

**THE NEW LIFE**  
Colossians 3:12-17 - Part 2

**Intro:** In studying the Apostle Paul's letter to the believers in Colosse, a small town in the Roman province of Asia which was located in the area which today is western Turkey, he had never been to Colosse. But he knew some of the Colossian Christians which he had met in other cities nearby. It is probably true that Epaphras, whom Paul mentioned in chapter 1 and verse 7, and in chapter 4, verse 12, had heard the Gospel in Ephesus (which was about 100 miles west of Colosse), had been saved, and then went back to his native Colosse, preached the Gospel there, and the church was established as Colossian people were being saved.

All went well for a time, but then the Devil began to cause trouble in Colosse. And he did this through false teachers who came in corrupting the Gospel with their erroneous doctrines. Some were Gnostics who taught that Jesus was not all that the Christians had been told that he was. Others, obviously Jews, tried to get the Colossians to believe that salvation was not by grace through faith alone, but that it was necessary to observe certain dietary laws and certain feast days if they wanted to be saved. In other words they were teaching a salvation by works.

It seems that the Apostle Paul first heard about what was going on in Colosse when he was a prisoner in Rome. Paul was deeply concerned, as he always was, when he heard that the Gospel of God's grace was under attack. And so, since he could not visit Colosse because of his confinement in Rome, he wrote to them, and Tychicus (who is mentioned in chapter 4, verse 7), and Onesimus (who is mentioned in chapter 4, verse 9), took this epistle to Colosse. Colosse geographically was in a kind of tri-cities relationship with two other towns, Laodicea and Hierapolis. It seems that the false teachers who were troubling the believers in Colosse with the doctrines, may have also affected the believers in Laodicea. There is no letter addressed particularly to the church at Laodicea (except for the letter which the Apostle John wrote many years later on behalf of the Lord, the letter which is recorded in Revelation 3:14-22).

However, it is generally thought that Paul's letter to the Ephesians may have been the epistle to the Laodiceans to which he referred in Col. 4. In some of the MSS of Ephesians, the word "Ephesus" is missing. This has given rise to the idea to the idea that the Ephesian epistle was itself a circular letter intended for the same cities to which the Lord sent the book

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of the Revelation of Jesus Christ. If so, this would account for the similarity between Ephesians and Colossians, and why the Apostle Paul would have wanted the believers at Colosse to read Ephesians (as we know it). The Ephesian letter, being somewhat longer than the Colossian letter, would fill in details of the doctrine which the Colossians needed to know, and which Paul had dealt with in greater detail in the Ephesian letter.

Paul's emphasis in Colossians was on the preeminence of Christ (1:18), that He was "all" (Col. 3:11), *i.e.*, that He alone was sufficient for the salvation of all who would trust in Him, and that He, Christ, was "in all," so every believer possessed the Lord Jesus Christ as his, or her, life! The teaching of the false teachers was not only wrong, *but it was completely unnecessary!* Christ did a complete, a finished, work of salvation. He left nothing for anyone to add to what He had done in order to complete the work of salvation. And when I speak of salvation, I am using the word in its widest and grandest meaning – of justification, sanctification, and glorification! If Jesus Christ is your Savior, He is all you need to get you to heaven and to glory!

So if anyone comes to you to tell you that you need more than Jesus Christ to get you to heaven, do what the Apostle John wrote to the elect lady in 2 John. Listen to what he said:

- 9 Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.
- 10 If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed:
- 11 For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds (2 John 9-11).

The preeminence of Christ and the sufficiency of Christ are doctrines which need to be written upon the minds and hearts of believers everywhere! When the Lord Jesus was dying on the Cross, He said, "It is finished" (John 19:30). He did not mean partly finished, or mostly finished, but "finished" – totally finished! He is the perfect Savior, the complete Savior. The person who teaches that something needs to be added to Christ and His work on the Cross, is a blasphemer of the Son of God. I trust that the Lord will enable us to understand this, and never forget it. I have told some of you that Dr. William Pettingill, a wonderful Bible teacher of a couple of generations ago, wrote a brief commentary on

Galatians which he entitled, “By Grace Through Faith Plus NOTHING.” If you want to find acceptance with God, you will only find it in Christ.

