

A SENSE OF TRUE BELONGING / Sunday School- May 16, 2010

Unifying Topic: A CHOSEN COMMUNITY

Lesson Text

I. A Loving Community (Colossians 3:12-13)

II. The Growing Virtue (Colossians 3:14-15)

III. A Peaceful, Thankful, Dedicated Community (Colossians 3:16:17)

The Main Thought: Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering. (Colossians 3:12, KJV).

Unifying Principle: Sometimes people are confused about what it means to be chosen. What does it mean to be chosen by God? Paul teaches that our calling includes kindness and humility, forgiveness, love, the peace of Christ, thankfulness, and worship.

Lesson Aim: To help students to create a loving, peaceful, thankful, dedicated Christian community.

Life aim: To teach how Christians are to love each other with kindness, forgiveness, and compassion: to allow Christ's peace to rule in our hearts, to encourage each other, and to dedicate ourselves to service for Christ.

3:12 Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;

3:13 Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.

3:14 And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.

3:15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.

3:16 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.

3:17 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.

HISTORY:

Colossians 3:1-4 Principles Of Christians Living:

3:1 If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. 3:2 Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. 3:3 For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. 3:4 When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. Paul had been telling the Colossians that man-made religion appears very wise, but has no value against fleshly indulgence. Their dependence should be a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. The believer's life is a life risen with Christ. This means that we are in union with Christ; whatever Christ experienced, we experienced. When He rose from the dead, we rose with Him, we conquered death, and we are raised to new life. ¹If the Colossians have died to self and been resurrected with the life of Christ, then they will **seek** those things that pertain to the kingdom of heaven, and not things down here on the earth. But we are also looking at something else. We are looking at Christ sitting at the right hand of God who is the Head over us, Colossian 1:18.

The first priority of Christians walking in the spirit is: do not seek the wealth of the world, political positions of authority in the world for self; or even corporate positions of power and authority in the world for self. Instead, seek the things pertaining to the kingdom of heaven, which pertains to the coming millennial kingdom of Christ on the earth. Set your affection on heavenly things and not earthly things.

1. First, seek those things above, where Christ sits on the right hand of God.

2. Second, set your "*affection*" (*phromēite*), your mind on things above and not on things on the earth.

We change our behavior by letting Christ live within us, so that He can shape us into what we should be rather than merely what we might want to be in ourselves. Paul says that we have already died with Christ; that is, co-crucifixion, and co-resurrection, with Christ, spiritually, therefore we are locked together with Christ in security. Christ is now our life and gives us power to help us live, and He gives us hope for the future. This is where our real lives are lived—through Him. And one day, Christ will be returning to earth. And if you are a Christian, whether your body died or was "*Raptured*", you will return with Him. You will be revealed in glory, even as He will be.

¹ <http://www.ffruits.org/firstfruits02/bookofcolossians.html>

<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>

Put Away:

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

TERMS:

- Mortify: put to death quickly.
- Fornication : illicit sexual intercourse between unmarried partners; similar to, but not identical with adultery.
- Uncleanness: impurity in thought and speech, dirty mindedness, indecency.
- Inordinate affection: depraved passion, uncontrolled lust, an evil desire.
- Evil concupiscence: wicked craving and sensualness beyond natural expression.
- Covetousness: greedy desire to have more; entire disregard for the right of others.
- Idolatry: the worship of false gods, putting things in place of God.

Since we have died with Christ, we need to consider our bodies as unresponsive and dead to the idolatrous pursuit of evil (the things listed above). The flesh must be kept in the place of death. It must be kept nailed to the cross. This is never easy, so we must make a conscious, daily decision to live according to God's values and to rely on the Holy Spirit's power. Paul tells the Colossians to "*mortify*" or put to death the "*members*" (those animal impulses that are earthly) in you; the old flesh nature. Therefore consider the members as alive to God and dead to sin. The point is: There is the fleshly nature, and there is the spiritual nature. The contrast is easy to understand. The Spirit urges us to put to death, "*sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.*" God does not regard sin with indifference. Sin is sin whether you call it "*little*" or "*big*."

