

Clothed with Christ

Bible Background • COLOSSIANS 3:1-17

Printed Text • COLOSSIANS 3:5-17 | Devotional Reading • PSALM 107:1-9

Aim for Change

By the end of the lesson, we will: GAIN an impression of principles of living in Christ; IMAGINE how, because we follow Christ, our life principles and behavior are different from the rest of society; and EVALUATE our treatment of others and make changes where necessary as demanded by a life lived in Christ.

In Focus

Most creatures in the animal kingdom shed something periodically. The most commonly known from among them are snakes. Most of us have gone to a museum and seen a snakeskin that has been shed and abandoned by the snake. It usually is hard and shaped like the snake. If the snake decided to go back into that skin, it would probably have a difficult time. Once the skin is discarded, it becomes hard and it does not fit anymore.

We can imagine a similar situation with a butterfly trying to return to its cocoon. It would likely damage its beautiful wings trying to get back into the hole of the cocoon. The butterfly no longer fits. Dogs and cats that shed usually leave their hair all over the place. It would be odd and foolish for a pet owner to gather up the hair and then attempt to paste it back on the dog or cat. That hair is dead, old, and it no longer belongs on the animal.

In our lesson today, Paul exhorts the church at Colossae to take off the old life and put on the new one in Christ. Just like the above examples, the old life no longer is appealing nor does it fit our new life in Christ.

Keep In Mind

“And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.” (Colossians 3:14, KJV).

Words You Should Know

A. Anger (Colossians 3:8) orge (Gk.) – Feeling of discontent, displeasure, or indignation.

B. Wrath (v. 8) thumos (Gk.) – Sudden and passionate outburst of extreme displeasure.

C. Malice (v. 8) kakia (Gk.) – General feeling of evil, a vicious disposition, prompting one to injure one’s neighbor.

Say It Correctly

Concupiscence. kon-KYOO-pi-sens

Scythian. SITH-e-en

KJV

Colossians 3:5 Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:

6 For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience:

7 In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them.

8 But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.

9 Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;

10 And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:

11 Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.

12 Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;

13 Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.

14 And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.

15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.

16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

17 And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

NLT

Colossians 3:5 So put to death the sinful, earthly things lurking within you. Have nothing to do with sexual immorality, impurity, lust, and evil desires. Don't be greedy, for a greedy person is an idolater, worshiping the things of this world.

6 Because of these sins, the anger of God is coming.

7 You used to do these things when your life was still part of this world.

8 But now is the time to get rid of anger, rage, malicious behavior, slander, and dirty language.

9 Don't lie to each other, for you have stripped off your old sinful nature and all its wicked deeds.

10 Put on your new nature, and be renewed as you learn to know your Creator and become like him.

11 In this new life, it doesn't matter if you are a Jew or a Gentile, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbaric, uncivilized, slave, or free. Christ is all that matters, and he lives in all of us.

12 Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.

13 Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others.

14 Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony.

15 And let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of one body you are called to live in peace. And always be thankful.

16 Let the message about Christ, in all its richness, fill your lives. Teach and counsel each other with all the wisdom he gives. Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to God with thankful hearts.

17 And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father.

The People, Places, and Times

Barbarians. The Greeks used this as a term for those they deemed uneducated; that is, those who did not speak Greek or follow a Greek pattern of living. In the Old Testament, the word indicated the inhabited world in contrast to the wilderness where the nomads roamed.

Scythian. A native of Scythia, the ultimate of barbarism, a savage. The Greeks despised the Jews; a barbarian scorned a Scythian. They were considered the lowest of the low.

Background

In the final two chapters of Colossians, Paul challenged the Colossians to make practical application of the doctrines he had been preaching. Paul believed Christians should not just know the truth and be able to defend it, but that truth must be lived out in their daily lives as well. The pagan religions of Paul's day said little or nothing about personal morality. A worshiper could bow before an idol, put his offering on the altar, and go back to live the same old life of sin; what a person believed had no direct relationship with how he behaved. No one would attempt to correct the person for his behavior. The Christian faith brought a whole new concept into pagan society. Faith in Christ meant being united with Him. If Christians share His life, they must follow His example. If Christ lives in the believer, he or she cannot continue in sin. Thus, Paul concluded his letter to the Colossians with some specific instructions about Christian conduct.

