

1. My title is "So how are Christians supposed to behave anyway?" Paul gets very practical here, as he gives examples of how God expects us to behave. Didn't you just lecture us in the last lesson that believers don't have to do "x or y" to be saved (other than believing Jesus is God, died for our sins and He is the Lord of our lives)? Yes, however the issue what should we be doing with that salvation. It's thinking, "If I want to be a good witness for Jesus, here's how I should act so that I'll be a good witness for Him ". Over and above that, the issue is what's the best way to live life. It is a matter of realizing God cares far more than whether or not we're just saved. He cares about us being a good witness for Him and living a joy filled life. I'd like as much joy as much as possible in my life. Therefore, I care a lot about what the bible says is the "best way to live". Again, not to earn God's favor, but simply out of gratitude for what He's done for us. If you get that, you got the basic idea of how to live the Christian life. OK then, time for specifics as this chapter teaches:
  - a) OK John, "hit us": How do we behave? We've got 25 verses in this chapter and 24 those verses focus on that topic. Yes, it also continues in the next chapter, but this chapter is the "heart" of why Paul wanted to write this letter in the first place, so "this is the good stuff"!
  - b) With that said, let me go through some of the "big theme's" of these verses and give you a flavor of how Paul wants us (not demand, but "should") live as a witness for Jesus. Again we should think in terms of "gratitude" and not earning God's love. If you get that, you'll get the idea of how and why Paul wants us to live this way, not only because it's the best way to be a witness for Jesus, but also the best way to have a joy filled life. OK then, let us start on the "idea by idea" commentary.
  - c) The first four verses are sort of the introduction. Remember that Paul's writing to people who don't own bibles and they need to understand some of the basics about Christianity. It starts with the reminder that we "have been" (note the past tense) "raised with Christ". I believe Paul's saying, "it's a done deal". I believe if it's possible to screw up my salvation, I would find a way to do it! Because it's a "done deal", I can't mess up no matter how hard I try. What about people who truly believe in Jesus and then spend years denying it? That is one of those things I let God worry about. I just know that as long as I trust that Jesus is God, He died for my sins and is in charge of my life, I can't lose that free gift of salvation!
    - i) The past tense aspect is also saying that once Jesus was raised from the dead when we got saved isn't an issue. We were saved when the resurrection occurred. That's why it's a done deal and Paul speaks in past tense.
  - d) This leads to the main reason for these first four verses: To understand what our new life is like as believers. It's about the fact that God wants us to use our lives as a living witness for Him. It's about the fact we rely upon God's power (as opposed to willpower) for us to live the type of life God desires we live. The amazing thing is as we begin to live that way, it will continue for all of eternity. It's that great reminder that whatever it is we must deal with in this life is "worth it" because infinity is a whole lot longer than this life. Verse 4 is a reminder that Jesus will return one day to rule over the world and Christians are going to appear with Him when He returns. I used to struggle with the question of how will all us believers appear with Jesus? Jerusalem "isn't that big" (been there). That's why I argue that our new eternal bodies exist in more than three dimensions. That's how all of us will "fit" when Jesus returns. OK, now that I've gotten weird on you, I can return to the text.
  - e) After the first four verses focus on the eternal things, then we get into the what should we be doing in the meantime question. That'll be the focus of the final two chapters of this book. Paul's going to focus on some negative traits for a few verses. It's not a "do any one of these, and you're going straight to hell" arguments. They're saying, if you want to be a good witness for Jesus, and want to live a joy filled life, here's a bunch of ways to live or avoid doing if it's our desire to please God and live for Him.

- f) Speaking of negative, let me start with that idea. Let's say we read one of the things he'll mention and we think, "I struggle with that, maybe I'm not a true Christian". First, all that means is you're human and all humans struggle with sin. The most important thing to get is the fact that we can only overcome a weakness with God's help. It's a matter of praying and asking Him to help us with that issue. It's a matter of praying, "Heavenly Father, yes I agree that Your way of living is better than how I'm living. Help me with this aspect of my life as I can't do it on my own." If we're trusting in God to help us, He will. He wants all the glory for the change, which is why willpower always fails. Change may not occur in the first 24 hours, but over time, if we're trusting in Jesus as the first half of this letter is emphasizing, then God will help us if we're willing to follow over time.
    - i) The reason I gave that little pep talk is Verses 5 through 9 emphasize ways we are not being a good witness for Jesus by practicing those things. Yes, I'll discuss them in detail in this lesson. In the meantime, just know that there are negative traits for believers. Again, it's not a "You're going to hell if you're doing them", but it's about desiring to live as God desires us to live as a good witness for Him.
    - ii) Then Verses 10 and 11 give the positive aspect which essentially says to act as God wants us to act. Paul then reminds us in effect that our background, status in life or religious background don't matter. What matters is our trust that Jesus paid the full price for our sins so we're free to live as God desires as a public witness for Him as well as the fact it's the best way to live out our lives.
