

“Identifying God’s Chosen People” Colossians 3:12-17, Sermon Notes
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Saving Grace Bible Church
July 28, 2019
Morning Worship Service

“So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience;¹³ bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.¹⁴ Beyond all these things *put on* love, which is the perfect bond of unity.¹⁵ Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful.¹⁶ Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.¹⁷ Whatever you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.” (Col. 3:12-17 NAU)

Introduction

As we come back to the study of God’s Word, we are going to take a look at Colossians Chapter 3 this morning

The Book of Colossians is one of the prison epistles. Paul wrote it while incarcerated in Rome

- Epaphras had found Paul in Rome and was ministering to him
- During that time Onesimus is spotted and encouraged or instructed to return to Colossae
- And with Onesimus, and a letter in hand, Tychicus comes to Colossae to inform the Church about what is happening with Paul and how God is using him

In this letter Paul takes the opportunity to minister to the Church. He is writing to protect the church from error and to encourage the Church to faithfulness

One of the things that Paul does in this letter is inform us about what a Christian looks like

- This is important for us to consider

We are tempted to think Christians are those who talk a certain way

- There are those who say “if the Lord wills”
- And they speak about hearing God speak to them
- And they talk about Jesus and the gospel and the cross

Or Christians are those who do certain things or stay away from certain things

- They go to Church
- Read their bibles
- Stay away from ungodly influences

Today Christians are being identified by various political ideologies

- Christians vote for a particular party

- Or they are Pro-Life
- Or they are concerned about particular social and economic concerns

Or others have identified Christianity by being a part of a particular denomination

Look unbelievers could be and do all of these things.

- An unbeliever can talk about praying to God. Many I know have when life has been hard for them
- An unbeliever may align with a Christian's political views
- An unbeliever may even keep certain practices and yet not be a Christian

So we want something more significant to help us gain assurance and know that we are in Christ

Because there is confusion about what evidences that someone is a Christian and because there are plenty of caricatures of Christians, it is helpful that we understand what God says a Christian does

Secondly, I am compelled to look at this section of scripture because of the increasing number of high profile defections

- There are those who at one point claimed to be of God and who are now openly walking away from the faith
- Men who were pastors
- Men who were offering spiritual counsel and advice who are now happy to deny the Christ they once proclaimed

These are confusing to people because we assume that if this person fell away then what is going to happen to us?

- I want you to know passages like this give us a warning sign
- You can tell when a car is swerving that it is losing control and is about to crash
- You know when someone is wobbling on a bike that they are about to fall
- The same is true in the Christian life. When these evidences are lacking you know there is trouble on the horizon
 - This is why we teach these things so that we can warn others and ourselves of the dangers ahead

Thirdly, I wanted to look at this passage because it helps solve a theological tension

- People often struggle with the Doctrine of Election
- Some struggle with understanding how God can choose some and not others. They struggle with believing that God would not save all
 - Some have abandoned the faith because they cannot reconcile their fears with God's Word
- This text does not address that problem so we will save that problem for another day
- The other problem with the doctrine of election is the concern of whether or not we are elected
- God does not put a watermark on the elect

- There is no instant tattoo demonstrating that we are an elect Child of God

No rather there are marks of the regenerate that are evident in our lives as we are drawing nearer to Christ

Lets look at our text this morning Colossians 3:12-17

“So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; ¹³bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. ¹⁴Beyond all these things *put on* love, which is the perfect bond of unity. ¹⁵Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful. ¹⁶Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. ¹⁷Whatever you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father” (Col. 3:12-17 NAU)

Now in this text Paul gives us 5 Characteristics of the Elect of God.

- Or we can say that Paul gives us 5 characteristics of Christians

- 1. Christians are Loving by Nature vs 12-14**
- 2. Christians Manifest a Peaceful Disposition vs 15a**
- 3. Christians are Filled with Gratitude vs 15b**
- 4. Christians Sanctify their Minds vs 16**
- 5. Christians are Devoted to Christ vs 17**

Of these the first 4 are commands in the original and the last is an implied command. We can call the 5th characteristic a summary of the first four. It will make sense as we complete our little survey of this section

Body

Now before we look at these characteristics let me also add that these things don't make you a Christian. You don't do these things to make yourself a believer

- Because you are a believer you will practice these things
- To be a believer you must see your sin, your helplessness, your guilt before God and turn to Christ and believe upon Him
- You must confess your sin
- You must believe upon Christ as the only source of salvation. That only in Christ, as Col 2 says, have our sins been taken out of the way and nailed to the cross
- You believe in God that He has equipped you now with a new life to live for His glory chapter 3:1-4
- And now only in Christ you believe you have the power to overcome the world because you now live in newness of life

As a result of your faith in Christ you are free from the penalty of sin
Because of the work of God you are able to believe and depend upon God
Because of the new birth you are able to do all God commands
So now it is time to walk in faith

And here in our text is the way a Christian lives:

1. Christians are loving by nature:

Now Paul starts here with the first of 4 commands

- There are 4 imperatives governing this text
- The imperative is the mood of command

Paul starts here in verse 12 with the command of put on

- The idea is cloth yourself
- Take on the character
- Cloth yourself with it

By commanding us to put this on it is safe to say that this is something we have to work at. It will not just happen

- We must work at putting on these qualities because they are not naturally what we turn to
- Nor are they modeled around us
- They may also be mocked and ridiculed by certain people or in certain contexts

These qualities have to be worked on in order for us to practice them.