At-A-Glance

1. New Life in Christ (Colossians 3:5–9)
2. Renewal Procedures (vv. 10–11)
3. Walking New (vv. 12–17)

In Depth

1. New Life in Christ (Colossians 3:5–9)

Paul speaks forthrightly about the demands of the new life and our urgent need to curb all the degrading tendencies of the old nature. The old life is dead. The believer has to let it die. We are not simply to suppress or control evil acts and attitudes; we are to wipe them out completely. Exterminate the old way of life. The action is to be undertaken decisively, with a sense of urgency. It suggests a vigorous, painful act of personal determination. Paul is calling for a slaying of evil passions, desires, and practices that root themselves in our bodies. Paul goes on to list sins. In the New International Version of Colossians 3:5, "impurity" is not just physical impurity but uncleanness in thought, word, and act. "Lust" essentially means a feeling or experience from an uncontrolled desire. "Greed" suggests a ruthless desire in pursuit of material things. This attitude is identified with idolatry because it puts self-interest and material things in the place of God. Paul warned that God's judgment would fall on the disobedient. He reminded the Colossians that this is the way they used to live. He said this ungodly life belongs to the past and that the Christian should be done with it. Paul firmly encourages getting "rid" of this past life (from v. 8, NIV). The phrase "but now" marks a new beginning. The Christian is to take off the filth of the past. Paul specifically names anger, rage (a sudden and passionate outburst of displeasure), malice, and slander (insulting talk against one's fellow man or woman). Filthy language is "bad or abusive speech, foul-mouthed abuse." The sin of falsehood is singled out. Lying is given separate treatment and given a strong exhortation: "Do not lie" (from v. 9, NIV). The Christian is to have a totally new life change in which he or she has put off the old self with its practices, habits, or characteristics and put on the new. This is like the resurrection of Christ, who pulled off the grave clothes and then left them behind in the tomb. Christians now have a new life in Christ; the old deeds and desires must be put off.

2. Renewal Procedures (vv. 10–11)

Paul talked about becoming a new creature in Christ and taking off the old self, but how can that be done? Bad habits and ungodly conduct is not simply going to fall away like dirty clothes. Paul used the word "knowledge" to explain how a person changes (v. 10, KJV) — not through knowledge of more rules and laws but the knowledge of Christ. Our minds must be renewed. As believers grow in

knowledge of the Word of God, when we learn, read, and study His Word, God's Spirit changes us. God transforms Christians by washing old thoughts, desires, and intentions out of our minds and replacing them with new ones. In verse 11, Paul gives examples of this kind of mind change when he speaks about human distinctions and differences. In Christ, there are no nationalities (neither Greek nor Jew), religious differences (circumcised or uncircumcised), and no cultural differences (Barbarian or Scythian). The Greeks considered all non-Greeks to be barbarians and the Scythians to be the lowest barbarians of all. Yet, in Jesus Christ, a person's cultural status has no advantage or disadvantage. Nor is economic or political status helpful ("bond nor free"). Slaves should try to get their freedom, but if they do not, that does not make them any less in Christ's sight. All of these kinds of distinctions belong to the old person and the old way of thinking.

3. Walking New (vv. 12–17)

Christians are chosen, set apart, and loved by God. These are privileges God gave to His people in the Old Testament that are made available to Christians as well. Because God gave these blessings to His people, Paul encourages them to walk in compassion (a tenderness expressed toward the suffering), in kindness, goodness, graciousness (a sweet disposition), in humility (thinking humbly of oneself), in gentleness (delicate consideration for the rights and feelings of others), and in patience (self-restraint that allows one to bear injury and insult without resorting to retaliation). It also means bearing with and forgiving one another ("putting up" with things we don't like). The final word is "love" (from v. 14, NIV). Love is unconditional giving and caring that goes beyond the call of duty. Peace is another characteristic that Paul exhorts the believer to put on. Not just peace with each other but peace of mind, unruffled by difficulties and confusion. As usual, Paul weaves an attitude of thanksgiving in this section of the letter. Thankfulness to God and to our brothers and sisters promotes inward and outward peace. The Colossians are told to allow the word of God, the Gospel, and the messages about Christ to be a rich treasure for them that becomes so deeply implanted that it controls thinking, attitudes, and actions. When God's Word is deep down in our hearts, Christ's presence causes us to conduct ourselves in a wise manner, influenced by God's insight and instruction. Paul writes that God's Word dwelling in our hearts will also cause us to sing psalms from the Old Testament and hymns and spiritual songs based on the New Testament truths. Paul concludes with "Do all in the name of the Lord Jesus" (from v. 17, KJV). We are to always act as Christ's representatives. Christ is to live through God's children, those who have trusted in Him for their salvation and are eternally thankful.