  - g) From there, Paul gets into the issue of our relationships with other people. The basic idea is to put the needs of others as priority over our own needs. Being a good witness for God is caring about others. It's about forgiving those who ask for forgiveness. It's about asking others to forgive us when we mess up. It's not about a desire to be loved, but the desire to see God's love shared with others around us.
  - h) If you ask people what they truly desire, more than money, power or fame, I'd say it's the sense of peace. It's the idea of not having to worry because we're trusting that Jesus is the one in charge of our lives, so no matter what happens, He can give us peace through what it is we must deal with in life. From there, we get gratitude. A grateful person is a happy person. Paul gives examples of how to be grateful and have a positive attitude no matter what life throws at us at any given moment.
  - i) The final set of verses get specific. Issues like how husbands should treat their wives, how wives should treat their children. How parents should treat their children. Then we also get into the issue of slavery. Two thirds of the Roman world were slaves. Paul didn't fight that issue as he had "bigger fish to fry" preaching the Gospel. The way we relate to these verses would be how employers and employee's should treat each other.
  - j) The bottom line of all of this is essentially, if we want God's love to flow through us, then it is essential that we put others needs as priority over our own. That's how we become a good witness for Jesus, which is why we were created in the first place. OK, there are lots of details to discuss to these points, so let me breakdown and start Verse 1.
2. Chapter 3, Verse 1: Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.
- a) Let's begin with the reminder that there were no chapter breaks in the original text. Paul left off by discussing "human regulations" as if to say, "Here are some ways we can't make God love us more by doing this and that". That's why Paul's stating here in Verse 1 that it is a "done deal", past tense. We already have been saved because we put our trust in the fact that Jesus is God, He has been resurrected and He's in charge of our lives. Therefore, we can't earn His love by doing more than that. That's how this verse ties to the last bunch of the previous chapter.
  - b) So what do we do now? Great question and the theme of this lesson. Paul is saying we're to set our minds on "things above" (i.e., heaven) where God is located. Let me explain:

- i) I have to admit, I've always struggled with the idea of God literally sitting on a big chair in heaven. I figure if "God is God", He's everywhere and knows all things.
    - ii) As a child, I pictured God on a throne chair. Now I figure God is everywhere at all times, so it is difficult to picture God the Father as a being sitting anywhere.
    - iii) It's a little easier with Jesus, because I know He's fully God and fully man for all of eternity, so I can picture Him sitting in a throne chair next to the Father.
    - iv) Here is how I reconcile that. God wants to "manifest" Himself (be visible) in a way we can get close to Him. Therefore, for our sake, God the Father will be in a form that we can see and relate to. He'll still be all God and all knowing. Still He created us to draw close to us for all of eternity. Therefore, He becomes visible in a way we can relate to Him and see Him.
    - v) Yes I could be totally wrong about this, but that's how I picture the God who made all things sitting in a "chair" we can approach and physically get close to!
  - c) The way I figure is Paul wants me to set my hearts on "things above". Making a picture in my mind (correct or incorrect) is a way of setting my heart on things above, so I'm sure I am doing the right thing here.
  - d) In a less literal sense, keeping our minds on "things above" has practical benefits. Let's be honest, we're less likely to sin if we've got our minds on God. No we'll never be perfect. I am just saying a way to live as God desires is to set our minds on "things above" as then it is less likely we're setting our minds on wrong things to do! Remember why God created us in the first place: Not only because He loves us and wants to spend eternity with us, it's also for us to be a good witness for Him. I'm sure all of you know that by now, but I figure that we've got our mind on "what is above" we're more likely to do the right thing!
  - e) Hey look, there's a verse 2!
3. Verse 2: Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. <sup>3</sup> For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. <sup>4</sup> When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.
- a) I admit that often when I write, I'm jumping ahead of what the author's stating in the next verse. After lecturing all of us on keeping our minds "heavenly focused", Paul essentially states the same thing in Verse 2. Let's talk practical for a second. None of us can focus on God "24/7" let alone for more than a few minutes. I am well aware that constantly setting our minds on "things above" is impossible. Here is the good news: if we allow some time to start our day thinking of God, and asking Him to guide our day and do His will, it will help when temptation comes. This is a case where God's far more faithful to us then we'll ever be to Him. God promises never to forsake us. That means when we mess up, God is going to be there to "pick us up, dust us off and ask if we're willing to trust Him again. If one of His, we can't "sin enough" to lose that. So does that mean I'm now free to go sin all I want? Yes and no. Yes we are, but the great question is "How much do we want to?" It is a matter of asking, "Do we want to be a good witness for God or not?"
  - b) That in summary is why we want to set on mind on "things" above, not earthly things.
  - c) OK we made it to Verse 3 and 4: Let me discuss the phrase, "For you died". No, it's not a literally thing, as I'm writing and you're reading. Paul's talking about living a life for any thing that's not Jesus. Wait a minute, does that mean we can't work or "take out the trash" as you're fond of saying? Of course not. That simply means that since we are "born again" we want to live our lives as witnesses for Jesus. To quote the most famous preacher of the 19th Century (Charles Spurgeon), he was talking to a railroad worker about how to be the type of Christian God wants and said in effect, "Be a witness for God to other workers on the railroad". Yes, we can change careers if we desire. The point is simply about living a life as a witness for Jesus no matter what we're doing at any given moment.
