



The good life

by Bernard Gabbott

Memory verse:

So if you have been raised with the Messiah,
seek what is above, where the Messiah is,
seated at the right hand of God.

Set your minds on what is above, not on what is on the earth.

For you have died,
and your life is hidden with the Messiah in God.

Colossians 3:1-3

There is so much that is good about being a part of God's household. In a world that offers so many alternatives—and very attractive ones at that! - it is helpful and wise to consider the goodness of being a follower of Jesus. Moreover, as we do so, we will be reassured of the substance of what we believe and what God has achieved for us, as his people. Too often we waver and doubt the goodness of God, or even the expansive nature of his work for his people. This robs us of joy and delight in the good life. As we start 2023, let's remind ourselves, from God's word, of the goodness of the good life, in Jesus!

Study 1: Colossians 3:1-4

So if you have been raised with the Messiah, seek what is above, where the Messiah is, seated at the right hand of God.

² Set your minds on what is above, not on what is on the earth. ³ For you have died, and your life is hidden with the Messiah in God. ⁴ When the Messiah, who is your life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.

Colossians 3:1-4

Comprehend

1. Read the passage.
2. Who is the 'Messiah'? (see Col.1:13-22)

3. What does it say about 'you' if you are connected to the Messiah?

How do you get connected to the Messiah? (see Col.1:4, 21-23)

4. What imagery does this passage use to describe this process?

5. How does this passage describe what 'you' have if you are 'with the Messiah'?

6. How does this change what you 'seek' and what you 'set your mind' on?

Consider

1. Looking at Colossians 1:13-23, what is good about being connected to the Messiah?

Looking at Colossians 1:13-23, what is certain about being connected to the Messiah?

2. Where is your life, if you are a Christian? More specifically, who is your life?

What do you think this means—'the Messiah, who is your life'?

Look a little more closely at Colossians 1:22—try to expand what 'the Messiah, who is your life' means... (look also at Romans 5:1, Ephesians 2:6)

Contact

1. What does it mean to 'set your mind on'/'seek' what is above?

Scan through the next verses (3:5-11) - is such an exhortation separate from daily life, or part of concrete living? Why/why not?

2. What is good about the picture of the Christian life in this passage?
3. Someone asks, 'How are you?'. Remembering this passage (and Colossians 1:21-22), how do you reply?

Study 2: Colossians 3:1-11

So if you have been raised with the Messiah, seek what is above, where the Messiah is, seated at the right hand of God.² Set your minds on what is above, not on what is on the earth.³ For you have died, and your life is hidden with the Messiah in God.⁴ When the Messiah, who is your life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.⁵ Therefore, put to death whatever in you is worldly: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desire, and greed, which is idolatry.⁶ Because of these, God's wrath comes on the disobedient,⁷ and you once walked in these things when you were living in them.⁸ But now you must also put away all the following: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and filthy language from your mouth.⁹ Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his practices¹⁰ and have put on the new man, who is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of his Creator.¹¹ Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all.

Colossians 3:1-11

Consider

1. Read the passage.
2. What does the 'therefore' in verse 5 mean?

What does the 'therefore lead to?' (vs.5-9)

What reasons are given in vs.6-7?

3. Verses 9-10 expand on verses 1-4 in another way, using imagery that is familiar—what is the image, and what is being stated?

What is the foundation of this renewal? (vs.10– and back to vs.1-4)

5. What is the converse of this? (vs.8)

What is striking about the list in verse 8?

Consider

1. How is the vision here the culmination of the promise in Genesis 12:1-3? Why would this be reassuring?
2. Why is this such a good image? And why do you think it resonates with God's people—any people?
3. What do you think is the key to this goodness?

Contact

1. How does this vision fill you with confidence and reassurance and hope?
2. How is this vision something our world needs to hear, and experience?
3. How do we, as God's people, display this image to the world?

Study 6: Revelation 21:1-8

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea existed no longer. ² I also saw the Holy City, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared like a bride adorned for her husband. ³ Then I heard a loud voice from the throne: Look! God's dwelling is with men, and He will live with them. They will be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God. ⁴ He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will exist no longer; grief, crying, and pain will exist no longer, because the previous things have passed away. ⁵ Then the One seated on the throne said, "Look! I am making everything new." He also said, "Write, because these words are faithful and true." ⁶ And He said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give to the thirsty from the spring of living water as a gift. ⁷ The victor will inherit these things, and I will be his God, and he will be My son. ⁸ But the cowards, unbelievers, vile, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars-- their share will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death."

Revelation 21:1-8

Comprehend

1. Read the passage.
2. What is John seeing? (vs.1-2)

What is so striking about verse 2?

3. What is so remarkable about verse 3? (remember Genesis 3?)
4. What will that be like? And how is this possible? (vs.4-5)

What/why is this so certain? (vs.6-7)

4. What is verse 11 asserting?

Comprehend

1. How does this passage connect godly living with godly knowledge?
2. How does this passage adjust what many people believe about 'sanctification'? (in particular look at the tense in verses 9-10, and what they reveal about 'sanctification')
3. In what sense has God done all the 'sanctifying' and we must work hard at our 'sanctification'?

Contact

1. What do you find hard about this 'sanctifying' process?
2. What is good in this?
3. Name one practical thing you can do to apply this passage?
4. What is one surprising truth you learned from this passage?