Now what I have emphasized so far today, is what you will find in the first two chapters of Colossians. Beginning with chapter 3 Paul describes how a Christian should live, which is very, very important. The Bible makes it clear that once a person is truly saved, his way of living is going to be changed from what it was before. We are so closely identified with Christ that He is our life, and the desire to do God’s will and the ability to do it come to us from Christ. All three Members of the Godhead are involved in enabling us to live like Christians ought to live. But we have a tremendous responsibility in this. All through chapter 3 and into the first six verses of chapter 4, the Apostle Paul was telling the believers in Colosse what they needed to do, what they needed to be. And we are to read it as if it were addressed to the believers of Trinity Bible Church of Portland, Oregon, or whatever your location in this world might be.

He has told us beginning with verse 5 of chapter 3 that we are to “put off” the sins of which we are capable by nature. Paul did not mean that these are complete lists, nor did he mean that we are all guilty of all of these sins. But what he did mean was that these are sins which we are all capable of committing. and we are guilty of some of them.

But now we are ready to see what he said about what we are to “put on.” What we are to be finished with are the sins which are ours by our conception in our mother’s womb. What we are to “put on” are those characteristics which are to be found perfectly in Christ. They won’t be perfect in us until we get to heaven, but we all need to be headed in that direction. God has saved us to make us like His Son. And we need to be growing more like our Savior every day that we live.

Notice first, and by way of review,

## **I. HOW PAUL ADDRESSED THE COLOSSIAN BELIEVERS (Col. 3:12a).**

“Elect of God, holy and beloved.” (Explain each.) These three words are descriptive of every child of God. If they don’t apply to you, you need to make sure that they do before you can go on. A person who isn’t a Christian can’t live like he, or she, is a Christian. But what an obligation all of us to whom they do apply, are under to live as God wants us to live,

and to be what He wants us to be.

And so now we come to:

## **II. TRAITS EVERY BELIEVER IS TO “PUT ON” (Col. 3:12b-14).**

Paul meant that none of us possesses these divine characteristics. Every person has been made in the image of God, and so there may be some traces of these characteristics, but not in the way that they are to be found in God and in Christ. The Holy Spirit produces these traits in us as we walk in fellowship with Him.

The first one Paul mentioned is:

### **A. “Bowels of mercies.”**

It is true that the Greek word translated “bowels” included the intestines, but it also included the heart, the lungs, the liver, and all of the vital organs. So in saying “bowels of mercies” the Apostle Paul was saying that mercy and expressions of mercy *had to be genuine*. Acts of mercy were not to be like a Pharisee might do, to win the congratulations of men. But they were to originate from deep within a person. The word that is often suggested for us to use today would be *hearts*. When we tell a person that we love them with all of our heart, we mean that we really love them.

So “bowels of mercies” we be a *heart overflowing with mercies*.

But what are “mercies.” They are feelings of mercy with the desire, or longing, to show mercy, pity, or compassion. This word was used by the Apostle Paul when he wrote to the Corinthians calling God, “the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort” (2 Cor. 1:3). Paul in writing to the Romans said in Rom. 12:1, “I beseech you therefore by the mercies of God that . . .” In the parable of the good Samaritan, the priest did not show mercy, nor did the Levite, but the Samaritan did. And the evidence was that he did something to help the man who had been attacked by thieves, robbed, and left half dead. See Luke 10:30-37. The Lord spoke of the Samaritan as a neighbor. Then the Lord told the lawyer who had questioned him to go and do the same. Our Lord was continually meeting the needs of others, often to the extent of not even taking time to eat He was so concerned about helping others.

We all are inclined to be more concerned about ourselves than we are others. But the Lord was indicating that we need to put on that God-given trait of looking for situations where we can be of help to others. The one place that most people desperately need help is in their relationship with God, and often some act of kindness will open a needy heart to the truth of the Gospel.

### **B. “Kindness.”**

Archbishop Trench called this “a beautiful word, as it is the expression of a beautiful grace” (p. 232). In Rom. 11:22 it is translated “goodness” and contrasted with “severity.” And Trench said that it goes beyond how we speak or our outward appearance. He says that “it is one pervading and penetrating the whole nature, mellowing there all which would have been harsh and austere” (p. 233).

Paul used this word in writing to Titus when, after speaking of the sinful behavior of men who were “foolish, disobedient, deceived,” living in “lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another,” he went on to say, “But after that the kindness and love of God our Savior toward man appeared, Not by works of righteousness we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us . . . (Titus 3:3-5).

It takes the grace of God, and a lot of it, to be Christ-like in a situation where the behavior of men is so revolting to us, but where God is calling upon us to be kind. Our Lord exercised kindness when the Pharisees brought to Him a woman taken in the very act of committing adultery, telling him that Moses said she ought to be stoned. What did He say should be done to her? He told the one who was without sin to cast the first stone. And you remember result. The Lord was showing kindness.

