That He should give His only Son
To make a wretch His treasure

(How Deep the Father's Love for Us by Stuart Townend)

You see, we were alienated; we were dead in our trespasses and sins, and God in His immense and vast love for us sent His Son. He sent His Son to die for the people of the Colossae church. He sent His Son to die for the people of Village Bible Church so that we would no longer be wretches, but sons and daughters of the Most High. Before you start thinking, "Look at what I've brought to the table," remember that salvation is all because of God's grace. God didn't have to save us. We didn't ask Him to send His Son. God made a decision before the foundations of the world to make us His children (Ephesians 1:4).

Why is this important in the church? If we forget what grace is all about, we will cease being the church. Grace is like oil in a car engine. It lubricates all the parts in a car so that the car doesn't overheat. We need the oil of grace in a church or we will overheat. We will overheat in our relationships with one another. We will overheat in our sin. We need that additive to grease the gears of our Christian walk so there's no friction. Grace is important as we live out our lives. It is important when we sin against one another because we are tempted to respond in anger. "How could you do that? Why would you sin like that? That's gross. Why would you do such a thing?" It is easy to be filled with a "holier-than-thou" attitude. We came into the faith as sinners saved by grace. Grace tempers our responses. It reminds us that we haven't arrived. Grace says, "There but for the grace of God go I" (attributed to John Bradford, an English Reformer who was martyred in 1555).

Grace helps us in our relationships as we sin against one another. If you don't have grace, you will never forgive. If you don't understand grace, you'll never allow someone the opportunity to have a second chance. Without grace your attitude will be: one strike and you're done. If the church is going to be what God has called it to be, it must be tapped into grace. Otherwise the church will implode. It all starts with grace.

How well do we as a church understand God's grace? Grace will keep you from looking down your nose at others. It causes you to look introspectively. When someone does something wrong to you, when someone hurts you or falls into sin, grace helps you see that you could be doing the same things. It makes you see that you are just like that other individual. It makes you see the need for your own life to be rectified. God loves you and desires for you to experience His grace. He also desires others to experience that grace through you.

2. Be Glued Together in Loving Relationships

If grace is present, it will allow for dynamic relationships. Without grace there is no relationship. Consider a marriage. There is no way that a couple could continue to be married without grace. I know that my wife could have left a long time ago. However, there is grace. She knows that she has a numskull of a husband who makes stupid decisions. If she thinks that I'm perfect, then I am lost. Thanks be to God that my wife says, "Tim is messed up, but so am I." In marriage, two sinners have to show grace to one another when they wrong each other, hurt each other and get in each other's way. Grace gives the husband and the wife the ability to continue in that relationship and committed love.

Having compassionate hearts

What would cause us to become compassionate? Compassion comes from grace. To have grace means living out that grace with compassionate hearts (Colossians 2:12). Compassion was a virtue that first century people believed emanated from the gut or the bowels. The Greeks understood this emotion as something deep within; emotion was something that came from the very depths of who they were. Literally, their innards would become undone.

Think about the last time compassion welled up within you. You got a sick feeling in your stomach when you saw someone and had compassion on him or her. In the Western world, we think of compassion more as coming from the heart. We know it doesn't come from our literal heart, but these are the terms we use to understand it. It is a deep-seated emotion. Compassion seeks to alleviate the pain, turmoil and trouble of others.

Many people today in the church have IBS (Irritable Bowel Syndrome). I don't mean this from a digestive point of view, but from a compassion standpoint. When they see people in trouble and turmoil and stress, they don't have compassion. They get irritated. They get bound up. They get angry. They see someone who is struggling and say, "That's their problem. I wonder what bad decision got them into that situation. I wonder what kind of life they are leading that would cause this. If only they were better parents. If only they were better husbands or wives or children, then their lives would be better."

We have a decision to make. When a person's issues and struggles come knocking on our door, do we get irritated with them? When someone comes undone before us, do we think, "I don't have time for this. I can't do anything for you. Don't cramp my style. Don't ruin my day"? Or do we use these opportunities to have compassion on them and be more like Jesus.

