

Colossians 3:12-21
By Grace I'm Saved
What does this mean?
The Christian Family

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Winchester, VA
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¹² Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. ¹³ Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. ¹⁴ And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

¹⁵ Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. ¹⁶ Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.

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.

¹⁸ Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.

¹⁹ Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them.

²⁰ Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.

²¹ Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged.

Our opening hymn this morning did an excellent job of summarizing the biblical teachings that we have reviewed over the past ten weeks. We are saved by grace, God's undeserved love given to us wholly and freely. By grace Jesus, God's own Son, came down to earth to bear away our sin and give us the gift of everlasting life. It's not because of anything you or I have done, it's simply by grace—simply because God loves us and wants us to be with Him forever. So, now, as we sang in that hymn, even when death itself confronts us, despite knowing the condition of our hearts—that we are sinful people who deserve nothing to do with God—you also know the voice of your Savior who tells you that through Him, your sins are forgiven and you have been given life that never ends.

By grace I'm saved. An understanding of those words is one of the greatest things for which we give thanks this year as we celebrate 500 years of the Reformation. We give thanks for an understanding of what that means for us as we look ahead to death and beyond that to everlasting life. But what about our temporal life here in this world? By grace I'm saved, yes. So now what does that mean for my life today or tomorrow?

What is the response of a Christian to the amazing gifts of God's grace? That's what we'll be looking at these next few weeks. To start, we'll break it down into three different realms. We'll find out what the fact that we are saved by grace means for our lives at home, as members of society, and finally as members of a Christian congregation. Today, we'll look at the first of those three: the Christian home.

Our second lesson this morning came from Saint Paul's letter to the Colossian congregation. We picked up in the middle of a section where Paul is talking about the Christian's response to God's grace. He encourages us to cast off with the powerful freedom that Jesus has given us the earthly things of this world and to set our minds on heavenly things.

But what does that mean? It means we live our lives thinking about those things we pray for in the first three petitions of the Lord's Prayer. Keeping God's name holy, letting His kingdom come, and letting His will be done. We do that, by adopting the attitudes that Jesus modeled for us: tender compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, tolerance, forgiveness, and above all else love.

And immediately after those words of encouragement, Paul applies them to the people you find in a Christian home—to wives and husbands, to parents and children. The Christian home is really the foundation of a Christian's life. If you're going to start each day off on the right foot, then we need to start with the place where you start each day, at home.

So what is a Christian home supposed to look like? What is the mission statement of a home? The businesses and schools that we are a part of have values and missions. Churches have values and missions. But what about your home? Does your home have values and missions? And if so, does your home have the right values and mission?

Whether we've thought it through or not there is some goal or some goals that are driving what goes on in our homes. In some homes, the mission is to prosper financially as much as possible, in others it's to give each other the best opportunities possible whatever they may be, in still others it might be to pursue excellence in a few specific areas. Those are goals you might find in any home, but are there goals, is there a mission or purpose that a Christian home has that sets it apart from those? Is there meaning in God's grace that can give what takes place in our homes direction?

Absolutely there are! From our lessons this morning, there are two in particular that I'd like to point out. The first one, looking to our Old Testament lesson, is that a Christian home has the purpose of a seminary. And second, from our Epistle lesson in Colossians 3 we find that the Christian home is also a fuel station.

So what do I mean by those? To say that a home is a seminary doesn't mean that we should all be training our kids to be pastors. The English word seminary comes from the Latin word *seminarium*, which means a "seed-bed" or a garden. Families are where the seeds of God's truth and grace are sown.

In the verses we looked at from Deuteronomy 6 and then again and again through the rest of the book, God has Moses emphasize that parents are responsible for passing His eternal truths on to their children. He says, **These words that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.** The Christian home is a seminary and the faculty are the parents.

God didn't have Moses tell the parents to make sure they went and found a priest or a Levite to raise their kids up in the ways of the Lord, He gave that task directly to mom and dad. That doesn't mean that churches shouldn't have Sunday Schools or confirmation classes, those are incredible blessings as well, but Sunday School is only once a week and confirmation class is just a few short years; parents have access to their kids every single day.