Search the Scriptures

1. "Mortify ... your _____ ...; fornication, _____, inordinate affection, evil _____, and covetousness, which is _____" (Colossians 3:5).
2. "_____ not one to another" (v. 9).
3. "_____ one another, and _____ one another ... even as _____ forgave you" (v. 13).
4. "And whatsoever you do ..., do _____ in the _____ of the _____" (v. 17).

Discuss the Meaning

1. How do we constantly "seek things above" when we have to live and participate in daily activities here on Earth?
2. How do we get rid of old habits and lifestyles and put on new ones?
3. Why are forgiveness and love two key elements in a life that pleases God?
4. How can an attitude of thanksgiving help us in our relationship with God and with people?

Liberating Lesson

In our society today, for many people, lying is common. Far too many people believe that if the truth is

going to hurt, make you uncomfortable, ruin your reputation, get you in trouble, or cause you to pay money, then lying is OK. We justify lying or find creative ways to do it by calling it something else. In popular culture—TV, movies, politics, etc.—how does lying manifest itself and how do we participate? In the midst of this kind of society, the Christian is exhorted to tell the truth. Lying in any form is considered part of our old life and needs to be discarded.

Application for Activation

Complete two lists with characteristics each from your old life and from the new as described in Colossians 3:5–17. Remember, you cannot change yourself or your ways. Pray and ask God to change you in His own timing and in His own way to see positive changes in your life.

Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

More Light on the Text

Colossians 3:5–17

5 Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:

6 For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience:

Paul calls the Colossians to “mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth.” The word “mortify” is the Greek verb nekroo (nek-RO-o), which means “put to death,” “to slay” or “to kill.” “Mortify” is used metaphorically. It suggests that action be taken to end sinful habits. There is a paradox between verse 3, “Ye are dead,” and verse 5 (NKJV), “Therefore put to death your members.” On one hand, Paul is saying that the Colossians are already dead. On the other hand, he is asking them to put their members to death. Reconciling the two seemingly contradictory statements has never been an easy task among believers. We can best explain this by understanding the concepts of grace and working faith. The moment we confess our sins, we are forgiven. At that moment, we are dead to sin. All of the baggage is still there and needs to be dealt with. That is the beginning. A transformative process of the inner person begins through the Spirit.

However, the Holy Spirit does not work in a vacuum, and neither does He force Himself on anyone. He works in a heart totally yielded to the Lord and solicits our cooperation. As He works in us and we start to obey Him, we begin to unload all of the baggage of sin that easily besets us. We begin to live Christ-like lives and all the worldly rudiments begin to dissipate. Our attitudes change, and new ways

of life and behaviors begin. A change in character becomes noticeable. Our desires, passions, and aspirations change. We begin to “seek... (and) set (our) affection on things above, not on things on the earth” (vv. 1–2). This process is called sanctification and is the work of the Holy Spirit. However, conscious and deliberate self-involvement is needed—and this is working faith. Paul says to the Philippians, “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” (Philippians 2:12). Paul calls it putting to death “your members which are upon the earth” (Colossians 3:5). What members of our bodies, or sinful characteristics, need to be slaughtered? “Fornication” (Gk. *porneia*, por-NI-ah) includes all manner of illicit sexual relationships outside of marriage. It embraces all types of sexual immorality, including adultery (Matthew 5:32; 19:9; 1 Corinthians 7:2; 10:8) and incest (1 Corinthians 5:1). Fornication does not apply only to single people, but to all sorts of sexual perversion. “Uncleanness” (Gk. *akatharsia*, ak-ath-ar-SEE-ah) is used to describe whatever is the opposite of purity, including thoughts and motives. The emphasis is on sexual immorality of all kinds (Matthew 23:27; Romans 1:26–27; 6:19; 2 Corinthians 12:21; Ephesians 4:19; 5:3; 1 Thessalonians 2:3; 4:7; 2 Peter 2; Jude 4). In Colossians 3:5, the phrase “inordinate affection” (Gk. *pathos*, PATH-os) describes the unnatural, unrestrained, and out of control passion and lust for anything (1 Thessalonians 4:5). This is called “vile affections” in Romans 1:26. Paul writes concerning the practice and result of apostasy: “For this cause God gave them up. unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature.” This refers to sexual relationships between women. “Evil concupiscence” (Gk. *kakos epithumia*, kak-OS ep-ee-thoo-MEE-ah) is any strong desire associated mainly with lust (John 8:44; Ephesians 2:3). Here again, it has the connotation of illicit sexual immorality. “Covetousness” (Gk. *pleonexia*, pleh-on-ex-EE-ah) is a greedy desire to have more or have what belongs to someone else.