3:6 For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience:— It is because of these things that come from the old flesh nature that the wrath of God will come upon the children of disobedience (unbelievers), that they once walked in and practiced. The Greek word for "*wrath*" means anger associated with punishment. The verse is clear that God will punish His children who are disobedient.

3:7 In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them. Yes, you used to be immoral and greedy, lustful and impure. But now as a Christian, it is not to be present in your life. Does this mean that you are not tempted? That your body doesn't have immoral desires? That your mind isn't tempted by money? Not at all! However, your response to those temptations should be very different than they used to be. It's a choice! Put them to death (cut away) and do not entertain them!

Put Off:

3:8 But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.

TERMS:

- Anger: uncontrolled temper, a deep seated emotion of ill-will, a settled feeling of habitual hate, revengeful resentment.
- Wrath: boiling agitation, fiery outburst of temper, violent fit of rage, passionate outbreak of exasperation.
- Malice: vicious disposition, depraved spite, willful desire to injure, cruel malignity which rejoices in evil to others.
- Blasphemy: slanderous talk, reviling, evil speaking, railing insults, reckless and bitter abuse.
- Filthy communication: obscene speech, shameful speaking, foul-mouthed abuse, dirty epithets, unclean stories.

The sins we had to put away in verse 5 were of the body. Now, we have the sins that are done with spiteful actions toward others. Paul exhorts them to "*put off, lay aside, and rid themselves of*" the sins that they now practice and he lists these sins as follows: temper, angry outbursts, ill-will toward fellow Christians, malicious gossip, and vulgar speech coming out of their mouths. This list is a bit different from the one Paul gave directly before it. These next things have to do with spiteful actions toward others, which are also things that characterize the affinities of the lost children of disobedience of the domain of darkness. They are transgressions of Christ's Law of Love.

Paul was appealing to the commitment the believers had made in their baptism and urging them to remain true to their confession of faith. The point is: these Christians had already put away many sins in their lives, but they still had many sins in their lives that they still needed to put away from themselves. So, when people see these things coming from Christians, what do you suppose they think? ("*There's not much difference between him and most everyone else in the world*"). But we are different because of the Spirit of God within us to rely on!

So, the way the Spirit is telling us to deal with these things in our current every day state of salvation is that we are to cast them off now, in the same manner as the old man was cast off in the past by Christ. You see this is not works for salvation. This is working out the salvation that you already have in the Spirit, with awe and reverence for what you see, in the Spirit, in the heavenlies. The word Paul uses for "*cast them off*", is a Greek word that is used for taking off dirty clothes and throwing them aside. Paul's point is that we are in the new man of the last Adam, which is Christ. We have already put off the old man, which of course is the old self, which represents the body of the first fallen Adam. In salvation, we are in the one new man which is the body of Christ, that Christ established in Himself. Paul explains that Christ "*in Himself*" makes all groups of people whom He saves, "... *into one new man*," Ephesians 2:15.

Don't Lie:

3:9 Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;— One temptation that we find is so easy to give into is to lie to one another. We lie for many reasons: to protect our reputation, to make things easier for ourselves, or to stay out of trouble. Paul is calling this to the attention of the Colossians, telling these Christians to stop lying to each other, since they had put off the old man or the old nature. The Colossian Christians are to tell the truth in every situation. If he does slip and tell a lie, he is convicted by it, repents and gets cleansed by the Holy Spirit. Many Christians today will tell a lie without the slightest feeling of guilt. Many Christians do not even comprehend that lying is a grave sin. Because, the truth of the matter is, when we lie to one another, we're really lying to God. There is no difference in a little lie or big lie, a lie is a lie.