Grace tells us that everyone needs compassion. One of the praise songs that we sing says, "Everyone needs compassion, the kindness of a Savior" (from "Mighty to Save" by Hillsong Australia). Matthew 9:36 says, "*When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.*" Jesus was grieved in His inner being and He wanted to alleviate pain.

At the end of Colossians 3:12, we see that compassion produces kindness, humility, meekness and patience. There is a choice you must make. You can go around being Oscar the Grouch, always angry with people, becoming irritated anytime someone enters your circle. Or you can be someone who opens your arms to everyone, just as Jesus did. Even though this might mean changing your schedule, or giving up your money and time and attention, even though you might have other important things to do, you can show compassion.

When I was considering becoming an elder here, I was still very young. I talked to my dad who had served as an elder here for years. I told him, "Dad, they've asked me to be an elder. What should I be ready for? What should I study in the Bible?" I thought that being an elder was merely a knowledge thing. I thought that I needed to get the knowledge down in order to give the right answers. My dad asked me, "How do you handle your schedule being changed? How good are you at handling thwarted plans?" When I asked him what he meant by that, he answered, "You've lived in this house long enough. You know how many times we missed a Friday night meal as a family because we went to someone's house to see them. As a teenager you weren't too happy about that. How has this changed in the last ten years? Are you ready for your schedule to change? God will call you as an elder to be compassionate. Are you willing to hold your plans with an open hand so that you can serve others when they need it?"

That isn't just an elder qualification, that's a qualification for every child of God. Why? Because we've experienced Christ's compassion. In the measure which you have experienced that compassion, you need to show it to others. How do you show that compassion?

Bearing with one another

In the Colossian church there were people who would roll their eyes when other people walked in. They would think, "Oh, there's so-and-so. I don't know why he keeps coming to this place. This church would be a lot better if so-and-so wasn't here or if we didn't have to deal with his issues and struggles." Paul tells us to bear with one another. What does bearing with one another mean? It means that relationships require endurance.

In our world today we think that once something becomes difficult, it's time to throw it away. We get rid of it. Remember back in the day when your appliances broke? What did you do? You called a repairman. These people would come in, bring a new part and fix what was broken. What do we do now? Something goes wrong and we throw it away. We do this with relationships, too. Instead of enduring and working on that relationship, we just throw it away. When someone wrongs you—maybe you feel neglected by someone or you think that someone is ignoring you—how do you respond? It can be easy to say, "I'm done. I'll go find someone else." We can't just throw away relationships; we need to bear with one another. We must endure the pains of one another. Bearing with one another means putting up with each other's messes.

Imagine a parent who is an hour into a ten-hour car ride. In the back the kids are shouting and screaming, "He's touching me!" "No. He's touching me!" "Tell him to stop getting in my stuff!" I know all of you have perfect kids. But if you hear all of that conflict coming from the backseat, there are two responses that you can have. You might want to wring their necks. Or, you are praying that someone will stop it and get everyone off of the crazy cycle. You just hope that someone will say, "No matter what you're doing, I'm not going to add to the chaos. I'm going to endure. You may poke me, but I'm not going to respond in kind." When people hurt you, when they wrong you, when they rub you the wrong way, don't respond in kind. Endure by being an absorber of those wrongs. First Peter 4:8 says, "*Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.*" You need to love for relationships to happen. You must bear with one another.

Addressing complaints

What happens when the offenses get so bad and so difficult that you cannot continue in that same pattern of life? If you can't relate to someone anymore because of an offense that has taken place, you should not run away from that conflict or cease being involved in that person's life. Colossians 3:13 says, "*If one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.*" If you have a complaint, you need to address it. You need to take that complaint to your brother or sister.