  - d) Time for the next big question: Why bother? Why should I live this way in the first place? The good news is Paul answers that question in Verse 4.

- e) Let me repeat Verse 4 again: It says, "When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory" as it reads in this translation. OK, Paul is getting all "end time" on us here. The first thing to keep in mind is the fact that whether we like it or not, we're going to live forever. I didn't make the rules, but that's how the "ballgame" will work, so we must accept it. One has to view life one or two ways: Either the bible's wrong and we should get as much pleasure out of this life as possible as "that's all there is to life", or there is an eternity and therefore, since "forever" is a whole lot longer than this life, we should use our lives for the reason God created us, to glorify Him by how we live out our lives. That thought leads us back to Paul's statement here. The way the "ballgame" works is Jesus is going to return one day to be king over the world and all Christians will return with Him. The view is those Christians still alive when He returns will change then and their and be part of that group.
  - i) OK since I'm getting weird on us, let me go all the way. What do all of us do when He returns? Do we just stand in the sky and stare at Jesus? What I suspect is it will be our job to "enforce" God's rule. Let's face it, most people don't desire to live how God wants us to live, which is why they never accepted Christianity to begin with. Therefore, we become the "enforcers" over the world. (I hope I get a warm place to work, but it's God's business where I end up with Him!)
  - ii) What about non-Christian Jewish people? It depends upon whether they're willing to accept Jesus as Messiah. The danger is those who want to prove their worth to God versus those who accept that God Himself paid for all their sins. Hopefully, you know that lecture, so I'll stop there. For other religions, I'm trusting that God who is perfectly just will work all that out. Meanwhile, since Jesus will come back to rule, it's time to discuss what we should and should not be doing until all this is taking place, starting in the next verse.

4. Verse 5: Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.

- a) Here is where Paul starts to get into the "nitty gritty". Keep in mind that salvation is only based on trusting that Jesus is God and died for every sin we ever have committed or ever will commit period! The issue isn't "You're not a good Christian unless you do this or that and avoid these things, the issue is 1) What's the best way to live out our lives and 2) How is it we can be a good witness for Jesus? Let me also say that we all have our old "Human nature" and it's normal to struggle with some of these sins all of our lives. So if we're now saved, why doesn't God just take away those desires? The answer is to remind us that we need to constantly trust in His power to overcome temptation and not do it by willpower!
- b) Let me think of a practical, but tough example. I remember a Christian talk show where a caller said he has struggled with a heroin addiction for many years. The host didn't say to "just stop taking it and that's that". He made the point that often we need medical help as it takes time to get our bodies off a tough addiction. Just as Jesus had to put to death all of our sins, so often we have to struggle our whole lives with our weaknesses. The reason I am getting into all of this is because as we discuss the specifics of some of these sins, I am well aware there will be people reading this and are thinking, "I'm not really saved as I'm struggling with this or that sin". If it's your desire to please God with your lives, you are human and God wants to help all of us turn from ways that don't make us a good witness for Him and also are not the best way to live our lives.
- c) OK speaking of the tough stuff, let's discuss Verse 5. Paul wants us to "put to death" all of the desires that turn us away from living as God desires. Let's start with disclaimers. For those who are married, it is not a sin to have sexual relations with our spouses. It's tough as we have to fight our "lower nature" for all of our lives. The male "lower nature" craves all the sex it can get. Women crave relationships. What God wants is for us to not act on our old nature and turn those thoughts over to God when they arise. Let me explain:

- d) OK, how do we put those desires to death? Willpower will not work. We overcome our "lower nature" by focusing on good things. It does work because God gave us the Spirit to live within us and help us overcome such desires. It's ok to desire a sexual relationship with say our spouse and it's ok to search for the right person. The challenge is overcoming our "lower nature" and it's a life long struggle. Enough lecturing, time for specifics.
- e) Here is the Verse 5 "naughty list" again. (Again, it's not meant as a complete list of all sins to avoid, but things on Paul's mind as common problems that anyone can face at times in their lives). "sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry".
  - i) Sexual immorality refers to any sexual act outside of the bonds of marriage. Way back in the early chapters of Genesis, God set up marriage as the best way to grow as people and bring more people in the world. Yes, it's tough at times to get along with the opposite sex, as truthfully we think differently. It is that struggle that we must work with, and God designed it that way. To use another saying I'm fond of, "If God was all that Adam needed, why did God create Eve?" All I'm saying is it's a natural thing to desire sexual relations. It's when we turn from how God wants us to use that desire He gave us is when we get in trouble.
  - ii) Paul was also aware that in that culture having sex outside of marriage was just as much an issue then as it was today. Again, it's not what we have to do to earn His love, but what we desire to do as a witness for Him.
