

Colossians 3:12-14

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[0 : 00] Please turn with me, if you're not already there, to Paul's letter to the church at Colossae, chapter 3. Let's see.

Their first day of classes is August 17th, which means we'll likely see a lot of that crew come back on the 16th and the week following. So I had every intention of wrapping it up.

In fact, originally verses 5 through 17, I had intended to preach in just two weeks. So this is now week 3, and obviously next week, Lord willing, will be week 4, and then we'll move on into verse 18 beyond that.

Not the best laid plans of mice and men. This morning for two reasons. I think it's right and proper to just address verses 12, 13, and 14.

The first of which being, I am sick and tired, but not in a literal, excuse me, not in a metaphorical sense, but in a literal sense. My little one, three years old, has a head cold, and I think it's coming on me now.

[1 : 30] I woke up this morning feeling quite under the weather. And we're wrapping up the wedding season. Officiated my fourth wedding since May yesterday. I finished premarital counseling for six couples just this past week.

And I'm beat. Weddings are fantastic. They are great and glorious and enjoyable, but they are also exhausting. So I am sick and tired, literally, this morning.

Secondly, there is a lot to consider in these texts. Certainly, thematically, they hold together. We can see verses 5-11 being this expression of those things that we should be putting off our old self. These activities that shouldn't exist amongst those who claim the name of Christ. In verses 12-17, those things that we put on, that we exchange instead. So thematically, they hold really well.

And we can see the primary exhortation of the text in the last part of verse 9 and the first part of verse 10. Where Paul says, It's seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self.

[2 : 41] Previously in 3-3, he says, For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. We have been made new in Christ.

And so it's proper that we put off the old self. It's stated in the negative. Stop doing these things. That we put on. We clothe ourselves differently now.

Stated in the positive. Rather, we ought to live this way. Sort of put off the old self. Verse 5, Put to death, therefore, what is earthly in you.

Here, not literally. Which is where I looked in my notes when I said not literally earlier. Not literally, but figuratively. Mortify sin in your life.

And verse 8, But now you must put them all away. And Paul gives us these two lists, which are not exhaustive lists of all sin, but they're sins that relate to how we deal with one another.

[3 : 40] They're sins of unrighteous love and sins of unrighteous hate. Stop functioning together in this way, but rather put on the new self.

Verse 10, And have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. I made the case to you last week that our sanctification, our perfection in Christ is a progressive process.

It's something that's being accomplished in us. That we have been made new and that we are being made new. So as we look at these kinds of exhortations in the Scripture, if we're really honest with ourselves, none of us live to this standard, but yet we should.

Don't deny the fact, the reality, that in Christ we ought to live this way, but we recognize that we are being, by one degree after another, being made into this image.

We rightly see these things and recognize what righteous looks like. The right way in which we ought to live in Christ. And we recognize rightly then, sin.

[4 : 54] You see that in verse 10, he says that we have put on the new self. This is a snapshot of a completed event. It's the aorist verb tense.

This is what it means. It's been accomplished. And then just beyond this, he says, which is being renewed. And it's being renewed in this way, by the power of the Spirit, in knowledge.

That we know how it is we ought to live. That we meditate on that. That we function out of the realities of who God is to us in Christ in order to accomplish these things.

And we're being made into the image of its, and they're referring to the new self creator. We're being made into the image of Jesus Christ.

I was thinking a little bit about that today and what that looks like in our lives. And it caused my mind to think about when you have a brand new baby, and so many people, particularly women, try to figure out who that baby looks like.

[6 : 01] I've heard this. I know, oh, he looks so much like. Babies don't really typically look like anybody. They look like themselves. And I don't understand how my boys look so much like. Maybe that's insulting.

I don't know. Maybe it's a compliment. Babies are awfully cute. I'm not sure. Sometimes a baby really looks like their father or mother, but in most cases, they really don't.

But as they grow, and as they get older, they do begin to take on more and more of those features. A wonderful example for my five-year-old Cade is that he sadly, unfortunately, inherited my double crown, the two cowl.

I don't know if you've ever noticed this about myself. But it's horrible, and it's really hard to comb your hair when your hair's doing that in the back, and the poor boy's hair does the same.

But when he was born, he had this cute little fuzzy head. Right? We're to look more and more like Christ, although it's a positive in this case, and Cade and mine, it's a negative thing, but we're to look more like Jesus by degree after degree after degree.