If you are harboring something against someone and you can't let it go in love, then you need to go to that person and say, "Something is bothering me. What you said the other day in small group wasn't funny. I know everyone else thought it was funny, but it wasn't funny to me. It cut deeper than you know. I just want to make you aware of it. Maybe you didn't recognize it. Maybe you didn't know it." Remember that grace is important. When confronting someone, don't say, "How dare you. Who do you think you are to say such a thing in small group? What kind of person are you?" Recognize that many people could come and say the same things about you. So when you address your hurt, go to that person, remembering that you are a sinner who is guilty of the same things.

Forgiving one another

If we don't show compassion, we will never forgive. Not only do we need to show compassion, but we also need to bear with one another and forgive each other. Colossians 3:13 says that we need to be "*bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.*" We must forgive. This isn't a suggestion if you want to be a good Christian. Every child of God must forgive.

What happens if the person doesn't receive you? What happens if, when you share your complaint, it adds fuel to the fire? What happens if they don't deserve your forgiveness? What happens if they hurt you again? What do you do when it looks like the other person will never learn? What happens when you start to think that forgiveness just enables bad behavior? Paul makes your response clear. While there is a place for rightful correction, punishment and restitution, you must forgive that person (Colossians 3:13). You don't forgive someone because they deserve it. Paul doesn't tell us to forgive because it will make us feel better. Don't forgive because it's the "Christian" thing to do. Forgive because Christ has forgiven you.

Jesus gives us the example of the unmerciful servant in Matthew 18:21-35. His master forgave the servant a debt of what today would be millions of dollars. As soon as the servant was forgiven, he went out and found a man who owed him pennies. The servant grabbed the man and said, "If you don't pay me, I will throw you in jail!" We are no different from that servant. God has forgiven our great debt against Him. We know that our debt was unfathomable. It was huge! We cannot comprehend how much we have offended our God in heaven. Yet, we lose our lid when someone offends us. We think, "I can never forgive that person!" If you think that you can't forgive someone, then you don't understand forgiveness. If you can't forgive, then you don't know what it means to be a Christian. The only thing that helps you understand being a Christian is that Christ has forgiven you. You need to forgive one another. We forgive because Christ forgave us.

C. S. Lewis has a great quote on forgiveness. He said this: "Everyone loves forgiveness until they have to extend it to someone else." Don't we love forgiveness? Don't we love it when people come and say, "Please forgive me?" We could just stay in that situation forever. But we hate that virtue when we have to extend it to someone who has wronged us. When a church understands what it means to bear with one another and forgive one another, then we will be bound together with Christ's love.

Putting on love

Colossians 3:14 says, "*And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.*" Christ's love will create unity. Only then will we recognize that our lives don't revolve around us. The greatest barrier to unity is people. Unity means a common pursuit, a common endeavor, a common participation in a common goal. Unity breaks down when we allow our own wants, desires and preferences to become more important than the thing we are striving together to achieve. If the church is going to be unified, then preferences need to be thrown by the wayside. We need to pursue harmony and unity because Christ has called us together to be one body.

The body is led by a head. When you got up this morning, your left side didn't say, "I want to stay in bed," and the right said, "I'm going to get up." You weren't some spastic individual fighting against yourself. Your brain said, "It's time to get up," and your body did just that. The head dictates what's going to happen. Christ dictates where the church is going to go and what the church is going to do. Our preferences aren't the ultimate goal of the church. Too often in the church today, individual preferences reign. "I want this. I want that. If I can't find this, I'll go find another church." We need to be careful with this. When we are bound together in love for one another, then our preferences will be thrown by the wayside.

Letting peace rule

What happens when a church is glued together in loving relationships? The peace of Christ will rule in our hearts as we are called into one body (Colossians 3:15). The church will be at peace. There won't be strife or struggles. When struggles do come, it will be seen as an opportunity to display God's grace.

About a year ago, our elders went through elder training every time we met for our monthly meeting. This training was through Peacemaker ministries and it was all about conflict resolution. As leaders, we need to lead in this area. An example that this series used was from the movie, Apollo 13. There is a scene where the people at the NASA headquarters on earth were lamenting all of the problems that were happening. One of the supervisors said, "This is the worst NASA accident. We will never survive this." Another supervisor responded, "I believe that this will be our finest hour." When conflict and disunity come, the church can respond like these two men. Either we say, "This is the greatest disaster ever to take place and we'll never survive this," or we can say, "This is the church's finest hour for us to be recipients and trophies of God's grace." Don't look at conflict as something to flee from or something to fight. Rather look at conflict as something to faithfully endure for the cause of Christ. We will be joined together, and this will lead to lives filled with gratitude.