Our third word is:

### **C. “Humbleness of mind.”**

Thayer in his lexicon says that this means “a deep sense of one’s moral littleness.” It means that we show our utter dependence upon God, that we have nothing in ourselves, but recognize that what we have has been received as a gracious gift from God.

Our Lord described Himself in Matt. 11:29 as “meek and lowly in heart.”

And it is in Phil. 2:5-8 that we have one of the greatest, if not the greatest, statement in Scripture of the humility of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Read the Phil. passage.) No one ever came from the heights that He did, not did any ever stoop as low as He did.

In contrast with our Lord, compare the Pharisees who sought the greatest seat at feasts and in the synagogue, or the disciples arguing about who was the greatest, or James and John wanting to sit on the right hand and the left hand of our Lord when He would come in His kingdom.

Jacob learned “humbleness of mind” during the twenty years he spent away from home, and coming home with the prospect of meeting Esau for the first time in all of those years. Do you remember his prayer as he anticipated seeing Esau? You will find it in Gen. 32:9-12:

9 And Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the LORD which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee:

10 I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands.

11 Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children.

12 And thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.

And the prodigal son is another illustration. See Luke 15:11-24. He left home saying, “Give me”; but he came back home saying, “Make me.”

The fourth word is:

#### **D. “Meekness.”**

This follows “humbleness of mind” because there can be no “meekness” without it. Trench defines this word “meekness” as “that temper of spirit in which we accept his dealings with us as good, and therefore without disputing or resisting” (p. 152). We all know that this is humanly impossible apart from the grace of God. A meek person is one who firmly believes Rom. 8:28. David was manifesting meekness when Shimei cursed and threw stones at him, and he told his men not to do anything to him because the Lord had told him to do it. Job manifested meekness

when he said,

21. . . Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.

22 In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly (Job 1:21-22).

But this meekness is not only before God, but also before men – saved men, and men of the world. This is what the Lord had in mind when He spoke to His disciples about turning the other cheek. See Matt. 5:39 and Luke 6:29.

But remember that we will never know “meekness” without first experiencing “humbleness of mind.” Paul listed “meekness” as a fruit of the Spirit in Gal. 5:23. I think we would all have to admit that all of these characteristics are rare among those of us who know the Lord.

The last word in Col. 3:12, and the last one we have time for today, is:

### **E. “Longsuffering.”**

We had this word in Paul’s prayer at the beginning of this epistle in Col. 1:11. It speaks of the person who is in a position to retaliate against an opponent, but who does not take that action. Our Lord was certainly in that position throughout His whole life, but His longsuffering was especially evident when He was dying on the Cross.

Paul’s appeal to the Corinthians in 1 Cor. 6:5-8:

5 I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren?

6 But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers.

7 Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?

8 Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren.

There is in everyone of us the feeling that we don’t want anyone to take advantage of us. That may be when people criticize us. Or when we buy something, and learn later that we paid too much for it, or that it wasn’t

what it was supposed to be. And so then we want to get even. And, if we do, that usually makes a bad thing worse.

**Concl:** There are three things to keep in mind as we think of the words we have been considering today.

The first is that these all find their greatest expression in our Lord Jesus Christ. He is our true Example. And we can see in considering each one of these words, that in the Lord Jesus Christ we see how they are to be.

The second thing we need to remember is that verse 12 of Colossians 3, as well as the rest of the epistle, were not written just for the Colossians over 2,000 years ago. But they are meant for us today. The standards of Christian living are just the same today that they were then. So we need to pay attention to each one of these words, and seek by the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit, that our lives are characterized by these very important words.

The third thing to remember is that we are to manifest them in our relationship with the Lord and His dealings with us. We are to behave as these words indicate in our relationships with each other in the family of God. And we are to live as these words indicate in our relationship with the people of the world who do not know our Lord and who do not know what God has ordained that the character of our life should be.

If we are faithful, trusting the Lord to make these words a reality in our lives, then God will be glorified, we are going to be more happy, more peaceful, and more contented, and there probably will be more people whose hearts will be open to listen to the message of the Gospel and to learn why we live the way we live.

The Christian life is a supernatural life, and it is only by prayer and by trusting in the Lord, that you and I will be able to live as God wants us to live. Paul has more to say, but this one verse gives us plenty to think about in the days immediately before us.