Put On The New Man

3:10 And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:— In addition to "*putting off the old man*", the Colossians had also "*put on the new man*", which is a reference to the new life in Christ. The new man is the person you are, after being saved. The new man is received, from Christ, at the time of the second birth, and is the regenerated man, the new nature. The new man is the nature of Christ and the new man must be renewed in knowledge in the believers who have decided to follow Christ. Renewed speaks of a continuous action. The crisis of salvation leads to the process of sanctification. It affects both character and conduct to be fashioned after the image of Jesus Christ. It requires perseverance and tenacity to realize the salvation of the soul, and it is not complete until the point of death or rapture. The battle of the new man occurs in our minds. That is why your mind must be renewed in the full knowledge of the New Covenant in Christ. And this is the action that we would have to take. When we renew our minds with God's revealed knowledge, we hold our heads up high and dwell on heavenly things; we practice, review over and over His Word; and we learn and obey His Will. The "*new man*" does not lie but speak the truth. It is the old man or the old flesh nature that causes us to lie. The new man that is being conformed to the image of Christ is trustworthy. You can count on Him to speak the truth. Becoming more like Christ will take a lifetime.

No Distinctions

3:11 Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all. As a Christian becomes conformed to the image of Christ, all distinctions (differences) disappear. National distinctions disappear as there is neither Greek nor Jew. Jews referred to all people outside the nation of Israel as Greeks. In this day we would say there is neither Jew nor Gentile for the Christian conformed to the image of Christ. There are no religious distinctions (i.e., circumcised or uncircumcised) for the Christian that is in Christ. We are all one when we walk in Christ. There are no cultural distinctions when we are in Christ. Anyone foreign to Greek culture was a Barbarian, and a Scythian was a wild, savage nomad. Cultures disappear when Christians become conformed to the image of Christ. Economic or social distinctions (i.e., slave or free) disappear when Christians put on the life of Christ. It is important to understand that this verse is referring to Christians who are realizing the salvation of their souls and not to every Christian. Many immature Christians still cling to these normal human distinctions based on national, religious, cultural and socioeconomic factors. Christ is absolutely everything.

LESSON:

Colossians 3:12-13 A Loving Community

Continue To Put On

3:12 Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;—

TERMS:

<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>

- Bowels of mercies: a heart of compassion, mercy in action, and heartfelt sympathy for the less fortunate.
- Kindness: thoughtfulness of others, unselfishness, sweetness of disposition, gentleness, and graciousness. This fruit of the Holy Spirit and refers to the inner attitude.
- Humbleness of mind: This refers to the outward expression of that inner attitude. Humbleness is modesty, it places self last, and regards self as least (Eph.2:8).
- Meekness: not weakness, but lowliness; delicate consideration for others. It is the opposite of arrogance and self-assertion. Pride has no place in the Christian life.
- Long-suffering: patient under provocation. This denotes the restraint which enables one to bear injury and insult without resorting to retaliation. It accepts the wrong without complaint. Long-suffering is an attribute of God (Rom.2:4) and a fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal.5:22).

These are the attire of the new man; his spiritual wardrobe of practical righteousness; the characteristic that are to be of the earthly nature. These things are now true of all who come to faith in Christ under the New Covenant. The command in this verse is to be obeyed at once. And it is to, believers who are called:

1. Elect* of God, i.e., chosen of God.
2. Holy, i.e., set apart by God and for God.
3. Beloved, i.e., loved by God.

These are the attire of the new man; his spiritual wardrobe of practical righteousness. These things are now true of all who come to faith in Christ under the New Covenant.

NOTE:

* ² Notice that in this trinity of favor (that God gives us in His Son) the first thing that Paul calls us is "the elect." This is the translation of the Greek word "eklektoi." The word is derived from the preposition, "ek," and the verb, "lego." These two words combine in the Greek to mean "pick out." The noun form is, "eklektos." It refers to people who have been picked out. So, when you hear the statement, "I elected you." The equivalent is, "I picked you out" To say, "You are 'the' elect," is to say, "You are 'the' picked out." This is important, so stay with me. This word does not mean that God merely identified you. It means God selected you, and so your identity is that you are elect. But there is more: To be elect always means to be selected unto something. Whenever you elect someone, you are electing them unto, or "to be," something. It is like Deuteronomy, "Yahweh your God has elected you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth" Deuteronomy 7:6.