The first four sins mentioned in Colossians 3:5 (also listed in Romans 1:24–29 and 1 Thessalonians 4:3–7) can be related to sex outside of its proper context, which is marriage. The fifth sin mentioned is covetousness. This is the underlying evil that summarizes the rest of the vices. It is based on the worship of self rather than God and eventually replaces the Lordship of Christ. For this reason, it is idolatry. Why does Paul use the phrase “your members” to describe these vices? John Calvin stated that these vices are called “members since they adhere so closely to us” (Exposition of Colossians and Philemon, 145). “Member” is a translation of the Greek word *melos* (MEL-os) which means “limb or a member of the human body.” It is used figuratively here to describe some of the sins that have become attached to us, as limbs are attached. They have become such a part of our bodily experiences that we have become used to them as inherent parts of our being. Paul calls on the Colossians, not only to mutilate the vices, but to kill them. Having listed the evils, Paul reminds and warns the Colossians of the consequences of indulging in them. These sins invoke the wrath of God against those who indulge in them. God’s “wrath” (Gk. *orge*, or-GAY) refers to the coming judgment day (see Romans 2:5–11; Ephesians 5:6; 2 Thessalonians 1:8–10; Ephesians 2:2–3).

7 In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them.

8 But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.

9 Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;

In verses 7 and 8, Paul compares the Colossians’ former lifestyle with their present status as those who have been raised with Christ. In their state without Christ, they walked and lived in those vices. But now they have been regenerated through the death of Christ. Therefore, those vices should be done away with. Paul now uses a different metaphor from the one used in verse 5. Instead of putting the sins to death, he urges them to put off the vices as one would do with wornout garments. “Put off” is from the Greek *apotithemi* (say ap-ot-EETH-ay-mee), which means “to put away,” or “to cast off.” This concept is more serious than the language seems to convey. It is “to discard,” something never

to be worn again. The phrase in verse 8, “but now ye also put off all these,” means that the believers need to discard the vices listed in verse 8: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, and filthy communication. Here is a list of five vices related to attitudes toward others that the Colossians were to discard. “Anger” is sometimes translated “wrath,” and the words are used interchangeably. The New Unger’s Bible Dictionary describes “anger” as, “the emotion of instant displeasure and indignation arising from the feeling of injury done or intended” (Unger, 62). Additionally, “wrath” is defined as “more of an abiding and settled habit of the mind . . . with the purpose of revenge” (Unger, 1373). Paul also includes “malice” (Gk. kakia, kak-EE-ah—“evil” or “wickedness”) in the list of things Colossians ought to discard. It is interesting how these sins are related. Extended anger develops into wrath. When wrath is not dealt with, it develops into malice. When anger is allowed to develop into a grudge, and a grudge becomes hatred, it is sin. That is why Paul says in Ephesians, “Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Neither give place to the devil” (Ephesians 4:26–27). There are two additional vices that relate to the use of the tongue: blasphemy and filthy communication. These vices start from the inside the heart and manifest themselves outwardly through the mouth through blasphemy and foul language. The word “blasphemy” is from the Greek blasphemia (blas-fay-ME-ah), which means “evil speaking.” Although it is typically used exclusively in reference to evil words against God (Matthew 12:31), it also refers to speaking evil or slander against people (Ephesians 4:31). By “filthy communication” (Gk. aischrologia, ahee-skhol-og-EE-ah),

Paul refers to the use of foul language or vile conversation, the same idea Paul expressed in Ephesians 4:29 and 5:4. Lying must also be discarded. Paul imperatively says: “Lie not one to another” (Colossians 3:9). This is the same idea as the preceding verse and is included in the things they needed to put off. In Ephesians 4:25, Paul says, “Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another.” The same reason is implicit here: Because you are members of the same body, do not “lie” (Gk. pseudomai, PSYOO-dom-ahee).