3. Live with Hearts of Gratitude

Three times in our text we are told to be thankful:

- Colossians 3:15, "*And be thankful.*"
- Colossians 3:16, "*...with thankfulness in your hearts to God.*"
- Colossians 3:17, "*...giving thanks to God the Father through him.*"

We are to have gratitude in our hearts. Thankful hearts are filled with a pleasant disposition. They are people who are just happy to be alive. They see the blessings and the goodness of the things that they are involved in. They don't see life as half empty; they see life as half full and even overflowing.

I didn't understand real thankfulness until we had our third son who is six years old now. He is by far the happiest kid I have ever met in my life. He is happy all the time. His principal tells me that he is the happiest kid in the school. The teachers and the students are happy when Luke is there. When Luke is sick, the temperature of the church goes down because he isn't here. If Luke is present, we're all good. I can't understand his happiness. Even when he does get mad, it's only for a short time and he forgets why he's mad. He moves on. One time I asked him, "Luke, why are you so happy?" His response was, "Well, it's not fun being sad." My son has a heart of thanksgiving. When my wife puts dinner on the table, the other kids complain and Luke says, "Thank you, Mom. It's a great meal." He's thankful. It doesn't matter if he likes it or not, but he's thankful. He's thankful for the clothes that he wears. He's thankful after all of the Christmas gifts are opened. He doesn't think, "Man, I didn't get what I wanted," but "Man, this is great!"

I know it's easy for a six-year-old to be thankful, but how do we do this as Christians? How can we be thankful spiritually? Each of the things that Paul lists reminds us of why we need to be thankful in the Christian life:

1. **We have the peace of Christ** (Colossians 3:15). This means that we are secure in our position as God's chosen, holy and beloved individuals whom God has brought into His family. You can have a bad week. I know that my week wasn't the best. Things didn't go the way that I planned. However, I should be thankful even in those circumstances because I know that I am not living this life as an orphan. I am a part of the family of God. When I appreciate my family, I see that I have much to be thankful for. I know that I'm not doing this alone; I'm doing this with other people.
2. **We have the Word of God leading us in truth and righteousness** (Colossians 3:16). You might be having a bad day. You may be struggling because nothing is going the way you planned. You can be thankful that you aren't walking alone. God is with you. You never walk alone. We have God's Word that teaches, directs and leads us to the paths of righteousness. We don't just sit there and throw up our hands saying, "God, I don't know what to do. God, I don't know what decisions to make." God's Word is available. It has everything we need for life and godliness. Therefore, no matter what our circumstances may be, our lives should be full of thanksgiving.
3. **We have Jesus, Who is Preeminent in our lives each and every day** (Colossians 3:17). We get to wake up every morning and know that Jesus is the Captain of our lives. We don't have to walk this life alone, but with Christ Who is with us. His Spirit is inside us. We have opportunities to be like Him. In the good times we get to be like Him and watch how He responds. In the bad times and even in the ugly times, we have Christ's example. Whether God gives or takes away, we can say because He is with us, "Blessed be the Name of the Lord" (Job 1:21). We have reason to celebrate and be thankful. God is with us.

Let's pause for a moment and take an inventory of our hearts. How are you doing? We're only 3 "G's" into this outline. Do you understand God's grace? Are you glued together in loving relationships? Are you filled with gratitude? Do you believe that God is all you need? If we're truly honest with ourselves, we might be doing some of these things pretty well, but we know that we can do better.

4. See that the Word of Christ is Our Only Means of Growth

If we want God's best for our lives, we need to see the Word of Christ as our only means for growth. Colossians 3:16 says, "*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.*" What does that mean?