He tells us why we are to put them on in verse 12 "As the chosen of God, Holy and beloved"

- Here is the motivation for us
- We are the chosen of God
- We are His holy ones, His beloved people

Some have argued that because God loves us, we can live any way we want. Or God loves us no matter how we live

- Paul gives us a different perspective here
- He says because we are elect of God, holy and beloved, this is how we ought to live
- We live in this way Because of God's love
- So God's love does not lead us away from holiness and Christian virtue but towards it

Now notice the loving virtue that Paul Points out here:

Notice then the characteristics of those who are chosen of God, holy and beloved . . .

Compassion

Heartfelt compassion. Love from the inner most being. A great capacity for love. This is the type of love that springs up from within. It isn't superficial. It is deep and sacrificial. It is the type of love you have when you see a child suffering. It is the type of love you have when you see a victim of a horrific accident or natural disaster

- Friends this is hard to put on. This means that God wants us to have a heartfelt love for others
- God wants us to have a deep internal love for those who are suffering with sin around us
- God wants us to be driven to sacrificially serve those who are unlovely because of sin's gross distortions. We need to have a heartfelt compassion even for our enemies
- Imagine the person who grates you the wrong way. Imagine the person who has harmed you the most. Paul says here we are to have compassion towards them even while they are in their sin
- But you say Pastor Wragg you do not understand what they have done to me? Oh really do you mean to tell me that they have harmed you more than you have harmed Christ? Were you not a mocker and blasphemer before being saved? Did Christ have to die for your sins? Are you telling me your enemy harmed you more than you harmed Christ?
- Friends we have no excuse we are commanded to show tender hearted compassion towards others

Kindness

Generosity towards others. It has been expressed as showing mercy. But we need to understand first of all that this characteristic is a fruit of the spirit Gal 5:22. Secondly, it is to be a natural part of who we are

- You see tender hearted compassion is extended to those who are distressed while kindness is to be expressed to all people at all times.
- This characteristic again is not dependent upon someone else's actions. This kindness is 100% dependent on our decision to show favor towards others despite their deserving it
- Parents you show this kindness to your kids when despite their foolish behavior you graciously supply for them
- Husbands and wives you show this kindness to your spouse when you show them favor
- It is the idea of showing lavish generosity
- The pouring out of favor

Humility

Humility or modesty Phil 2:3, Eph 4:2, 1 Pet 5:5; lowliness this is the idea of placing ourselves low. Not thinking more highly of ourselves than we ought to think

This is Phil 2:3 material

The great example is Jesus Christ, even though he was God and had all the rights of God he did not think equality with God was a thing to be grasped and took of the form of a man. Christ with all the power and glory of God took on the role of servant.

- This is what we are talking about here. Are you a great leader in your home? Then serve those around you. Let others stand up and praise you. Let your ears wilt if they ever hear your tongue expressing self-glory
- Are you deeply spiritual, do you memorize large sections of scripture at a time, do you pray for weeks at a time, can you preach to multitudes? It is best that your praise comes from God. You do not need to show us your greatness you need to model your example of humility. Let God marvel at your devotion He sees all these things
- Humility is cultivated by seeing yourself as God sees you
- When we see God as the source of all things we are not inclined to exalt ourselves.

Gentleness

2 Cor 10:1 the gentleness of Christ. This is the willingness to suffer injury and not inflict it on others. It too is the result of the spirit of God living in us as it is a part of the fruit of the Spirit. This type of selfless sacrifice is not part of the natural man

- Imagine in your marriage having been harmed by your spouse. Most people when they have been harmed by their mate launch attacks of their own. Before we know it there is a full out war
- The bible says **Proverbs 15:1** "A gentle answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger"
- This is gentleness on display, instead of lashing out in response to evil words you speak gently
- Parents be careful our kids will test us in this area and we need to be ready to walk in the spirit

Patience

This is long suffering and endurance. It never loses heart with someone's foolishness. It does not quickly fail. It bears up and endures until the end. This is patience and long suffering

- This means when our kids fail for the 1000 time we are there to help
- It means when our spouse sins again we are not giving up on them
- This means that we seek their good even when they have lost their hope