10 And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:

Continuing the clothing motif, Paul instructs the Colossians to “put on the new person” (v.10). To “put on the new person” is to clothe oneself with the new nature, which results from our spiritual union with Christ through His death and resurrection (2 Corinthians 5:17). The “new human,” Paul continues, “is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him” (Colossians 3:10). The phrase “renewed” (Gk. anakainoo, an-ak-ahee-NO-o) indicates growth and changing from the former corrupt state into a new kind of life. This is comparable to earthly relationships. When a Christian receives Christ, they begin a new relationship. As that relationship with Christ deepens, the believer’s life changes. Thought processes change and new choices are patterned according to Christ’s. Therefore, the standard of the renewal of the new human is God’s image. The next idea we can glean from Scripture is that God’s original plan of creating man and woman in His image was for them to have the full knowledge of living according to God’s moral and spiritual likeness. Humanity severely damaged the image at the Garden of Eden through sin, which we inherited. Now God renews us after His original pattern and gives us the true knowledge through the new Adam—Christ Jesus (2 Peter 1:3–13).

11 Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.

This progressive transformation into the image of God does not distinguish between racial, religious, cultural, and social boundaries. Jews, Greeks, slaves and free people are equal. Paul is aware of the divisions in his time. The partition between the Greek and Jew was practically unbreakable, especially from the Jewish end. The Jews would look down on the Greeks or Gentiles as inferior and would not acknowledge them. The word “barbarian” (Gk. barbaros, BAR-bar-os) refers to all foreigners who were

non-Greeks and unfamiliar with Hellenistic culture. The Greeks regarded them as the lower class of society. “Barbarians” were also regarded as uncultured, crude, and rough. A “Scythian” (Gk. skuthes, SKOOthace, meaning “rude or rough,”) was said to be part of the lowest class of barbarians. They were inhabitants of Scythia, north of Palestine. Attitudes have not changed much, have they? Discrimination based on class, race, gender and other factors remain in society and in the Church. Paul condemns all of these mindsets and allows no room for such discrimination within the society of his time. The same is true within the community of believers today. How might Paul react if he were to visit our congregations today? Paul sums it up by saying, “but Christ is all, and in all”—meaning He is all that matters. He lives in all believers, whether Greek or Jew, “barbarian” or Scythian, slave or free person. He does not discriminate based on racial, cultural, or social background. His Spirit works in every heart yielded to Him, renewing and progressively transforming them daily “in knowledge after the image of him that created him” (v. 10).

12 Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;

Paul returns to the familiar clothing theme: “Put on therefore, as the elect of God.” Believers should live according to the new humanity. Paul uses a series of phrases to describe who believers become when they receive Christ. First, they are “the elect of God” (Gk. eklektos, ek-lek-TOS), or “the chosen ones” of God. Paul clarifies that salvation is based on God’s choice or election. Christians are called “chosen” or “elect” of God. Secondly, they are “holy” (Gk. hagios, HAG-ee-os). This means “set apart ones,” “special” or “saints.” All true believers are holy in the sight of God. Paul affirms the Colossians’ position before God, a special place that they and all Christians now share with the ancient covenant people of Israel (see Isaiah 4:2–3; Hosea 2:23; 1 Peter 2:9; Romans 9:25).

After affirming who they are because of their relationship with God through Christ, Paul now enumerates the qualities expected of them—things they are to put on. The list here counters the vices in Colossians 3:8, which they are to put off. While the list in verse 8 consists of sins that harm people, the list here implies a desire to care for the wellbeing of others. While the former is self-oriented, the latter is centered on others. It is interesting to note how these qualities are paired and overlap. The first pair is “bowels of mercies” and “kindness.” “Bowels of mercies” is figuratively used here and describes the spirit of compassion in the heart of God’s elect. The word “bowel” (Gk. splagchnon, splangkh) refers to the intestines. “Bowel” is another word for stomach or the abdomen. Used here, it means “pity,” “sympathy,” or “an inward affection.” Bowels were regarded as the seat of more violent passions of both anger and love. For the Hebrew, it is the seat of tender affections, kindness, compassion, and benevolence, which are usually associated with the heart. “Bowels” and “mercies” (Gk. oiktirmos, oyk-tir-MOS) go together. This word can literally be translated as “bowels in which compassion resides.”

The word “kindness” (Gk. chrestotes, khray-STOT-ace) is synonymous with bowels of mercies and expresses moral goodness. The next set of qualities the Colossians are asked to wear as garments are “humbleness of mind” (Gk. tapeinophrosune, tap-i-nof-ros-OO-nay) and “meekness” (Gk. praotes, prah-OT-ace). These qualities convey the spirit of gentleness and modesty. Humility is a virtue that was despised in the heathen world and is in opposition to pride. But to the Christian, humility is an honorable quality to strive for and one Christ exhibited throughout His earthly ministry (Philippians 2:3).