Notice that the same way we're to put off those negative things, we are to put on the positive ones. Paul exhorts the Colossians as born-again believers who have been set apart and loved by God, to "put on" the "bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering." The bowels are the intestines, the heart, the lungs and the liver, and the Hebrews considered the "bowels" as the seat of the more tender affections of kindness, benevolence and compassion. These affections are not automatic upon spiritual rebirth, but they must be "put on" as a Christian would put on new clothes that are fresh and clean. When you clean the inside, the outside will match, because what's on the inside will come outwardly in your speech and behavior. The putting off of the old man is likened to the removal of old, dirty clothing, and the putting on of the new man is likened to putting on clean, fresh clothing. We need to make a conscious effort to make changes in our character: being compassionate, kind, humble, gentle, patient, bearing with one another, forgiving, loving, and thankful.

Forbear And Forgive

3:13 Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.

TERMS:

- Forbearing one another: put up with things we dislike and get along with those who disagree. Christians can disagree without being disagreeable.
- Forgiving one another: the word forgiving (*Gr. charizoman*) is built on the same root as the word grace and means to bestow favor unconditionally. This means that the Christian will always treat the offending party graciously. The Christian not only forgives, he forgets.
- Quarrel: a cause of blame, a ground for complaint. He thinks himself angry.

The key to forgiving others is remembering how much God has forgiven you. Realizing God's infinite love and forgiveness can help you love and forgive others. We are to imitate Christ's merciful, forgiving spirit.

² <http://www.bridgewaybiblechurch.com/index.php/sermons/79-colossians-verse-by-verse-expository-sermons>
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>

Colossians 3:14-15 The Growing Virtue

Put On Love

3:14 And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. ^{3:15}And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful. If these are merely things that we are trying to follow without being saved, then they are just outward expressions of a written commandment, and so Colossians 3:13 just becomes another law list to follow in the lost flesh. They appear like the real clothing, but they are fakes. But, for us who have put on the new man in the Spirit, to put these things on in Christ is to put on Him, and so the key to what Paul is saying is that what ties all this together is the main outer robe, that is like the layers of clothing that people would wear in the time of Paul. You would have your undergarments, and over them you would have your tunic; and you would have your main outer robe that brings it all together and covers it all. On top of these things, like an outer garment, put on charity, love. Love is the basis and cloak of all the graces. The bond that binds the others together; the bond of perfection, meaning completeness; full grown and mature. The love of Christ is that beautiful outer robe that covers all the other manifestations, and brings it all together. This kind of love is not an emotion. This is action love of commitment, and caring that is stronger than emotions. In fact, it keeps on going even when emotions die or change.

³The Law of Christ of the New Covenant is love. So, the point is that though we can do all the other things, the outer love garment must be there as part of the complete outfit. We can even piously speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but if we do so, and do not have love, we are just noisy instruments making loud sounds. Even if we have the gift of prophecy, without love, we are nothing. Even if we have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, we are nothing. Even if you give all your possessions to feed the poor in a religious act, and if you surrender your body to be burned in a religious act, but do not have love, it profits you nothing (*1 Corinthians 13*). Listen, being able to do a list of religious or nice looking things does not make you manifest the King. Doing things that look like love, does not mean you are doing the love itself. It looks like you are on the throne. You think you look good, but the reality is that the emperor has no clothes. The big point with this principle is that without real, Holy Spirit love, then, you are just an actor, and acting is what anyone can do.

Peace Will Rule

3:15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful. The Christian who has the love of God ruling in his life also has the peace of God ruling in his heart. Do problems in your relationships with other Christians cause open conflicts or mutual silence? Consider what you can do to heal those relationships with selfless acts of love. Then the "*peace of God will rule in your heart.*" The word "*rule*" comes from "*athletics.*" Paul tells us to let Christ's peace be "*umpire*" in our hearts. Our hearts are the center of conflict because there our feelings and desires that clash—our fears and hopes, our distrust and trust, our jealousy and love. How can we deal with these constant conflicts and live as God wants? Paul explains that we must decide which choice will promote peace in our souls and in our churches (conflicting elements or peace)? We are to demonstrate the heart-peace which Christ demonstrated. It is a tranquility of soul which is not ruffled by adversity nor disturbed by fear. There is so much to thank God for concerning the riches of Christ. God wants us to be just as thankful for the people around us in the body of Christ. The Spirit wants us to recognize the Spirit in them too.