Now all of these hurt but there is more:

Forgiving

We are to be lavish forgivers

"bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you" (Col. 3:13 NAU)

This verse itself is worthy of a full sermon

- First Paul says we are to be bearing with one another
- The implication is that we are going to hurt and offend
- We should not be surprised when offenses happen

- They will
- Sometimes the offenses we be personal
- At other times they will purposeful
- Still other times they will be accidental

Some offense will come by clashing

- Personalities – loud vs quiet; soft vs hard; direct vs indirect
- Genders – Men and women view things differently – We spend our whole lives trying to get the other party to figure out what we are trying to say
- Age – young and the old clash – style of music, volume or music, pace of movement
- Maturity – young and old in the faith; personal experiences – many who have suffered a long time have a totally different perspective on life than those who are naive and thus people clash
- Expectations – people to act in a particular way or say a particular thing

When these offenses happen, we are to bear with one another and forgive offenses lavishly

- Bearing with is enduring with someone
- To continue to come along side of them
- The natural tendency is to pull away
 - We cannot give into this
 - We have to keep bringing the person along

And whatever the complaint we are to be forgiving

- The implication is that we cannot hold on to anything
- We must be forgiving generously
- We must be helping others be set free

The example is the lavish work of Jesus Christ

- Just as He suffered so we suffer
- Just as He was unfairly treated so we embrace being unfairly treated
- Just as He was endured and lavishly forgave so must we
- Jesus is the perfect example for us when we want to wallow in self-pity over how hard it is to love certain people

Because the Lord has forgiven we must forgive. We are the benefactors of His great forgiveness and should also share the gracious gift with others

- Listen you can forgive and then help them grow by confronting the sin and calling them to repentance
- As they repent the two of you will be reconciled

Loving

Now you say Pastor this whole point was about being loving by nature but you have not talked about love

“Beyond all these things *put on* love, which is the perfect bond of unity” (Col. 3:14 NAU)

Literally the text reads, “And beyond all this love”

- The verb in verse 1 is carried over and implied here
- The idea is put on love

And notice how Paul states it here: And above all

- All that he has mentioned is subordinate to this idea
- Be loving
- Be a gracious outpouring of God’s love

Conduct yourself in the love of God

- Love by keeping His commandments in 14:15
- Love by serving God’s people
- Love by fellowshiping with God’s people
- Love by sacrificing yourself
- Love by preserving God’s people

When you do this, Paul says this is the perfect bond of maturity, or unity

- Literally the idea here is maturity. Love leads to perfection
- Love leads to what is right

Christians then, the elect, are marked by a virtuous life of love

- The decline of love can be traced back to the death of virtue

People living for themselves will not love. Love who are walking in Godly virtue and regularly clothing themselves with love

2. A Christian Manifests a Peaceful disposition vs 15a

“Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body;” (Col. 3:15a NAU)

Here the command is simple. Do not be filled with turmoil but be filled with the peace of Christ

- Have you ever seen someone who is running from one argument to another?
- Or a person who is moving from one uncertainty to another?
- Or a person who is living in constant unrest?

They need to be encouraged to rest in God. They are to entrust themselves to God

- We can get fearful in so many ways

- Even now in the life of our Church
 - Can we take on another missionary?
 - Will we have enough money to build our new facility?
 - Do we have too many staff pastors
 - Do we need to change something about our ministry?
 - Did our elders respond properly to certain worries?
 - What if they make mistakes . . .
 - What if things don't go well . . .
 - What if . . .

on and on the list goes

- Listen we need to rest in faith in Christ
- There are a lot of things in life where we move forward in faith
- There are a lot of times we don't know what God is going to do but we keep moving forward in faith and God richly blesses us

We need to live in such a way that we are not filled with fear and turmoil but the peace of Christ

- Christ will supply for our needs
- Christ will answer any false word spoken about us
- Christ will bring an end to our suffering
- Christ will bring about His glory in and through us
- Our enemies will not be allowed to do anything God has not permitted for the testing and growth of our faith
- And God may often lead us through suffering to prepare us to receive His great rewards. Otherwise the greatness of the reward might cause us to be proud and turn away from God.
- So let the peace of Christ rule

By that I mean have a faith filled disposition that entrusts itself to a faithful God who cares for us

- By this I mean is take your fears to God
- By this I mean believe what He has promised. Fill your mind with the promises of God and do not allow your heart to doubt God
- When you do this you will be able to say as the hymn writer:

When peace like a river attendeth my way, when sorrows like sea bellows roll, whatever my lot, thou has taught me to say, it is well, it is well, it is well with my soul

When your family has died in shipwreck and you are able to write a song like that and sing praises to God, even through tears of pain, the peace of God is ruling in your heart

3. The Christian is filled with Gratitude

“Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful.” (Col. 3:15 NAU)