Study 3: Colossians 3:12-17

¹² Therefore, God's chosen ones, holy and loved, put on heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, ¹³ accepting one another and forgiving one another if anyone has a complaint against another. Just as the Lord has forgiven you, so also you must *forgive*. ¹⁴ Above all, *put on love*-- the perfect bond of unity. ¹⁵ And let the peace of the Messiah, to which you were also called in one body, control your hearts. Be thankful. ¹⁶ Let the message about the Messiah dwell richly among you, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, and singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, with gratitude in your hearts to God. ¹⁷ And whatever you do, in word or in deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

Colossians 3:12-17

Comprehend

1. Read the passage.
2. Who is being talked to from verse 12? How does this flow through the passage as a whole? How is this a different 'feel' from verses 1-11?
3. What is the command in verses 12-13? And how are these necessarily 'community' things?
4. What binds all this together in vs.14?

What controls the community in vs.15?

What is also commanded in vs.15?
5. As this community exists, what must 'dwell richly among' them? How? And why? (vs.16—see also Col.2:6-7; 1:23)

4. What does Paul command in verses 4-5, and why?
5. What does Paul command in verses 6-7, and why?
6. What does Paul command in verses 8-9, and why?
7. In verses 10-14, Paul turns to community again, and uses it to display two things he has learned—what are they, and why?

Consider

1. What/who are God's people to 'rejoice in'? Why? (perhaps look at Phil.3:20-21)
2. Do you think we are known for being 'gracious', 'thankful', 'peace-able', not 'anxious'? Why/why not?
3. What do we think about?
4. When, are, can we be content?

Contact

1. What is so good about this type of life? What is so attractive about it?
2. Why do you find it hard? Why do you find it attainable?
3. How is this type of anxiety-free, thankful, contented life tied to being a citizen of God's kingdom?

Study 5: Philippians 4:1-14

So then, in this way, my dearly loved brothers, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord, dear friends. ² I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to agree in the Lord. ³ Yes, I also ask you, true partner, to help these women who have contended for the gospel at my side, along with Clement and the rest of my co-workers whose names are in the book of life. ⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! ⁵ Let your graciousness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. ⁶ Don't worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses every thought, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. ⁸ Finally brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable-- if there is any moral excellence and if there is any praise-- dwell on these things. ⁹ Do what you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you. ¹⁰ I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last you have renewed your care for me. You were, in fact, concerned about me, but lacked the opportunity *to show it*. ¹¹ I don't say this out of need, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. ¹² I know both how to have a little, and I know how to have a lot. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret *of being content* - whether well-fed or hungry, whether in abundance or in need. ¹³ I am able to do all things through Him who strengthens me. ¹⁴ Still, you did well by sharing with me in my hardship.

Philippians 4:1-14

Comprehend

1. Read the passage.
2. What does the 'so then' in verse 1 refer to? (hint: look back at Phil.3:20-21)
3. This passage is full of so many pithy and memorable sayings/commands. But notice, what does Paul encourage in verses 2-3?

6. How must everything be done? And what attitude should be displayed? (vs.17)

Consider

1. What is good about God's design for his community?
2. What is hard about God's design for his community?
3. How is this type of community multi-generational?
4. What drives this community? And what forms it?
5. How is this type of community different to so many communities in our town?

Contact

1. Pick one of the things commanded in vs.12-13... write down what you find easy about it... and what you find hard about it... and what you find good about it... and then write down one way to display it this week.
2. What do you think the 'peace of the Messiah' and the perfect bond of love might look like in our church community?
3. How do verses 16-17 affect how we gather?

Study 4: 1 John 1:8-2:8

⁸ If we say, "We have no sin," we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ If we say, "We have not sinned," we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us. ^{2:1} My little children, I am writing you these things so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father-- Jesus Christ the righteous One. ² He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not only for ours, but also for those of the whole world. ³ This is how we are sure that we have come to know Him: by keeping His commands. ⁴ The one who says, "I have come to know Him," without keeping His commands, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. ⁵ But whoever keeps His word, truly in him the love of God is perfected. This is how we know we are in Him: ⁶ the one who says he remains in Him should walk just as He walked. ⁷ Dear friends, I am not writing you a new command, but an old command that you have had from the beginning. The old command is the message you have heard. ⁸ Yet I am writing you a new command, which is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining.

1 John 1:8 - 2:8

Comprehend

1. Read the passage.
2. To whom is John writing? (look at 1:1-4)

How does this change how we read this passage?

3. What are we told about 'sin', 'confession', 'forgiveness' and how this is all possible in 1:8-2:2?
3. In 2:3-6, how do God's people show that they 'know' God, and are known by him?

In these verses disobedience to God's commands is a sign of what?

4. What type of command is this, in vs.7?

What type of command is this, in vs.8?

How have these people already heard this before? (vs.7)

Consider

1. Why do you think God's people might say 'We have no sin?'
2. What is so good about 1 John 2:1-2, and encouraging when it comes to fighting sin in our lives?
3. What is good—and confronting—about 1 John 2:3-6?
4. Why do you think we struggle, as God's people, with the way in which this passage mixes grace and obedience?

Contact

1. What do you find hard about sin? How is this passage an encouragement to you?
2. What do you find hard about obedience? How is this passage an encouragement to you?
3. What is good about 1 John 2:8?