

LifeGroups

GROWING TOGETHER IN THE GOSPEL

Growth Sheet

Christ-Motivated Living

Colossians 1:12-14

Christian Growth: Possibility and Practice

How does a person grow as a Christian? That question stands in the background of Colossians 3, and it makes sense that this would appear here in the flow of the letter. Up to this point, Paul has already warned his readers against seeking maturity in ecstatic experiences or a set of strict rules. True maturity, Paul insists, comes only in the life Christ has given them, not in anything they could achieve for themselves. Therefore, Christian growth is a matter of *working from* the life they have in Christ. This is why chapter 3 can be divided as follows

- 3:1-4 The possibility of Christian growth
- 3:5-25 The practice of Christian growth
 - 3:5-11 Putting *off* vices that distort and disrupt
 - 3:12 -14 Putting *on* virtues that bring beauty and harmony

Christian Growth: Motives

In this next section, Paul is no longer telling them to put off vices or put on virtues. Rather, he goes to a deeper level and speaks to their *motives* (note the occurrence of “heart” in 15 and 16). We know what it is like to be motivated by pride, guilt, or anger. What would it look like to be motivated instead by *Christ*?

Christ-Motivated Living Is Grateful Living

The answer is found in the following three verses, which address how . . .

1) the *peace* of Christ motivates gratitude in our relationships (3:15)

Paul urged his readers to “let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts” (3:15). The same reconciling work that Christ achieved in bringing sinners to God should be operative among believers as well. His command to “be thankful” is not randomly tacked on; rather, it is integral to his argument. Because the peace of Christ is something he has supplied *for* us, we receive it with gratitude, not as a debt we are owed. Thus, there is no room for boasting in the “body” to which we are called. The peace of Christ reigns in grateful hearts who have been brought to peace with God.

2) the *word* about Christ motivates gratitude our communication (3:16)

The “word of Christ” (that is, the word about Christ, the gospel) likewise must be given a rich dwelling. When that message—that Jesus died for us and raised us to life in him—makes itself at



home in our hearts, we find the motivation to communicate in two directions: toward one another and toward God. Toward one another, we “teach and admonish in all wisdom.” Toward God, we offer the most beautiful, heart-stirring form of communication possible: music. What motivates this otherward and Godward communication is not guilt, pride, or mere duty. It is gratitude, for God has done something for us we could not do for ourselves.

3) the name of the Lord Jesus motivates gratitude in our everyday activities (3:17)

Paul broadens his appeal for Christ-motivated living when he writes, “And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him” (3:17). As believers in Christ, we do nothing as independent individuals, but as those whose lives are bound up in Christ. He is our Lord, and we act as his representatives. This means that even the most mundane task is infused with eternal significance. Whatever our motivations were before we trusted in Christ, we now have a new and heightened calling: to bring glory to the Lord on whose name we called for salvation.

The common theme in each of these components is *gratitude*. This fits with other places in Colossians in which Paul stresses the importance of gratitude (1:12; 2:7; 4:2). Christ-motivated living is grateful living.

Questions for Application and Discussion

1. Why are motives so important in Christian growth? Obviously, high standards, peaceful relationships, and energetic serving does not mean that motives are right. What kind of wrong motives *could* be behind these things?
2. Read the vices named in 3:5-9. What kind of motives do you think are behind those?
3. Why are we often blind to our motives? How would we know what truly motivates us?
4. The peace of Christ (3:15) and the message about Christ (3:16) involve things God has done *for* us. Why does this stir us to gratitude?
5. Consider some of your mundane “everyday activities.” How would they look different if you did them “in the name of the Lord Jesus”—gratefully motivated by the fact that you represent Jesus in doing them?