

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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Love Holds It All Together

By Dan Trygg

“and... holding fast to the Head, out from whom all the Body, by means of the fastening-connections and binding-links bringing-supply and knitting-together, grows the growth of God.” Colossians 2:19

“...speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ, ¹⁶ from whom the whole Body, being fitted-together and knitted-together by every fastening-connection of supply, according to the proper inworking of each individual part, causes the growth of the Body for the building up of itself in love.” Ephesians 4:15-16

“...as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, meekness and patience; ¹³ bearing with one another, and gracing to yourselves, whoever might have any blame (cause of complaint); just as the Lord graced y'all, so also should y'all. ¹⁴ And over all these things put on agapē-love, which is the binding-link of maturity.” Colossians 3:12-14

We have looked at Colossians 3:12-14 before, in the context of consciously putting on the qualities and attitudes of who we are as children of God, infilled and empowered by the Holy Spirit. 2 Corinthians 5:17 declares that **if we are in Christ, we are new creatures**. Old things have passed away; new things have come into being in us. Elsewhere, we are told that **we have been born from above, and there is a new life inside of us** (Tit. 3:3-5). We, ourselves, have been made new. There is a “new me” that is fresh, new, and of a different nature or quality than the “old me”. **I am no longer who I was before**. My identity, my capabilities, my destiny and eternity are different than they were before. **In order to experience that in my daily life, however, I have to choose to put off the old person** (my former identity), along with the attitudes, mindset, and behaviors of that previous way of living life, **...rework my understanding of myself and how to live, ...choose to put on the new identity**, along with the attitudes, mindset and behaviors that accompany that new life (Eph. 4:22-24 ; Col. 3:1-17), **and learn to walk abiding in the Holy Spirit**.

This is the context for the passages above. As you ponder these passages, it is very evident that **there are two other dimensions to the Christian life** that are very important to understand:

(1.) **We are NOT called to just to practice a private piety. We are to yield our lives to God**. This is NOT about a personal preference for living, or a private philosophy of life. **There is nothing “private” about following Jesus!** That is so important to understand, because we live in a culture that promotes a myth of private citizenship, along with private possessions and the promotion of the sacredness of personal rights and freedoms. I’m sorry, but all of that is *deception*, and must be jettisoned if you are to follow Jesus. **The truth that is in Jesus is that we are citizens in the Kingdom of God, ...a domain where God is your King and Master, ...where all the property and possessions that are in your care are HIS, not yours** (He is the Owner, ...you are the steward, accountable to Him), **...AND even YOU, yourself, are NOT your own**. You have been bought with a price, **even your life and very existence are not yours to spend as you please**. That is the essence of what salvation and being a disciple of Jesus Christ comes down to: **You have chosen** (and are to choose *daily*) **to deny yourself, and follow Him** (Lk. 9:23). God *has* given you free will, the ability to choose how to live in daily decisions, ...but this ability is not given so that we would just go our own way, and live our own lives. **THAT** is self-directed, self-centered living, and is *antithetical* to the life of faith. Self-directed, independent living is sin. **Our free will is the capacity to voluntarily choose to agree with and affirm the will of God by the choices we make to obey Him, moment by moment**. **The life of faith, the walk of discipleship, is to choose to walk in the will of God, in agreement with His leading and in His power. All that we are and have are submitted to Him, and at His disposal**. This is not just an intellectual belief, or a “statement of faith”, ...it is a lived-out, practiced reality that we walk in and pursue. It is *faith expressed in action*. **It is faith working through love. God is the Source and Focus for our lives. Our lives are all about following Him. We are called to develop intimacy with Him, get instruction and empowerment from Him, and live to carry out His will**.

(2.) **The second dimension of our Christian life is that we are called to be part of the Body of Christ**. Not only are we responsible to *serve God*, but we are also responsible to *serve others*. Again, this goes against the cultural training of our Western society in general, and probably also our own preferences in particular. **God is calling us to community, not just acts of service**. We could do acts of service, and still maintain distance and relational separation. **God is calling us to foster relationship with one another, ...relationships of love, support and interactive truth. We are to be the engine of church growth and discipleship, as we do life together in interactive, interdependent community**. As you read the NT, it is quite clear that God’s plan is *always* for believers to get into community relationships with other believers. You will look in vain for the notion of the “solitary pilgrim” in the NT. It simply is not there. **The norm, the expectation, was that if you came to believe in Jesus, you would get involved in**

some kind of ongoing relationship with others, who would help you grow and mature in your faith. The descriptions of the church in the NT were not spectator events, they were small home fellowships, where people shared their hearts with one another, and they helped each other grow and deal with real-life problems. **God's plan to build the church was not dependent on lectures and classrooms, but interactive gatherings.** Teaching and instruction happened, yes, but in a much more interactive setting. Questions could be asked, and people were encouraged to express other gifts and insights to build up the others in the group (1 Cor. 14:26-33). Everyone was welcomed and trained to participate. **Everyone was expected to develop intimacy with God, and to express that in encouraging, supportive relationships with each other that helped them grow in their walk with God.**