  - iii) By the way the Greek word used for one of these terms is the same root word that is used for "pornography". The reason God wants us to turn from that is because it will take away our desire for our spouses when we focus on that type of material.
  - iv) OK enough of the sex talk. Let's move on to evil desires and greed. When we don't care about our eternal destiny, then our human nature naturally focuses on other types of evil desires such as wanting things that don't belong to us. It's the old, if this life is all there is, let's try to steal or grab what we can and who cares what any other person does since nothing matters past this life? It's a horrible way to think, but it is common and way too many people only care about what they can get in this life as if no other reality exists. Grant it, some people have a gift for making a lot of money and doing big deals. Some will do whatever it takes to reach a goal of having "lots of stuff". Again, it comes back to the idea of do we believe there is a next life or should we just try to maximize our pleasure in this one? If we think this life is all there is, it's "natural" to desire all the sex and stuff we could ever get. If we believe that God created us to give Him glory, then we should desire to live as a witness for Him. That's why we work to restrain our lower natures so we'll be the type of witness God desires we be! Without giving a lecture on each one of the vices listed in Verse 5, that's the essential point, do we care about pleasing God or ourselves? The vices are simply examples of living for ourselves.
  - v) Time to move on to Verse 6 now.
- 5. Verse 6: Because of these, the wrath of God is coming.
  - a) First, let me say what this verse does not mean: If we've ever committed one of those sins, we're going to feel the wrath of God for eternity! God wants us to live a certain way as it's the best way to live out our lives as a witness for Him. When we fail, it means we sin and it also means that Jesus died for that sin we just committed.
  - b) The issue is God's standards for the world. Whether we like it or not, the law is still God's standards for how He wants people to live. If we've ever violated one of those laws even once, that makes us a sinner and Jesus paid the price for those sins. The bible clearly says that Jesus as the Messiah is going to judge all people one day. Those who refused to trust in Jesus as God will feel that wrath. People will be judged based on what they knew about God and how they acted on that knowledge. The short version is His wrath is coming and all people must face His judgment. That's pretty basic "western" philosophy.

- c) A way to look at it is God created the world, therefore He gets to make the rules. We may not like the rules, but that's how we're supposed to live. For all people who refuse to live as God desires, that wrath is coming. For us believers, we'll be rewarded based on how it is we lived after we believed in Jesus. That's a topic coming up in this lesson.
6. Verse 7: You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. <sup>8</sup> But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. <sup>9</sup> Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices
- a) Remember the "naughty list" of Verse 5? I'm speculating a lot of people can think, they've not cheated on their wives or had significant sexually immorality. If you think that way, remember that Jesus said if we even look at a women with lust in our hearts, we're guilty of that sin. (Matthew 5:28). My point is keeping the law perfectly is impossible, which is why it was an absolute necessity for Jesus to pay for our sins. However, even if we think we "past" Verse 5, Verse 8 takes it even further! If we've ever yelled at someone or even if we've used bad language, or made false accusations against someone, God is saying even that counts as sins against us. Again, the first thing to grasp is how impossible it is to try to keep the law perfectly. That's why having God Himself pay for our sins is needed!
  - b) That leads back to the central issue of this lesson of Christianity and behavior. So if it isn't possible to keep the law perfectly, why try? As I like to say, as a Christian I'm free to take all the bad drugs I want. The question is how much do I want to? I'm free to curse all that I want, but again, why would I want to? The issue isn't trying to be perfect, but a desire to be a good witness for God. That leads back to my lesson theme of how should Christians behave? It should be our desire to live as God desires. Not just because it is the best way to live, but also as a witness to nonbelievers that we're not like "everyone else".
  - c) I'm not saying we have to be the perfect Mr. and Mrs. "Goody two shoes". I'm saying that how we live should be different enough that if it was a crime to be a Christian we'd fit the "crime" so to speak. Let me try it another way: Suppose we see someone who gets angry all the time or uses foul language a lot. Do we curse them out in front of the church? All I can think of is Jesus concept of getting the "log out of our own eye before taking the speck out of someone else's eye". (Matthew 7:3.) The best way to deal with someone else's sins is first to pray for them. Ask God to reveal it to them. If you're friends, you may want to mention in a gentle way that when we act that way we're not a good witness for Jesus. It's a matter of remembering it's God's job to fix people not ours. The Holy Spirit is capable of convicting us of our sins all by Himself and He doesn't require our help!
  - d) I could get into more specifics about these terms used in these verses, but I'm sure most of us would be very convicted by simply reading those verses, so I won't add to the guilt!
  - e) Finally let's suppose we struggle with anger or one of the things here. Start by telling God that we want to change. Tell Him we can't change without His help and we'd like him to change us on His timing. Yes we can still try and if outside counseling helps, lots of Godly counselors who can lead us down the right path. There's nothing wrong with seeking any sort of counseling that help us to be a good witness for Jesus to the world around us. OK, enough of that, time for Verse 10:
7. Verse 10: and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. <sup>11</sup> Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.