Colossians 3:16:17 A Peaceful, Thankful, Dedicated Community

Dwell In God's Word

3:16 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 Paul exhorts the Colossians to allow "*the word of Christ*" to dwell in them abundantly in teaching everyone (i.e., all individually) wisdom and admonishing each other in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in their hearts. The "*word of Christ*" is the manifestation of Christ, who is the Living Word. The word "*dwell*" means to feel at home. The Word of Christ is to feel at home in believers. We are to allow, "*Let*" the Word of Christ saturate us and remain in us as a rich treasure. This Word is to be the living truth giving us wisdom and not man-made traditions. This Word is used in teaching and admonishing one another in:

- **Psalms** are songs from the book of Psalms.

³ <http://www.bridgewaybiblechurch.com/index.php/sermons/79-colossians-verse-by-verse-expository-sermons>
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>

- **Hymns** are other songs of praise, and
- **Spiritual songs** are other songs that affect your spirit by faith.

The Psalms are repeated in the New Testament at least 116 times. The Psalms were filled with Messianic prophecies that declared the reality of the Messiah that was to come, and now has arrived, has given His life, raised from the dead, and now sits at the right hand of the Father as King of kings and Lord of lords. To sing these, is to sing Scripture to one another. They can be personal testimony songs where the body sings about victories, desires, fulfillment, salvation, and hope in Christ. Spiritual songs by implication are not carnal. They come from the Spirit and the Word in our hearts. Together, we give thanks to our great and glorious God. We do all of this as the one body, operating the way we should--connected--in unity—and focused.

Do In The Name Of Jesus Christ

3:17 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.

Paul sums up the point by telling the Colossians that whatever they speak or do, they should do it in the name of the Lord Jesus. This means that every word and act of a Christian should be said or done in the power and authority of Jesus Christ. When a Christian speaks or acts in the name of Jesus Christ, this means that Jesus Christ would have said the same thing or acted in the same manner. The more a Christian speaks and acts in the name of Jesus Christ, the more he is conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. This is losing one's soul or life for the sake of or on account of Jesus Christ, and will result in the salvation of one's soul at the Judgment Seat of Christ. This Christian does not speak and act in accordance with his flesh nature, but he speaks and acts in accordance with the Holy Spirit and the nature of Christ.

SUMMARY:

Paul offers a strategy to help us live for God day by day.

1. Imitate Christ's merciful forgiving spirit (3:12-13).
2. Let love guide you (3:14).
3. Let the peace of Christ rule in your heart (3:15).
4. Always be thankful (3:15).
5. Keep God's word in you at all times (3:16).
6. Do everything as though you were Jesus Christ's representative (3:17).

The passages are very clear. We "*can only do all things through Christ Jesus which strengthens us*" *Phil.4:13*. He strengthens us by the power of His Holy Spirit who dwells in us richly and gives us peace. Paul begins to show the Colossians that when their beliefs are like that of Christ rather than the false teachers, they can imitate Christ and put on as the elect of God holy and beloved. They can be guided by love to forbear and forgive one another. They can let the peace of God rule in their hearts with thanksgiving of oneness of one body, operating as a unit because they adhered to the Word of God in which they were taught. As Christians, you represent Christ at all times—wherever you go or whatever you say.

When you're placed inside of something, you grow within the boundaries of that confinement or you wither. If you have a sense of belonging to Christ's loving community, He gives you all the necessary principles to be apart of Him. He lets us know from the beginning, He chose us, we're of the elect. If we let Him, He does everything possible for us to grow in the love that's in Him; the peace that's in Him; the Word that's in Him! And whatever we do in word or deed we represent where we come from, whose we are, in the name of the Lord Jesus. But there is more: In all of this, be thankful.

APPLICATION:

What impression do people have of Christ when they see or talk with you? It is impossible to obey God if you're playing the part of the Christian Lone Ranger. You know the kind: "*I've been hurt in church, betrayed by believers.*" Love is the key to it all. We need the fellowship of other Christians. We can all learn from each other, and should never miss the opportunity to learn from another believer.