Paul also highlights “longsuffering” (Gk. makrothumia, mak-roth-oo-MEE-ah), which is patience or “slowness in avenging wrongs.” It characterizes a person who refuses to yield to rage in the face of wrongs done to them. Patience is almost exclusively associated with our relationships with other people. However, it is applied to self in relation to our attitude to the world system and life as a whole. One needs patience to succeed in life.

13 Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.

In close association with the five virtues listed above is a pair of activities required of all believers. The first virtue, “forbearing” (Gk. anechomai, an-EKH-om-ahee), means “to hold oneself up against, to bear with or to endure.” This word means to tolerate or put up with something negative. Paul adds the second activity, “forgiving one another,” and gives a scenario of what can constitute forgiveness. Paul says that “if any man have a quarrel against any,” we should follow in the supreme example of Christ. Christ taught His disciples to pray thusly: “Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors” (Matthew 6:12). He sets no limit on the number of times we are to forgive one another (Matthew 18:22). All virtues are apparent in Christ’s life—a heart of compassion, humility, meekness, longsuffering, endurance or forbearance, and forgiveness. When a believer manifests these virtues, he has put on Christ (Romans 13:14).

14 And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.

15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.

Love is the cord that binds together all the other virtues: “Love is the lubricant that enables the other virtues to function smoothly (Galatians 5:6, 13)” (Exposition of Colossians and Philemon, 158). Love is the essence of living. This fact is made clear in Colossians 3:14. After putting on the eight virtues above, we are to put on the outer cloak as the bond of perfectness or as the girdle. “Perfectness” (Gk. teleiotes, tel-i-OT-ace) means “completeness.” The word “bond” (Gk. sundesmos, SOON-desmos) is like a joint tie or ligament by which things are bound together, especially uniting the human body together.

Paul clarifies that we are forgiven of our sins and redeemed from slavery. This peace not only brings harmony within individuals, it brings harmony and oneness within the corporate body of Christ. “Let the peace of God rule in your hearts” means we should allow the “peace” (Gk. eirene, i-RAY-nay) of Christ to “rule” (Gk. brabeuo, brab-YOO-o) our hearts (v. 15). The “peace of God” means either “the peace that Christ gives” or “the peace that belongs to Christ.” Paul adds that believers should be “thankful,” an expression he used frequently throughout the epistle. A grateful heart produces a peaceful mind. Conversely, an ungrateful heart produces grudges and disharmony within oneself. This also overflows to others, breeding discord and quarreling within the body of Christ.

16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

The word of Christ should “dwell” (Gk. enoikeo, en-oy-KEH-o), “inhabit” or “make its residence” within our hearts. The word “dwell” means that the word of Christ should influence one’s life and activities. While the peace of Christ should control our lives, His Word influences our activities; both should make their habitation within our hearts. The Word of Christ dwelling within our hearts will produce all the wisdom we need in life. It will influence and govern our thoughts, deeds, and motivations. It will help us to make good and rational decisions in life. When we are abundantly equipped with all wisdom through the Word of Christ, we will be teaching and “admonishing” (Gk. noutheteo, noo-thet-EH-o), “warning,” “cautioning” or “reproving” each other gently through psalms, hymns and spiritual songs.

17 And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

“Do all in the name of the Lord Jesus” refers to His revealed will in our relationship with Him. It also results in subjection to His authority for His glory. Paul adds, “giving thanks to God and the Father by him.” This is in appreciation for what God has accomplished for us through Christ’s redemptive sacrifice. Sinners receive forgiveness and are accepted by God the Father as sons and daughters. Our lives are to be motivated by the love of Christ in us with the purpose of honoring and glorifying His name. Our lives and activities must be governed by the “peace of Christ” in our hearts (v. 15, NIV), influenced by the Word of Christ dwelling richly in wisdom (v. 16), and motivated by our relationship with Christ—with eternity in view.

Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY

Setting Aside Doubt
(Matthew 14:22–33)

TUESDAY

Getting Rid of the Old Ways
(Romans 6:12–19)

WEDNESDAY

Living in Love
(1 John 3:10–17)

THURSDAY

Forgiving as You Were Forgiven
(Matthew 18:21–35)

FRIDAY

Living in Peace
(John 14:25–29)

SATURDAY

Living in Gratitude
(Psalm 107:1–9)

SUNDAY

Living as God's Chosen Ones
(Colossians 3:5–17)