- a) We're on the topic of effort in Verse 10. Paul tells us that we're to put on the "new self" as a believer in Jesus. OK, where do I get one of those? Do churches sell "new self" outfits as believers? Of course not! This is about choices. It's about free will. We're free to live like nonbelievers live and we're free to live as God desires we live. It's a choice. We have free will so we will chose to live as God desires. OK, why do we fail so much? Why do we fail to live as God desires? That's the question Paul asks in Romans Chapter 7? He concludes that it's only possible to live the life God wants us to live by having Him "live within us!"

- b) That is Paul's way of saying we must be born again and let the Holy Spirit have control of our lives in order to be the type of "new self" God desires us to be. For example, I find I'm the most "God like" not when I'm trying hard, but just when I'm letting God be in control of my life. It's easy to see in hindsight but hard to practice, because the desire to control is so powerful and we want to be in control of our destiny! So whether we like it or not, the goal is to let God be in charge of our lives as Christians and that's what the "new self" is all about in Verse 10.
  - c) Verse 11 essentially says, it doesn't matter you're background, or our status in this world. Either we're Christians or we're not. We can come from a Jewish background, or one that adopts to the local culture (since the Greek's ruled that world for centuries, that's what the text means by Greek culture) or even if we're from a foreign culture, like the reference to a strange culture, the Scythian's, who were a war like culture that existed in "Western Asia" at that time. The simple point here is it doesn't matter our background, we can be saved if we chose to believe Jesus died for our sins.
  - d) Also a quick word about slavery. About two thirds of the Roman world were slaves. It's just Paul's way of saying even if we're slaves, we can still be free in Jesus in the sense we don't have to prove our worth to God in order to earn our salvation.
  - e) One final note. There's a parallel verse in Galatians 3:28. Paul wrote that letter as well. In that letter Paul also mentions it doesn't matter if we're male or female. I don't know why he didn't mention that here as well. Either way, it's obvious Paul believed it didn't matter what is one's background or even one's sex. We can be saved and free of the guilt of trying to prove our worth to God by trusting that He paid for our sins and proving our worth to God isn't necessary for salvation.
8. Verse 12: Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.
- a) OK, enough of the bad news of what we shouldn't be doing or the "tough news" of having to let God's spirit control our lives. Here we get the positive of how we should act! Again it is not a "You're not saved unless you're always acting this way!" type of message. It is a way of saying that if we care about pleasing God with our lives, these attributes will come out of us naturally. Let me pick one from the list: "Clothe ourselves with compassion". I'll pick a tough example and ask, "What if I'm suffering right now or just in a bad mood? Is God expecting me to be compassionate now? If one is suffering, letting others minister to us is a form of compassion. Showing kindness to others when we're hurting is also a form of compassion. The underlying point is we care about others and we're interested in their lives and not just others. I'm reminded of the old joke that goes, "Enough about me, what do you think of me?" Instead, we should be asking, "What is new with you, or how can I be helpful to you right now!" The point is a sign of a Christian is we sincerely care about the lives of others and are willing to get involved in other people's lives.
  - b) Where do we draw the line between help and being used? Won't we be taken advantage of us if we put ourselves out there like that? Yes, that is always a risk. I'm a big believer that trust is earned. Still, I love talking to others. I often draw the line when strangers do ask for money as I can only do so much!
  - c) Anyway the key point is one way people know we're different is we're interested in lives of others and not just ourselves. That makes us compassionate, kind, gentle and patient.
  - d) Can't nonbelievers act that way too? Of course. The difference is we are relying upon the power of God to care about others, and not willpower!
  - e) That leads me back to the verse. Notice it says, "holy and dearly loved". A way to put it is God doesn't say to us, "OK you're saved, go have a nice life and I'll see you after you die one day". What God desires is an intimate life long relationship with us. That starts now, not when we're in heaven! The reason God wants us saved isn't to mark off, "another one on his chalkboard". :) It's to have an intimate relationship with us.

- f) That leads me back to "free will". The reason God gave us free will is so we'll chose to love Him back as we love us. But we're not perfect like He is. He's not asking us to be perfect. He's asking us to trust Him as we go through our lives! He wants to be part of all aspects of our lives! As the expression goes, "Going shopping, take God with you!" It is through His power, that we can be the type of person God wants us to be and have those character traits listed in this verse. The issue isn't about "trying harder". It's about letting God be in charge of our lives and giving the "controls" over to Him.
  - g) OK how do we do that practically? Come on, we still have to "wash the dishes" and go do what we do every day. How do we be "that good" practically? It starts with trust. We've got to trust that He's there and guiding us. We can't control what others do to us and we can't always control our circumstances. However, we can always control our attitude. It's when we trust God through all circumstances that we can be the type of person that God desires we be. Speaking of dealing with tough situations, let's look at Verse 13:
9. Verse 13: Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.
- a) One of the hardest things to do is to forgive people who've legitimately hurt us. There are two people I've talked to recently that have so much anger over a person who's hurt them, they can't let go of the anger! The problem with that anger is it only hurts us! The other person doesn't care that they've hurt us. Sometimes we hold onto that anger as it's our way of clinging to a dead relationship! Forgiving others doesn't stop God from loving us. However, that pain is "standing between" that love relationship God desires between us. Letting go of the pain helps us to love God more and yes, even loving others more. We let go of the anger not to let others off the hook, but so we can be more loving to others!