[7 : 13] This is the work of the Christian life and the way in which the Spirit works in us. And he begins to talk about this new self and the way in which we will be changed in what seems like such a peculiar way in verse 11.

He says, here in this new self, there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised, uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave-free, but Christ is all and in all.

And in this culture of this day, there were so many barriers, just like there are today. Maybe even more strictly drawn up in theirs. There were ethnic barriers between the Greeks and the Jews.

Religious barriers between those who were circumcised and uncircumcised. And I mean by religious, the outward trappings of religion, not the true devotion to God. There were cultural barriers between the barbarians, the Scythians, and those who were educated.

Social barriers between slave and free. And what Paul is saying is that for those who have placed their faith in Jesus Christ, Christ should be everything.

[8 : 17] Christ is all. It's a reality that we should function out of. And He's in all. So we have this wonderful commonality between us.

Apart from our backgrounds, apart from our ethnicity, apart from the culture that we grew up in, we have a wonderful, wonderful commonality in Christ.

And so today, our verses will be verses 12 through 14. And I want to read those to us just again to get them on our minds, if only for my benefit.

Paul writes, 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 me remind you that this is God's Word to us. It has bearing and meaning on our day.

[9 : 25] It's written for His glory and for our good and that we would all do well to listen to it in order to believe its promises and obey its commands. I, and I hope you appreciate and join with me in this, I am so thankful for the Word of God.

This past week, on our family day, which is on Tuesday, I was playing with Judah, our three-year-old, in the woods, and we found a millipede, those big, fat millipedes. They're kind of gray and they've got cool red lines on them.

And I've touched them before, but I've never like agitated one of them. But this one kept trying to go into the leaves and I wanted Judah to see it, so I kept pulling it back out of the leaves. Don't agitate a millipede because it secreted this yellow gunk all over my thumb and my pointer finger on this hand, which just smelled horrible.

It had a very thick ammonia kind of a smell to it, like burned my nose when I smelled it. And shortly after, I washed my hands, but shortly after, it turned my finger and my thumb maroon.

And I showed it to Sam and she was very concerned, like, is it hurt? Like, what's going on with your finger? And I just really wasn't sure. Didn't seem to be any real issue. I don't know if anybody, you can't see my thumb from there. Maybe some of you on the front row.

[10:39] I still have some maroon under my thumbnail from this goo that was on my finger. And this world, the temporal part of our world, doesn't really come with a manual, does it?

Certainly if I had done a quick Google search, I would have found out I shouldn't touch the millipede. But these things that have temporal bearing and temporal nature, there's not really a book that we can be handed that tells us how we ought to live in relation to the world in those temporal ways, but we have been given a book that tells us how we ought to live spiritually.

In those things that have eternal weight and matter, what a precious, precious thing this is. That if we are to be renewed degree by degree to look more like Christ, that this is the great call on the Christian life for the sake of His name, we've been given a book.

It shows us how we ought to do it and we ought to treasure it much more than we do. Main point for today, there's only one, and that is Christian people will be distinguished by the way they live in relation to one another.

Christian people will be distinguished. We will look different by the way we live in relation to one another.

[11:54] If the affection of your heart says Christ is all, and oh, I hope that it does. I hope that is the cry and the longing of your heart.

Christ is all. Christ is everything to me. Then you will live differently as you relate to other people who say the very same thing.

Remember what Paul is saying here. He's saying in relation to one another, we're to put to death those things that cause enmity between us and we're instead meant to live in this way.

All of those barriers, all of those cultural, social, ethnic barriers have been torn down in Christ. So live like this.

And he begins by rooting that in our very character, who we are now as God's people. Verse 12, he says, put on then, put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved.

[12:54] In Christ, we are holy. Right? That's that completed act. We have been made perfect in Christ. When God looks at us, He sees Jesus.

We have been given, we've been imputed Jesus Christ's righteousness. Right? So we should continue in that. We should stand in that. This is our status in God. We are beloved.

We are loved by Him. And we are chosen in Him. This speaks of who we are. Not differing in degree, but in type.

It speaks of who we are, but more importantly, it reminds us of who made us who we are. See that we are chosen ones and we're holy and beloved, but so importantly, we are God's chosen ones. Holy and beloved. If you are in Christ, if you have placed faith in Him, this is a great work of God Almighty. He has birthed this in you.

