

“New Life in Christ – Please God!”

As we consider this sermon series’ theme of “New Life in Christ” and examine our Scripture Reading, it is helpful for us to first look at its conclusion and then to dive into the middle section of the text. So, let’s review **verses 13 and 14**, *“He [God] rescued us from the power of darkness and brought us safe into the Kingdom of His Dear Son, by whom we are set free, that is, our sins are forgiven.”* Our Divine Parent revealed our rescue from the “power of darkness” – from death and despair, along with how we are safely brought into the New Faith Relationship with God – “into the Kingdom” of the Son of God, Who “set us free” – declared and accomplished forgiveness for us. As the Apostle Paul explained to the Galatian Church in the Scriptures for the past few weeks, we are no longer prisoners to the Old Testament Law because of what God has done through Jesus Christ. This freedom is God’s Doing – a powerful expression of our Divine Parent’s Agape – Self-Giving and Sacrificial Love for us. We do not deserve God’s Forgiveness – it is not earned but is given by God as a Gift – Grace. As mentioned in last Sunday’s sermon, this Grace of God goes against the common public view and expectation, which claims one must earn forgiveness by following the Jewish Law and its requirements. Instead of saying certain people are rejected and unacceptable to God because of who they are, as was claimed by Jesus’ legalist adversaries, we are to welcome and agape love all people.

Amber Penney wrote an article titled, “What Does It Take to Please God? *No matter what I do, it doesn’t feel like enough.*” In the article, she described her struggle to believe God’s Grace had made her acceptable to our Divine Parent, since society’s message is just the opposite. Penney shared, “I tried my hardest to live out what I believed. I had a quiet time every morning. I prayed often. I memorized Scripture. I led a small Bible study group. And I never missed Sunday school or church. But it never seemed like I was doing enough, and I kicked myself for it.”

She asked herself, **“What would it take to please God? What else did I need to do?”**

Providing how she came to a new understanding, she explained, “One day I asked my pastor these questions, and he had some encouraging words:

‘If you’re a Christian, God *is* pleased with you,’ he said. ‘It sounds like you’re looking at your relationship with God as a to-do list. That’s what’s stealing your joy.’”

Penney continued, “He pulled out his Bible and turned to Galatians. He told me how the people in the Galatian church felt a lot like me.” Her pastor told her, “Some people convinced the Galatians they had to keep a list of rules, too. So Paul wrote them a letter to remind them that God accepted them by grace, not because of anything they did.”

Later in her article, Penney wrote, “I think what I lacked in the first few years of my Christian life was the understanding that God is infinitely pleased with me, not because of what I do but because of who I *am* — his child. Through his grace, I am ‘hidden with Christ in God’ (Colossians 3:3). That means when God looks at me, he doesn’t see my sin, he sees the perfection of his Son.” (“What Does It Take to Please God? *No matter what I do, it doesn’t feel like enough.*” by Amber Penney as reported at ChristianityToday.com / IgniteYourFaith.com)

Since our Forgiveness, New Faith Relationship with God, and the New Life in Christ are not earned by us but given to us out of God’s Agape Love for us – as a Gift – Grace, why do you and I need to be concerned about pleasing God? Perhaps the simple answer is because we respond to God’s Agape Love with our own agape love for our Divine Parent, for one another, and for all people. Indeed, it is natural for us to do pleasing things for God in our New Life in Christ.

Jumping into the middle of today's Scripture Paul wrote in **verse 10a**, ***"Then you will be able to live as the Lord wants and will always do what pleases Him."*** What is pleasing to our Divine Parent?

Before we look at some positive expressions of pleasing God, let's consider some activities, which are not pleasing to our Creator. The violent events of this past week and other situations of violence, which have been reported during the last few years, lead us to wonder if our Divine Parent is pleased. Along with the tears of the families of the police officers, who were murdered or wounded, and the tears of the families of the two black men, who were killed in Louisiana and Minnesota, I believe our Divine Parent is also shedding tears of grief. However, God is saddened not only by the deaths and serious injuries of those, who experienced those violent acts, but is also gravely displeased by our whole society and world, which seem to encourage and support the continuation of violence! Having many good people with a multitude of guns during the sniper's murdering spree did not prevent the 5 peace officers from dying when struck by the many bullets fired from the rifle designed to be used for warfare. Both of the two black men carried guns for their protection but that did not stop them from being killed by the policemen in the Minnesota and Louisiana deadly force police actions. God is not pleased by this senseless violence.

Looking for the positive things we are called to do in the living of our New Life in Christ – those activities, which are pleasing to the Divine Parent, Paul informed the Colossians that he prayed God's Spirit would fill them with the knowledge of God's Will and with wisdom and understanding. Then, Paul specified in **verse 10b**, ***"Your lives will produce all kinds of good deeds, and you will grow in your knowledge of God."*** Unfortunately, our Pew Bible translators chose to use the word "deeds", instead of the actual literal translation of the word for "fruits". Paul's reference to the Colossians' lives producing "all kinds of good fruits" and them growing in their "knowledge of God" infers their New Lives in Christ produce "all kinds of good fruits" through following God's and Jesus' example of living – expressing – doing agape love. If one lives agape love, then his or her actions will help others, instead of doing harm to the other.

Jesus indicated this when he challenged the Law's food commandments and told the crowd in front of the Pharisees and the Teachers of the Law in **Mark 7:20-23**, ***"It is what comes out of a person that makes him unclean. For from the inside, from a person's heart, come the evil ideas which lead him to do immoral things, to rob, kill, commit adultery, be greedy, and do all sorts of evil things; deceit, indecency, jealousy, slander, pride, and folly – all these evil things come from inside a person and make him unclean."*** The reason Jesus singled out those negative and evil actions was because they bring harm to the other person – do not agape love him or her. As quoted in today's Call To Worship from Luke 10:25-28, Jesus pointed out how even the Old Testament Law recognized agape loving God with our all and our neighbor as ourselves are of the greatest importance. Further, Paul verified the laudable living of agape love by the members of the Colossian Church when he recalled their original teacher's description of them in **verse 8**, ***"He has told us of the agape love that the Spirit has given you."***

Paul pointed to the importance of pleasing our Divine Parent and the special gifts God offers us, so we live pleasing God, when he wrote of the Colossian Church in **verse 9**, ***"For this reason we have always prayed for you, ever since we heard about you. We ask God to fill you with the knowledge of His will, with all the wisdom and understanding that His Spirit gives."*** Additionally, Paul prayed for the Colossian Church and us in **verses 11-12**, ***"May you be made strong with all the strength which comes from His glorious power, so that you may be able to endure everything with patience. And with joy give thanks to the Father, Who has made you fit to have your share of what God has reserved for His people in the kingdom of light."*** Let us recommit ourselves in our living of the New Life in Christ and to our using God's gifts of strength, patience, and endurance to please our Divine Parent as we agape love everyone with whom we interact. Let us joyously give thanks to God for Forgiving us, Making us fit to be in the New Faith Relationship with God, and enabling us to receive full citizenship in God's Kingdom, while we live the agape loving New Life in Christ! Amen.