  - b) Let me talk practical for a second. Suppose someone hurt us badly! How do we forgive if they hurt us that way? What if we're still in physical or emotional pain based on that pain inflicted on us. I'm all too aware that sometimes that takes time. For example, many years ago someone stole money from me. I had to pray for them daily for a few months before I could let go of that pain! I had to start seeing that person as someone who needs Jesus as opposed to someone who hurt me. It took time, but eventually that pain went away when I saw them that way. That's the type of "letting go" that God desires of those who hurt us. Yes the hurt is often legitimate, but until we work on forgiving them, all we're doing is we let them continue to hurt us! Enough on that point, let's move on!
10. Verse 14: And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.
- a) In Verses 12 and 13 Paul gives us positive ways we should act as Christians. Then Paul is saying the most important virtue is love. Time for a quick lecture on the Greek words for "love". There are a handful of words that can be translated love. One refers to sexual, one for "brotherly" love and another for caring about someone so much, we put their needs as a priority over our own. That's what Paul's talking about here. It's not about sexual love or even hugging people (not that there's anything wrong with that). It's the point that the way people know we're Christians is because we care about them. (Jesus Himself stated that fact in John 13:35).
  - b) This is not about forcing ourselves on others, but asking how we can be helpful to them at that particular moment. It's about "volunteer slavery" so to speak. A servant anticipates a need of his or her master and serves accordingly. It's about relying upon God's power as to put others as more important than ourselves and well, being helpful and kind!
  - c) Yes obviously there is far more to it than that. But that's where it starts. Let me also ask a tough question: What if we're in a lot of physical or emotional pain and can't help anyone at the moment. In such cases, the most loving thing we can do is let others serve us. One of the hardest things for devout Christians to do is let others serve us as it's our desire to serve others! I'm just saying we got to let it cut both ways! The danger is when we say, I want you to serve me right now! It's about volunteer servitude, not mandatory!



- d) Let's back up to remember that Paul's writing a letter to a bunch of Christians he's never met living "off the beaten path" battling cults who want to tell them how they should be living at the moment. By reminding them that the way Christians should live is by having a loving attitude is the way to combat "You must do this or that in order to be saved!" It is Paul saying "Christians never have to do "this or that", but here's how we can be a witness for Him by volunteering to live as God desires we live. Paul's combating the "We must do this or that" in order to be saved by telling us how God expects us to act as opposed to the false ideas that we can only be pleasing to God by acting "this way or that way"! That's the purpose of this lecture. That's why Paul is saying the most important thing is that we have the type of love for others that God desires we have! It comes from letting God's love flow through us so we can have that type of loving attitude toward others!
  - e) The last part of this verse mentions "perfect unity". Let's be honest, if we care about needs of people around us, it unifies us because we're helping those in needs! Life works when we put others needs as a priority over our own! That's Paul's point here. Hey look, we've still got eleven more verses to go today. Let's get moving!
11. Verse 15a: Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace.
- a) If you ask people what they want in life, a lot of time it boils down to peace. We desire to not have to worry about our problems. We desire to not have to worry about pleasing to God. We desire not having to worry about making others around us happy. We want to have enough money to do what we want. It boils down to peace. That's what Jesus did promise to us (See John 14:27). That concept is also what first led me to Jesus so this is a personal thing to me!
  - b) Say we're struggling with peace right now. Say we've got problems beyond our ability to deal with! Welcome to the club! Jesus promise of peace does not mean He'll solve all our problems in the next five minutes. It means He promises His peace is upon us and He will be there through whatever we're dealing with. It means God gives us peace as we face the issues we must face. As to what to actually do, when I'm overwhelmed, I pray then I ask, what's the next logical thing to do! That's how God gives us peace even as we go through difficult times in our lives, period.
12. Verse 15b: And be thankful.
- a) It's impossible to be positive without being grateful! Unless we're thankful for our lives, we will never be joyful! People who think they're a victim also lack gratitude at that time in their lives. Yes horrible things happen to people! That's not the issue. The issue is are we grateful for what we do have or are we focusing on how we're a victim? As I stated in the lesson earlier, we can't always control our circumstances, but we always control what we're thinking at any given moment. I'm positive we can't be grateful unless we've got an attitude of thankfulness.
13. Verse 16: Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.
- a) OK, how do we get in that good mood? What if I'm not feeling it right now? As I learned, "we fake it until we make it". As many of you know, I'm the kind of guy who spends time every day just reading the bible. It's more than just preparing the lessons, it's realizing the expression is true that goes, "Don't be so busy going about the king's business that we fail to make time for the king!" Even as I read some of the toughest parts of the bible, I realize I am reading God's word and it never fails to have things to teach me daily!