Being the faculty of a home seminary doesn't mean that you sit your kids down and make them read Bible stories from dawn until dusk. The curriculum for the home is a relationship, not a religion. We make the Christian home a seed-bed for the gospel when we show that

Christianity is more than a way of life and a moral code. It's far more than just showing up at church when we feel like it. Christianity is a living relationship with the living God.

What is the difference between a relationship and a religion? A religion is a set of rules—do this, don't do that in order to gain a reward. A relationship is based on love because of what you have already been given. Christianity is an intimate, growing relationship with Jesus Christ. It's about who you are. It's about whose you are. You parents, and your children, were bought with a price—not gold or silver, but with the holy, precious blood of God Himself. That's the relationship we foster with love in our homes. That's the relationship we want to build into our children. It's relationship with their Creator, their Provider, their Savior.

And kids, you can do that too. You can help your brothers and sisters grow in their relationship with Jesus, you can help your mom and dad, and someday down the road you may have kids of your own that you can teach that relationship to.

But how do we do that? Well the teaching method is our lives not just our lips. This is where that second goal of the Christian home comes in: to be a fuel station. We had a whole sermon series this year after Easter called *Running on Empty*. There are all kinds of different things in life that wear us down and leave us with feelings of emptiness, but that Easter news—that gospel message of Christ's love for each and every one of you has the power to fill you up.

We don't just fuel each other up when by quoting Scripture back and forth—although there certainly is a time and place for pointing each other to God's Word—we fuel each other by sharing God's love through the way we live our lives.

We spend our days out and about in a world that doesn't operate on God's love. We go to work and school at places where rather than being loved unconditionally, our grades and approval ratings and popularity are based on how we perform and how we present ourselves. So by the time we get home, we're worn out, sometimes exhausted, maybe even a little cranky. And that's where the Christian home really has an opportunity to shine, that's where our faith in God's saving grace has a chance to take real meaning in our lives.

Paul gave us that nice long list of ways that we can make a real difference, starting with compassion, a loving predisposition to the needs of our family members. We come with a tender heart toward them regardless of how they are coming to us. If Mom or Dad is cranky, you can help them refuel, maybe it's as simple as giving them a hug. If the husband or wife is crabby, you can see through your own feelings and opinions to focus on their needs. If the kids are being a headache, you can still come to them with a loving and compassionate heart.

Compassion is the emotion; when we put that into works and express it through our words and actions, we get the next word on Paul's list, kindness. And that kind of selfless kindness takes all the rest of the words on that list humility and gentleness, patience and forgiveness. And that's true especially when you're running on empty too. Sometimes we're so worn out that it feels like there's nothing left to give. Sometimes we need filling up too, right? So what are we supposed to do then?

Nowadays about the only option out there for fuel stations is self-serve. The days when an attendant would come and fuel up your tank for you are pretty well behind us. But not in the fuel station of the Christian home. In the Christian home, Jesus is our attendant.

When Jesus was tired He gave to those who needed. When Jesus was worn out He gave to those who asked. When Jesus was empty of strength He gave to those who were empty. He

gave to me, so that I can give to others. As I feel like a car sputtering down because I am running out of gas, I see Jesus giving to me and I'm refilled. When you feel that you have nothing else to give see Jesus giving His all for you and you will be filled to fill others with that same wondrous love, that same amazing grace.

The relationship we teach each other with is the relationship that we learn from our Savior Jesus. The love we share is the love He shared with us. Jesus and His amazing grace are what power our homes to seed-beds for the gospel and fueling stations for the soul. And that's true whether you have a houseful of kids, whether it's just two of you, or even if—like me—you live on your own.

Whatever model we may have had in our homes growing up, the model for a Christian home is Christ. And whatever relationships we may have been blessed with in this life the one all of you have is a relationship with God through Jesus Christ your Savior because by grace you are saved.

Our homes are the perfect place to refuel on that grace every day because our homes are where each of our days begins and comes to a close. Our homes are the perfect place to plant those seeds of the gospel in our own hearts and in the hearts of our family. May God bless your home that it may continue to be a place where faith grows and where hearts are refueled right up to the day when Jesus takes us to our new home in heaven with Him.

Amen.