When all is said and done we ought to be the most thankful people

- We have been given so much
- We have so much and we have been given so much that it keeps distracted from the source of all good things

We ought to regularly be giving thanks to God

- Thanks for how He uses people to help us
- Thanks for His work in us
- Thanks for His provisions
- Thanks for His faithfulness
- Thanks for His patience
- Thanks for His mercy and forgiveness

We ought to regularly give thanks to God for all that He has done in and through us

- The command is be thankful
- Again the implication is that we have to work at this
- It will not come naturally. It is something we have to strive to do and practice doing it.
- And maybe the more we receive the harder it is for us to be thankful because we become accustomed to the gifts

This is where it is helpful to remember that we cannot do anything apart from God and His work

- You know we probably do ourselves more harm in this area
- We are afraid to tell someone we are thankful for them and their contribution
- We don't want it to get to their head
 - We want them to be able to get through the double doors after we talk to them so we don't share how grateful we are

But we do ourselves a disservice when we are not grateful

- We fail to remind ourselves of how important people are who have helped us when we are not grateful
- We fail to recognize our weakness when we are not grateful
- We foster an entitlement when we are not grateful
- We kill joy when we are not grateful

Honestly the only real appropriate response to a lavish and incredible gift is gratitude

Paul commands us to be grateful

- So we look for grateful people
- This is a mark of God's election of them

Two more:

- 1. Christians are Loving by Nature vs 12-14**
- 2. Christians Manifest a Peaceful Disposition vs 15a**

3. **Christians are Filled with Gratitude vs 15b**
4. **Christians sanctify their Minds vs 16**
5. **Christians are Devoted to Christ vs 17**

4. **Christians are marked by sanctified minds vs 16**

“Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.” (Col. 3:16 NAU)

Again this is a command

- “Let the Word of God dwell in you richly”

The idea here is that we are to be filling our minds with the truth

- We are to be dwelling on the things of God
- We are to be delighting in the truth and captivated by it
- We are to be filled up with it

We need more and more of God’s Word

- We need the simplicity and clarity of the truth
- We need the purity of the truth
- We need to see the power of the truth
- We need to see the undeniable wisdom of the truth
- The Word of God is a light to our path
- The Word of God is food to our soul
- The Word of God is an anchor to our faith
- The Word of God is the source of life
- The Word of God makes us wiser than our teachers
- It brings healing to our misery
- It blesses and enriches us

It sweeter than honey and most costly than fine gold

- It is the most precious treasure we can seek

This is why we work hard to teach you God’s Word every time we come together

- Now Paul give us three ways this Word is manifested in our midst
 - A. Teaching
 - B. Admonishing
 - C. Worship

Teaching

This is in our teaching sound doctrine. We talk theology and we support it with the Word of God. We teach God's doctrines as revealed in His word

- We do not shy away from teaching the full counsel of God
- We seek to address all that God addresses in His Word
- We teach the truth

Admonishing

- We counsel
- We disciple
- We confront sinful living and sinful thoughts or words
- This is always done according to the Scripture
- The authority is God's Word
- We put the Word of God on one another's minds

Worship

- Singing to one another in Psalms and Hymns and Spiritual Songs
- Our singing reflects hearts and minds filled with the truth
- The more we study the more we should respond in song
- The Psalms were songs of theology
- We sing to remind us of the depth of theology found in God's Word
- This is what happens when the Word is filling us

A person who avoids learning, will not receive instruction, is also a person who is not signing in praise and worship

- The mark of a believer is a sanctified mind which is filled with praise and adoration to God

Finally, our last point

5. A Christian is devoted to Christ

"Whatever you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father." (Col. 3:17 NAU)

There is no command in this verse.

- The "do" is implied
- I think that this is the summary statement of the Christian life
- Whatever we are saying or doing it is in the name of Christ giving thanks through Him to God the Father

The whole Christian life is a reflection of grateful living for the one who has redeemed us

- Everything we do is the result of a gratitude to the one who has elected us and made us holy and beloved

Notice here he says all that you SAY and DO

- Those careless words will be judged
- Those thoughtless interactions are to be brought into subjection to Christ

The whole Christian life is summed up as this, whatever you are doing let Christ be on display in your words or actions

- Give for the glory of Christ
- Serve for the glory of Christ
- Love for the glory of Christ
- Be filled with peace for the glory of Christ
- Be grateful for the glory of Christ
- Let the word of God sanctify your minds for the glory of Christ

So that God the Father receives praise

- Listen the Christian is filled with giving God praise
- And only through Christ will God receive our praise

For the Father sent the Son

- The Father chose us and gave us to the Son
- So that only through the son will the father receive appropriate praise

Now listen even God's enemies will be brought into subjection. And they will give honor

- But we don't come as humbled enemies we come to God as grateful Children praising God

Let these truths fill your heart and be marked in your life