  - b) OK, I'm a bible teacher, you knew I was going to say that. Let's talk about the rest of this verse: Do we "force" Godly wisdom on other people! Only if we want to turn them off. I rarely quote the bible to others, but I always want to be a good witness for Jesus no matter what the situation is. That's another way we're to live as a witness for Jesus!

- c) Are there times to share God's word and wisdom with others? Yes, when asked. When the opportunity arises and the spirit leads us, yes that works.
  - d) That leads to the topic of Christian music. I've met Christians who avoid parts of a service because they don't care for modern Christian music or will only sing classic hymns. Over the years, I figure the point of Christian music is to praise God. If the style isn't "my cup of tea" I make the best of it and realize I'm worshipping God. The style isn't that important!
  - e) Let me also share a habit I've had as of late. While I prepare these lessons, I often have a Christian "youtube" channel going in the background. It inspires me to no end to listen to praise music while I prepare these lessons. I know many people can't do that, but for me it works and inspires me to pound away at the keyboard!
  - f) No we don't have to listen to a certain type of Christian music to focus on God. However, I do find such music is a great practical way of getting our focus on Him, and I encourage all of us to do so.
  - g) Finally notice, all of this music reference leads Paul back to the idea of gratitude. There are many naturally grateful people who are not Christians. However, being grateful for what God's done for us ties to the idea of why we should be grateful, period!
14. Verse 17: And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.
- a) You all know how I love extreme examples: Does this mean we go to the bathroom in the name of the Lord? Does this mean we do our laundry in God's name? Of course none of us can concentrate on God "24/7". We aren't built to focus on anything that long. What I suspect Paul simply means is we make the effort to constantly think about the fact God is watching and judging all that we do! It's a matter of thinking, "Is God pleasing with what I'm doing right now?" As I stated earlier, "If we're going shopping take God with us!"
  - b) Notice Verse 17 comes back to gratitude. If we're grateful God gave us our lives to begin with, we can't help but be grateful. I admit, my day goes so much better when I start it by naming things I'm grateful for. It can be simple things or complicated things. I state what pops in my head as I'm grateful to God for the life He's given me. I promise that exercise's a great way to start the day and gets our focus on Him. It benefits our whole day as we're realizing God's in charge of our lives and the greatest purpose for living is to use our lives as a witness for Him. That's a great thought for a closing prayer, but there's more to go!
15. Verse 18: Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. <sup>19</sup> Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them.
- a) From here to the early verses of Chapter 4, Paul gets "group" oriented. The idea is not that one group is better or more important than the other. It's the idea that God gave specific commands for both husbands and wives in marriage.
  - b) Ok, let's talk about the ugly word "submission". My favorite illustration to this is from the movie "My Big Fat Greek Wedding" that came out a few decades back. One of lead female characters said, "The man is the head of the family, but the woman is like the neck and has the ability to turn the head the way it wants to go." That's my favorite definition of how it is a woman is to submit. Time for more extreme examples: If a husband asks you to steal something, you need to obey God and not man. Again, think in terms of putting the needs of others ahead of one's own needs! That means yes, submission. The married women I've know who think this way, usually have the best marriages. Yes it applies to sex as well. It is a way of saying, I may not be in the mood, but my husband's needs are my priority and I want to make him happy. Yes there are exceptions for sickness and the "period". All I'm saying is if we put others needs above our own, it begins with (ok, yech!) submission!
  - c) OK time for revenge. Paul taught in Ephesians 5:27 that men should love our wives just as much as they love their own bodies. Again the issue is submission. It's thinking, I'd like to do "this" but my wife wants that! It's about I'll say it again, "submission". Suppose you'd really like a new set of golf clubs and your wife wants "x". What does one do now?

- i) The answer is we talk to them. Here's what I'd like and here's what you'd like. It is a matter of working as a team and making the best decisions. If both want to be pleasing to each other, it should work out over time. God loves to "give with His right hand what He takes away with His left." My point is if we're willing to put God, first it never ceases to amaze me how God gives us the desires of our heart!
  - d) Finally, let me discuss "harsh". No I'm not perfect and I get angry at times! Sometimes it is best to walk away or agree to discuss it calmly later. Remember the acronym HALT: We are at our worst when we're (H)ungry (A)ngry, (L)onely or (T)ired! Marriage is about compromise and if it's the desire of both spouses to make each other happy, and if we will pray our way through problems, they all tend to work themselves out! When we mess up (and we will) apologize and offer to gently talk about and work out that compromise. OK, time to move on.
- 16. Verse 20: Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.
  - a) This is the "Fifth commandment". It's also the first commandment of our relationship with others as opposed to our relationship with God. It's the only one of the 10 with a promise. If we obey it "our days will be long in the land". (Exodus 20:12). No, it doesn't mean we're guaranteed long life. It means that honoring our parents (at whatever age) is how we are to show respect for the family unit. God will honor our family as we honor them. Paul is stating that command, as an example of putting other's needs ahead of our own.