[13:55] He has caused you to believe in Jesus Christ's person and His work. It is His doing, and therefore, the completion of what He intends to accomplish with you is sure.

What a precious promise is found in this little phrase, God's chosen ones. Holy and beloved. Turn with me, if you will, to 1 John 2.

See a bit of a parallel text here that drives the point that because of now who we are, we will live in a particular way.

Our obedience is a response to the grace of God in Christ on our behalf. 1 John 2.

And I'm going to begin reading in verse 28. And now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink from Him in shame at His coming.

[14:58] If you know that He is righteous, there's His work, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of Him. See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God, and so we are.

The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know Him. Beloved, we are God's children now. So there's this status change for us. Enemies of God, now children of God. John goes on to write in verse 9 and 10, No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in Him, and He cannot keep on sinning, because He has been born of God. By this it is evident who are the children of God and who are the children of the devil. Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother. So you see that there's this status change, and it causes us to live in a different way. And if we don't, if we're not about the practice of righteousness, but we're instead about the practice of sinning, it's indicative of who we are.

[16:13] Pears don't grow on apple trees. Only apples grow on apple trees. And as such, when we've had this status change, sin is part of a believer's past.

Verse 7 of chapter 3 in Colossians, In these, you too once walked when you were living in them. The last part of verse 9, Seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices.

It's once who we were, but it is no longer who we are if we have placed faith in Christ. And Paul is driving this point that this has to do with how we relate to one another.

And beloved, we don't do this well. There are so many things about our church that are healthy, and we probably do this better than many. But you need to hear what Paul is trying to communicate about the way in which we should relate to one another.

And I think one of the great cultural challenges to this is that so many of us think of the church as something that is outside of us. It is an institution.

[17:25] It is a thing that we attend rather than who we are. If you are in Christ, you are the church.

We go on existing apart from this piece of property and from this building, praise God. We continue to exist without a name or a website or any contact info whatsoever.

The church is us. It is people. If you have a favorite restaurant, I would not expect you to know everybody who works at that restaurant.

I wouldn't expect you to know the owner. It doesn't really matter if you know the owner or not, if you enjoy the food. You don't have to know the chef who cooks the food for you. You never relate to the other patrons.

You don't come in and go, isn't this the best restaurant ever? You go in, you enjoy the company that came with you, you get up, and you leave, and that is fine and acceptable. Sam and I went to a restaurant down in Gwinnett close to a large building where a congregation meets.

[18:35] And we ran into while we were eating, there were so many people that we knew from our past. Like I ran into my health teacher from the seventh grade. We're just running into people we knew. It was the weirdest evening. And most of them, Sam would ask, where are you attending church now?

Who are you fellowshiping? And they all had the same answer. But as we watched them go to eat their meals, none interacted with one another. All of them professed to be part of a fellowship of Jesus Christ together and yet had no relationship.

None whatsoever. Or they all hated each other or were ignoring each other. One of the two. Both sin. This shouldn't be so amongst us. I will fight and fight and fight and fight for that not to be the case amongst us.

We are the church and we're meant to live in a very particular way with one another. And this is God's design for the advancement of His gospel.

This is a primary way in which His glory is proclaimed in this world. The way we relate to one another. Look at some of the things that He says.

[19:50] And I'm not going to develop all of these out. Each of these could be a week of a sermon. But look what He says that we're meant to be doing together. The things we're meant to put on as God's chosen ones.

His holy and His beloved. Compassionate hearts. Compassionate hearts. Love characterized by mercy. That looks at an individual and your heart breaks for them and the situation that they're in. And every single one of us has something happening in our lives that should be causing heartbreak in the life of somebody else. We're all hurting. We're all dealing with stuff.

So we're to have compassionate hearts for one another. Merciful hearts. We should put on kindness. Which means gracious acts of goodness.

That we care for one another to the degree that we serve one another. That we maybe as Romans 12 suggests that we compete to outdo one another in showing honor and serving each other in this way.

[20 : 56] We're to put on humility. Which means that we recognize who we are apart from Jesus Christ. Christ. Wretched thing that I am apart from Jesus.

I have been given grace in abounding measure. I deserve nothing that I have. And yet, so often we act like we deserve everything that the world has to offer.