With this as our backdrop, let's look at our passages for today's study. **The first passage, Colossians 2:19, describes what is the expected norm, namely that we would "hold fast to the Head (Source), who is Christ (1:18; 2:10), out from Whom all the Body, being supplied (nourished) and knitted together through our connecting bonds, grows the growth of God."**

This is almost exactly what Paul teaches in Ephesians 4:15,16. There, the emphasis is on "trudging in love" as a key part of how we grow all things into Him who is the Head (Source). **Our truthful, loving interaction helps us train each other to learn to grow deeper in our relationship to Christ. Then, out from that relationship with Jesus comes the action of the various parts, as they work to cause the growth of the Body.**

We see both dimensions of Christian growth: (1.) growing deeper into Christ in order to be ready and available to serve Him; and (2.) expressing truth and love to other believers in the Body of Christ to bring about growth.

The passage from Colossians 3 comes at this from another direction. Here, the emphasis is on "putting on" that new identity and heart that is yours as a new person in Christ. Note the relational nature of all the words included here. We are to be compassionate, kind, humble, gentle, patient and forbearing with one another. (When would you need to exercise these qualities, just to "attend church" as we do in our culture?) Note that words like "righteousness, truthfulness, holiness, integrity" are *not* included in this context. The focus is on the new *interpersonal abilities* you have in Christ, as a child of God. **As you go down a few more verses, you see the application of these abilities in the interactive ministry of "teaching and admonishing one another"** (the "one another" in this phrase implies that we are all involved in this back and forth of ministry). Now it makes sense! If we are going to be teaching and admonishing one another, we might *need* some of those relational qualities Paul mentioned above!

Note, too, that there is a shift from "one another" to "yourselves" in verse 13, though it is not rendered that way in most translations. Most translations render the Greek as "forgiving one another", but the Greek is "gracing to yourselves". There is a clear shift from the reciprocal pronoun, "one another", where the action is supposed to go both ways, and the reflexive pronoun, "to yourselves", where the action described comes back on you as the subject. The unclear part is whether it is meant primarily for us *personally*, to have grace on ourselves, ...or whether it is meant for us to have grace on *all of "us"*, ...all the members of the Body of which we are a part. *Probably both are true.* **It starts with Jesus. Just as He had grace on me, I am to also have grace on myself,** even if there is something I have done that could be a cause of shame, regret or guilt. By extension, then, if He has had grace on me, **I am to show this same grace on all of "us".**

Finally, note that all three of these passages contain references to "fastening-connections" or "binding-links". They serve at least two purposes: (1.) they are the connections that bring "supply", which would be like oxygen and nutrients within our physical bodies; (2.) they also connect us to each other and knit us together in relationship to each other. Again, when you ponder this word picture, you can see how impoverished we would be as "isolated pilgrims". In this word picture, we are meant to be intricately held in place, supported and fortified by a network of connections. These connections also bring us the grace, encouragement, instruction, and even the "power" of the Holy Spirit, as He chooses to use different giftings in the Body of Christ to minister to us. **Without these "joints of supply", we would miss out on the strength, support and empowerment of the Holy Spirit that God would make available to us through the various gifts of the Spirit in the Body,** which are given "for the common good" (1 Cor. 12:7). In Colossians 3:12-14, as Paul encourages us to "put on" all those relational qualities described in the first verses, then he says, "above all these things put on agapē-love, which is the binding-link of maturity." Love is the utmost and highest ligament that holds everything together. The word for "maturity" here is culmination of the growth process which God has set in motion in the Body. **Agapē-love is the endpoint or goal of Body life.** As we are knitted together, fitted together, and the gifts are actively working through each individual in the Body, the result will be growth of maturity for all the parts, ...and **maturity is expressed and made visible by means of the actions produced by agapē-love within the members. At the same time, the agapē-love also becomes the relational binding-link that cements us together, more and more. Agapē holds us together, supplies us with life, builds us up, and gives us encouragement to take the risks to build others up.** Love becomes the binding-link of maturity.