  - b) As I've stated all through this lesson, it is not a matter of "do this or we'll go to hell". It is a matter of realizing here's how God desires we act as a witness to Him. That's why he gets into marriage and family relationships.
- 17. Verse 21: Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged.
  - a) Verse 20 spoke of how children should honor their parents. Here we get the reverse: how it is parents should treat their children. The idea of "embitter" is about long term hatred. I am well aware none of us are perfect parents. Yes teenagers will be angry at us no matter what it is we do. Yes we should apologize when we mess up. It's a matter of children at a latter age realizing, "Hey my parents weren't so stupid after all!" Children want to have a relationship with their parents. When we mess up and we will, discuss it and try our best to mend fences. Again it's not about being perfect, but being a good witness for Jesus and that includes raising our children.
  - b) Ok, if those last few verses we're tough enough, we're about to discuss slavery!
- 18. Verse 22: Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to win their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. <sup>23</sup> Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, <sup>24</sup> since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. <sup>25</sup> Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for his wrong, and there is no favoritism.
  - a) The first thing I should emphasize is that neither Jesus nor Paul ever endorsed slavery. It was a part of that world. Yes Jesus is God and He could have waved his hands, and that'd be the end of slavery, why didn't He? Jesus wants us to come to him by faith, not by some great miracle of all slavery magically ending on the spot! I'm grateful that in the last few hundred years, some great men arose who've worked to rid the world of that practice. In the Old Testament, slavery was allowed only as a way to pay off debts. The bible stated that masters must treat their slaves with kindness and release them after a certain number of years. Slavery was a part of world culture for millennia. Also realize that the racial aspect was a small part of it. Most of it was about one group conquering another one and then selling people off as slaves. Bottom line, it existed. When Paul wrote this letter, two thirds of that world were slaves. As I stated earlier, Paul didn't fight it as he had "bigger fish to fry" than to try to rid the world of slavery. Christians killed that practice!
  - b) The next and easier thing to say is when reading these verses, think bosses and employees as that's the closest modern equivalent we have to slaves and slavery.

- c) With that said, let me describe how Paul wanted slaves to act historically and then I'll talk about how that works with employers and employee's. The bible never encouraged slaves to run away. Also realize that slaves did not necessarily mean having nothing. Luke who wrote the Gospel of Luke and Acts, most likely was a slave as well as a doctor. The point is simply that often slaves had high status in the ancient world and not just "nobodies".
  - d) Remember that Paul's theme here is about being a good witness for Jesus. Since two thirds of the Roman world were slaves, it was important to bring it up as if to say, since you're in that type of relationship, be a good witness for Jesus in spite of that issue! Paul's saying to those slaves that yes, they're just as much Christians as anyone else who commits to being a Christian. Back in Verse 11, Paul pretty much stated that fact. Therefore, Paul wants to encourage slaves as to say in effect, "Compared to this short life on earth, you will be free for all of eternity and God will make up for whatever suffering you received in this life!"
  - e) Also realized that Paul said in 1st Corinthians 7:1, that if one can gain one's freedom, we should "go for it". There were legal ways to gain freedom in those days. That was Paul's way of not condoning slavery and at the same time not starting a revolution against it!
  - f) Did Paul realize many Christians were beaten as slaves? I'm sure of it. In spite of being treated that way, he wanted those Christians to be a good witness for Jesus again in spite of all they had to go through. Again it's about putting other people's needs as a priority over our own needs, and that included their slave owners.
  - g) At this point, it's pretty easy to see what does and doesn't apply to employees as well as employers. While it's not exactly the same, a lot of the same principals apply. I hold the view that if we committed to a job, we owe the boss the "eight hours" (or whatever it is) that we agreed to do. If we want to tell workers about Jesus, we need to do it on our own time or as we're working. The issue is always about being a good witness for Jesus while on the job or off the job! That's the essence of these verses and this chapter.
  - h) What if we hate our bosses? It's rare to meet someone who loves their boss. The point is simply that if we agree to work there, we need to do the right thing and that means we've got to do our job whether it's pleasant or not! The issue isn't about being comfortable all the time. It's about being a good witness for Jesus all the time. Remember why God did create us in the first place: To glorify Him by our lives. The reason God doesn't murder us right after we're saved is He wants us to use our lives as a witness for Him. To me the relatively easy part is committing our lives to Jesus. The challenge is to live for Him daily. In a sense, I admire martyrs for Jesus because they do it and that's that. The harder part is to live for Him daily. That's why God gave us the Holy Spirit so by His power we'll live the type of life that God desires. On that positive note, I'll end this with a closing prayer.
19. Heavenly Father, the great question of life isn't what we're to do with our lives, but what is it You desire of us. If You created us You must want something from us. As best we can tell, You've created us to glorify You with our lives. While none of us are perfect, we can make the conscious effort every day to use our lives for Your glory. Help us by Your Spirit to put other's needs as a priority over our own and be the type of witness You desire we be. Help us to accept what it is You desire of us and do Your will for Your glory. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.