We are to be humble. Paul writes in Philippians 2 verses 3 and 4 do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit.

So here's the stated in the negative. This is the activity of the person who's not humble. Operating out of selfish ambition and conceit. But, in humility, count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests but also to the interests of others. We're to put on humility. We're to put on meekness. gentleness. A synonym for this kind of is gentleness.

[22 : 05] But in the Greek it means a bit more than that. It's a person that's not gentle by lack of strength but a person who has strength and bridle that strength appropriately.

Jesus Christ is the most wonderful example of this as he is of all righteous characteristics. You see him as we work through Mark recently. Stilling storms by his voice.

Commanding the waves and they stop casting out demons. Pulling no punches with the Pharisees. Fierce in the way that he dealt with the world and sin.

And then you see him inviting little children to come and sit on his lap. To me there's nothing more precious than some of the big strong men of our church and the way they hold their little babies.

Stan Luttrell breaks my heart sometimes as big and strong as he is in the way he's so tender with his youngest daughter. This is a picture of meekness.

[23 : 09] Jesus Christ on the cross is the highest example of it. Having the power, being God himself, to just go ahead and say you know what we're not doing the cross thing. I'm just going to go ahead and judge and destroy the earth now.

And yet he took it for our sake. This is that picture of meekness. We're to put on meekness. We're to put on patience. Not to be quick tempered.

We're to be patient with one another. Because God bears with us. Just consider that for a moment. Think about the people that tend to annoy you, that you have a hard time being patient with, and then take on their characteristic.

Am I ever that way toward God? And the answer is a resounding yes, you are that way toward God. And yet, he is patient with us. Ever loving.

Verse 13 goes on to kind of work some of this out. So what is that going to look like? If we're going to have these kinds of qualities and characteristics, what is this going to look like in our dealing with one another? And Paul says we are to bear with one another.

[24 : 18] And if we have a complaint against another, that we're to forgive one another. We're to bear with one another. And this means that it's going to be challenging to do this.

Paul's not here promising that you just join a church and it's easy. It's all wonderful and everything is slick. That you're never going to have any personality conflict with somebody else. That you're not going to butt heads over some issue in the church.

But here we're to bear with one another. And this is a great English translation. That idea that comes up in our minds of just dealing with somebody is exactly what's being communicated here.

Because Christ is all. Because He's redeemed the souls of His people, we are to bear with one another. We're to work through those challenges of our relationship because Christ is all.

Because He loves His church. And as such, so are we. Far too many people are looking for the peaceful place to go.

[25 : 22] I have been to churches and it just makes me sick the false kindness that goes around in those churches. It's just fake and you can feel the tension in the church.

The good morning brother, how are you? And behind the scenes a person is saying I don't care at all. In fact, it would be okay with me if you went someplace else. There's a bitterness that broods in a lot of churches because people just don't like one another.

And this is not the activity of a person who believes that Christ is all and that He is in all. We're to bear with one another. Turn to Ephesians chapter 4.

Beginning in verse 1. I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called because of who you are in Christ.

Verse 2. With all humility and gentleness, with patience, this sounds familiar, doesn't it? Bearing with one another in love.

[26 : 39] Eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Catch what Paul is saying to us there, that we have a unity. We have the unity of the Spirit because Christ is all and He is in all.

Therefore, we have a unity. This wonderful commonality that we all possess. And yet, we're to work. We're supposed to work that out. We're supposed to bear with one another in love.

We're supposed to be eager to maintain that because of what Christ has done for us. So we're to bear with one another. And if one has a complaint against another, we're to forgive each other.

You all don't know that I know most of the things that go on in our church and amongst our people. I don't step into the middle of many situations because it's honestly just not my place.

I like to let you guys work your stuff out on your own. I have heard on many occasions little comments like, oh, well, he doesn't really like him. That is not okay in our congregation.

[27 : 47] Hear me clearly saying to you, it's not okay for you to live that way. When we have sign-ups for things, I know that some of you wait to sign up to go do something because you want to see who else is going to sign up and whether or not it's a group of people you really want to hang out with.

Not okay. If you should serve in a particular way, sign up and show up and figure it out. Learn to get along and to love each other.

It'll be a work I promise, but a work worthwhile. If someone has offended you, forgive them. They may owe you an apology, but either way, forgive them.