1. **The Scriptures must be at home in your heart.** You must make the Scriptures your abode. That means that the Bible should be like your home. It shouldn't be unfamiliar to you. You shouldn't look at the Bible and think, "Where did this come from? What's this all about?" If you have lived in your home for any amount of time, you know all of the nooks and crannies of it. You don't walk into the dining room and say, "Where did this place come from? I've never seen this place before." You are at home in the rooms of your house. You are familiar with them. When the Word of God dwells in you, you are familiar with the Scriptures.
2. **The Scriptures should be where you spend most of your time.** Just like you invest a lot of time and energy in your home, you need to invest in the Scriptures. What good is a mortgage on a home if you're not spending any time there? If the Word of God is going to dwell in you, you have to spend time in it.
3. **The Word should be the place you go for refuge.** When I've had a great day, I go home. When I've had a terrible day, I go home. When there has been a birth in the family, we go home. When there has been a death in the family,

we go home. In every circumstance, we go home. Even when we travel far away, at some point we make it back home. If you want the Word of Christ to dwell in you, every circumstance in your life must be placed under the authority of God's Word. If you're having a good day, apply God's Word to it. If you're having a bad day, apply God's Word to it. If you're having a terrible day, apply God's Word to it. If you lose someone close to you, apply God's Word. If you gain someone, apply God's Word. No matter what happens, dwell in the Scriptures. Make it your home.

4. **When the Word dwells in you, you will want to invite others on the journey.** Your home is a place where you invite others to come and where you practice hospitality. You are familiar with your home; you spend a lot of time there, yet you clean up your house and invite others to share in your joy. In the same way you need to be hospitable with the Word in each other's lives. For this to happen, it must dwell in you richly. It can't dwell around you, it can't be something that you carry around just on Sunday morning, but it must dwell in you richly. All of your circumstances come under the authority of the Word of Christ. When that happens, you will see what God's Word does. As it dwells in your life you begin to tell others, "Do you see what's happening? Do you see what God's Word is saying? Do you see how it's being applied to my life and the impact that it is having?"

Rick Renner put it this way, "Christians, throw open the doors, roll out the red carpet and give the Scriptures a grand reception." If you let the Word of God dwell in you in this way, it will produce an amazing amount of spiritual wealth in your life. If you are not engaging in this process of letting the Word of God dwell in you richly, then you are missing out on a major part of the Christian life.

I'm thankful that our church loves the Word of God. We love to hear it preached. We love to be challenged by it. We love to study the Word. We love to apply the Word. Don't give up that hunger, but allow that hunger to continue to grow. Don't lose that fire. When you hear from God through His Word, whether in sermons or in songs, allow that Word to dwell in you richly (Colossians 3:16). Throughout the week, continuously rehearse what God's Word has said. When you do that, when that is a part of your daily life, you will pursue the glory of Christ in all that you say and do.

5. Pursue the Glory of Christ in All that We Say and Do

Paul finishes this passage by saying that when we rely on God's grace and are glued together in love, when we are grateful and growing through God's Word, it is only then that we are in a position to bring glory to Christ. When Christ is preeminent in a church, watch out. That's when miracles happen. That's when relationships are brought back together. That's when God begins to do His best work.

In the early church people were sold out for Jesus. He was number one in their lives. This was seen in their speech and their actions. God longs for us to be that type of church today. God's brought us a long way, but He's not done yet. Just like our technology, the best is yet to come. The ideas and plans and ministries that He has for us in the future will be so great and marvelous. Until then, we must tap into His network. We need to tap into these things in order to honor and serve Him today, so that we may be positioned for what God has for us in the future. Let's become that church. Let's be the church that does all that it is supposed to do. Whether in word or deed, may we do everything for the glory of Jesus Christ because He is preeminent.

I will be selfish and ask you to pray for your leaders in this regard. Pray that we might be able to lead you in this way. Pray that we would seek to honor Christ in all that we do and in all our relationships, so that we might be on the cutting edge of what God has for His people in the days to come.