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THE LETTER OF ST. PAUL TO THE COLOSSIANS (VII)
"Exhortations and conclusion of the letter"

The Apostle continues with his exhortations regarding what the Christian life should look like for the church in Colossae:

"Bear with one another and forgive one another if anyone has a complaint against another; 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 the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, as you teach and admonish one another in all wisdom, and as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God. 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." (Col 3:13-17)

We know how important forgiveness is for a fruitful life in community. When this forgiveness is granted by God, it should spread as peace throughout the congregation. In response to Peter's question, Jesus also admonished us that we should forgive our brother, virtually always. It is important to understand this. If we are not willing to forgive, we remain, in a sense, in a position of accusation. If this stance becomes more and more hardened, then the *"accuser of our brothers"* (Rev 12:10) will take pleasure in it.

It is precisely the forgiveness of sins that God grants us through the sacrifice of His Son that strips the accuser of the weapons he directs against us humans. Even if a brother who has actually done something against us has not yet asked for forgiveness, we should work on our hearts so that we are always able to grant forgiveness.

"Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them. Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged." (3;18-21)

Here, the Apostle presents us with a set of household rules showing how a harmonious family life, as God intends it, should be structured. Today, people react very sensitively when they hear about a wife's submission to her husband. This runs counter to the spirit of the times, in which even in the Christian world the sense of family is in danger of fading. Other "parallel lifestyle models" have become too deeply entrenched in public thought and in practice.

Subordination is often misunderstood, and perhaps sometimes even practiced incorrectly. It concerns the different roles, and thus also the different natures of men and women, which are designed to complement one another. In the world of the Apostle at that time, it was taken for granted that the family occupied a central place, that the woman, especially as wife and mother, had her role, and that the man was more involved in maintaining external relationships. He therefore assumed social responsibilities and corresponding positions. The woman supported this order and submitted to him while managing the household, often with many children.

Men are called upon to love their wives and treat them accordingly. In this way, the loving relationship between husband and wife becomes a source of strength both for the children and for the man in his social role.

The natural submission of children to their parents, as well as the exhortation to fathers to deal wisely with them, complete the picture of the family as Paul envisions it. In this context, it must be emphasized once again that Paul always refers to the Lord so that family life may unfold in accordance with His will.

Before the apostle concludes the letter with personal messages and greetings, he offers the church some final advice, accompanied by a request for prayer for himself and his fellow workers.

"Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving; and pray for us also, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison, that I may make it clear, as I ought to speak. Conduct yourselves wisely toward outsiders, making the most of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer every one." (Col 4:2-6)

Paul never fails to remind the believers to be grateful to God for all that He has done for the church. Gratitude is indeed the key to allowing the heart to open ever wider to God and for love to grow. Likewise, persistent prayer maintains and deepens our connection with the Lord.

The Colossians are to make the most of the time God has still granted them on earth. This is a reminder that is also of great importance to us. We can work for our own salvation and for the salvation of many people when we entrust ourselves completely to God.

Paul also draws our attention to outsiders. We are to treat them with kindness. Our words should be seasoned with truth, for in this way we will be able to answer everyone and bear witness to the One who loved us even unto death.

Reflection on the Daily Reading:
https://en.elijamission.net/imitating-the-apostle/

Reflection on the Daily Gospel:
https://en.elijamission.net/detachment-from-money-2/