And why? Because the Lord has forgiven us. Paul gives that to us as the example for why.

Forgiving each other as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must, and that's imperative, forgive.

Apparel to this is Ephesians 4.32. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another as God in Christ forgave you. You have been forgiven the highest of offenses.

[28 : 55] Eternal offense. A massive weight. An unpayable debt has been stricken from your record in Christ. You can forgive somebody the little offense they delivered in the tone in which they said something.

Luke 7.47. Jesus is talking of the woman who comes in and cries, washes his feet with her tears, and he says, but he who has forgiven little loves little.

Beloved, if you are in Christ, you have been forgiven much, and therefore, stating this in the positive, we should, it necessitates that we love much.

I want you to hear me. You're not all easy for me to love. I'm not going to tell you who you are, but it's just a personality thing sometimes.

Sometimes our personalities rub up against each other. I sometimes don't have a clue what to say to somebody. I have nothing to say. I fear sometimes I walk away awkwardly because I don't know what else to say.

[30 : 08] I'm just talking and then I just go and walk away. You're not easy to love, but I do love you. And I do that because it's rooted in the great love that God has for me.

You are His people. And I love the things that Jesus loves. You are all precious to me because you are His.

In our community outreach groups, we've been studying through the book of Philippians together. And just depending on which evening you meet. Two weeks ago for some of you, just a week ago for others, we looked at Philippians 4, verses 1-3.

I want you to turn there real quick. I know a lot of you are familiar with the text, but I want you to see it just in case you're not. Maybe a little obscure it seems.

You read past it. How many times I've read right through the book of Philippians? I read right past verses 1-3. Something very important that Paul is doing here.

[31 : 16] He writes, Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved. I entreat Euodia and I entreat Cintiq to agree in the Lord.

Yes, I ask you also, true companion, help these women who have labored side by side with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers whose names are in the book of life.

And that was our text for that evening to discuss together. And I got the treat of getting to fill in and lead a group. And the question I led with was, how would you feel if on a Sunday morning I got up and I called out two of you who I've heard weren't getting along too well?

I just pointed you out and I said, oh, and while we're at it, I encourage the two of you, work it out. Come on. Quit causing so many problems. And how that would make you feel.

This is what Paul does. Paul wrote a letter to the church at Philippi. It was meant to be read out loud. It's exactly what he does here. As he seems to pause, for some reason, why does he do this?

[32 : 31] It must have been really important. It must have been of great, great importance. And here's the thing that I want you to see is that he gives this exhortation to stand firm in the Lord and then he turns right from that and he says of these two Christian women, he affirms that, they've labored alongside me, these are good people who something is causing this rift between them.

And he gives this treatise, this encouragement to get along, you two get along because this type of disunity is a danger to the church standing firm together.

Do we as a congregation stand firm the way we should and is it possible that we don't because there are these divisions amongst us?

It's very possible. If you look up in Philippians chapter 3, Paul is talking about enemies of the cross of Christ in verse 19, he says their end is destruction.

Their God is their belly and they glory in their shame with minds set on earthly things. Who they are. These people over there, but our citizenship is in heaven and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

[33 : 53] Christ is all to those who have placed faith in Him. And when we properly function out of that reality, we ought not have division amongst us.

We ought to love one another the way we should. Verse 14 presses that point. And above all these, put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

Our culture says that love is an intense feeling of deep affection. affection. It's primarily about the way we feel towards a person or towards a thing. Christian love certainly is a deep affection, but it's rooted and sustained by God's unchanging affection for His people.

We love the church, we love each other because we love Christ, and this is what Christ loves. And that affection seeks the highest good of the object of that affection.

So let me read that to you without my interruptions. Christian love is a deep affection which is rooted and sustained by God's unchanging affection for His people that seeks the highest good of the object of that affection.

[35 : 07] This is Christian love. Doing so many weddings really has kept present on my mind what marriage is meant to represent, this relationship between Christ and His church that someday we'll be reunited with Him.

And this is the metaphor that's used, right, that we would better understand what it means for His bride, the church, to be reunited with Christ. Right? Not an individual, but the church.

You are a part of the church. Your salvation is corporate. Jesus died for the sins of the church. And beloved, language is powerful and it works its way into our minds and there's a phrase that's found nowhere in the Scriptures which is used constantly and commonly in churches of these days and that is personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

This is the question asked in an invitation. Do you have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ? And there is an element to that certainly that I must place faith in Jesus. That if He died for the sins of the church, He certainly died as dying for the greater for the lesser as well.

For me as an individual, right? I pray to Him. His Spirit lives within me. There is a personal element to it, but the Scriptures way further, like in greater balance, talk about how it is that we're saved together.

[36 : 27] A people set apart. We have to begin thinking rightly and properly about that. We have to love what Jesus loves.

Turn with me finally to 1 Corinthians chapter 12. We're almost done. Amen. Amen. If you love someone, to walk our text backwards.

If you love someone, you forgive them. If you love them, you will bear with them. Love generates in us compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience.

This is why Paul says, above all else, put on love. Classic 1 Corinthians chapter 13. I'm sorry that I didn't get you there before.

Let me start reading to you in verse 27. The Corinthian church had a lot of conflict in it concerning gifts, concerning spiritual gifts. And much of Paul's first letter to them addresses this issue.

[37 : 41] Verse 27, now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues.

So these gifts that God has given to the church are all apostles, are all prophets, are all teachers, do all work miracles, do all possess gifts of healing, do all speak with tongues, do all interpret, but earnestly desire the higher gifts.

And I will show you a still more excellent way. So there's these gifts that are in operation. And we won't get into the theology of that today. Not worth it right now, because that's not ultimately the point.

He's saying we don't all have the same giftedness. Seek the higher gifts. But, and this phrase is so fascinating, and I will show you a still more excellent way. I'm going to show you something better, greater, than the higher gifts that he's been referring to in the previous chapters.

This is not just a kitschy text to read at a wedding. Verse 1, If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, I have a gift to speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love.

[38 : 55] I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers that understand all mysteries and all knowledge. Just huge phrases, right?

And if I have all faith so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

Here's this beautiful expression. I couldn't explain it better than Paul does here. Beginning in verse 4, Love is patient and kind. Love does not envy or boast. It is not arrogant or rude.

It does not insist on its own way. It is not irritable or resentful. It does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away. As for tongues, they will cease. As for knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part, but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away.

[40 : 03] When I was a child, I spoke like a child. I thought like a child. I reasoned like a child.

When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face.

Now I know in part, then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known. What he's saying is that all of these things, the operation of the church is a shadow. It's pointing to Christ. So when Christ comes, we'll fully get it.

So that stuff will no longer be of great necessity. Verse 13, so now faith, hope, and love abide.

These three. But the greatest of these is love. So our main point today is that Christian people will be distinguished by the way they live in relation to one another.

And the defining characteristic will be love. Jesus says in John 13, 35, by this, all people will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another.

How do we show the world a primary way that we show the world that we treasure Christ? First, we love each other. We look different in that way from the rest of the world in the way we relate to one another.

[41 : 16] In closing, I want to read to you a quote by a contemporary pastor named Arturo Azzerdia. I call him Pastor Art because Azzerdia is hard to say.

He's the pastor of Trinity Church of Portland, Oregon. I commend him to you. Listen to Pastor Art's sermons. They're wonderful. He said this. Let's suppose that a kite could come to life and develop its own personality.

On the one hand, it would feel the exhilaration that comes from the surges of wind that direct it through the sky. On the other hand, it would almost immediately take notice of something annoying. The tugging of the string at its center.

A feeling of constraint. A resistance. Consumed, the kite begins to think to itself, If only I could detach. Then I could really fly.

To the kite you see, it seems that the string is limiting its full experience of freedom. But as any boy or girl who has ever flown a kite knows, Were that string to suddenly snap, the kite wouldn't soar freely for very long.

[42 : 21] It would dart to and fro for a minute, maybe two, But very soon thereafter would end up on the ground in a pile of broken sticks and torn paper, Never ever to fly again.

Rather, you see, it is the taut line between the kite and the one holding it that enables the kite to fly, That allows all the principles of aerodynamics to come into play, So that the kite might achieve its full purpose.

Christian love performs the very same function as a kite string. You take away the stabilizing force of Christian love, And every towering gift, every supernatural power, Every sacrificial act, Every musical performance, You name it, friends, It will all end up on the ash heap of eternal insignificance without love.

Let's pray together.