

**Jesus Christ**

**The Image**  
**of the**  
**Invisible God**

**An Exegesis of the Epistle to the Colossians**

## Study 8 The Character of the New Man (Colossians 3.12-17)

Paul urged his readers not only to divest themselves of behaviour that is inappropriate to their union with Christ, but also to clothe themselves with attitudes and actions that are appropriate. He did so to complete their understanding of their responsibilities as Christians.

### Look at Colossians 3.12-14

Paul reminded the Colossians of who they were ("those . . . chosen by God"), because an appreciation of who one is affects how he or she behaves. In doing prison evangelism, I have learned that many prisoners grew up hearing from their parent or parents that they would never amount to anything, and would probably end up in prison. Thinking of themselves as "losers," they became what they thought they were (cf. Prov. 23:7). God has *specially selected* believers, has set them apart for great things, and has made them the objects of His love. In view of these privileges, the following characteristics are only reasonable:

**Compassion** (Gr. *splanchna oiktirmou*) shows sensitivity to those suffering and in need

**Kindness** (*chrestotes*) manifests itself in a sweet disposition and thoughtful interpersonal dealings

**Humility** (*tapeinophrosyne*) means having a realistic view of oneself, "thinking lowly of ourselves because we are so

**Gentleness** (*prautes*) means not behaving harshly, arrogantly, or self-assertively—but with consideration for others

**Patience** (*makrothymia*) is the quality of being long-suffering, self-restraining. The following two qualities expand on the thought of patience.

**Bearing with one another** (*anechomenoi*) means putting up with others and enduring discomfort

**Forgiving** (*charizomenoi*) involves not holding a grudge or grievance but letting go of it immediately

**Love** (*agape*) means doing what is best for another person.

(Lenski, Richard C. H. *The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles to the Colossians, to the Thessalonians, to Timothy, to Titus and to Philemon*)

(Constable TL. *Notes on Colossians*)

All these features deal with the believer's interpersonal relationships. In interpersonal relationships especially, the life of Christ should be visible in us and love, the *agape* type of love, is the supremely important Christian virtue.

### Look at Colossians 3.15-16

Paul now elucidates four imperatives for Christ-like living. The first of these imperatives is:

**Let the peace of God rule in your hearts.** When we as Christians make decisions and choices, the peace that Christ produces in our hearts should be the determining factor. We should choose what

will result in *peace* between us and God, and also between us and one another, if such a course of action lies within God's moral will (John 14:27; Rom. 12:18).

The second imperative Paul mentions is:

**Be thankful.** This thankfulness arises from within a heart that is at peace with God

The third imperative Paul mentions is:

**Let the Word of Christ dwell in your hearts.** The "Word of Christ," used only here in the New Testament, is Christ's teachings, not only during His earthly ministry but also in all of Scripture. His Word should permeate our whole being so that we make all decisions and plans in its light.

(Harrison Op Cit)

Many saved people cannot honestly say that God's Word dwells in their hearts richly because they do not take time to read, study, and memorize it.

(Wiersbe Op Cit)

Part of the imperative of letting the Word of Christ dwell in our hearts is teaching and admonishing one another.

"*Teaching*" is the imparting of truth, and admonishing is warning against error. We should perform these activities joyfully and with song. "*Psalms*"

probably refers to the inspired Old Testament psalms. The word "psalms" implies that the believers sang them with musical accompaniment. "*Hymns*" are songs of praise and thanksgiving to God.

"*Spiritual songs*" probably refers to all types of expressions of Christian experience set to music.

"Thankfulness . . . to God" is to typify our singing, too (cf. v. 15).

(Constable TL. *Notes on Colossians*)

"It has often been noticed that the Colossian passage is parallel with Ephesians 5:18-20. In the latter passage the hymns and songs are the outgrowth of the filling of the Spirit, while in Colossians they are the result of the deep assimilation of the Word of God. In other words, the Word filled Christian is a Spirit-filled Christian, and the examination of the two passages would save us from a great deal of error on this subject. Undisciplined emphasis on the Holy Spirit is accompanied too frequently by shallow grounding in the Word of God."

(Johnson Op Cit)

Paul's fourth and final imperative is wrapped up in one simple word:

**Do.** The basic principle, as opposed to a set of specific rules, is this: We should say all our words, and practice all our deeds, in harmony with the revelation of Jesus Christ, namely: under His authority and as His followers. Acting in someone's "name" comprehends everything revealed and known about the person bearing the name. Moreover, we are to *do* "all" with thanksgiving to God. The fourth imperative is implicit here in the Greek text, but the translators have supplied it in the English text: "*Do.*"

### **Summary Statement**

When faced with a question about what the Christian should do, Paul taught that we should simply ask ourselves what conduct would be appropriate for one identified with Christ. "What would Jesus do?" is quite similar. This approach is vastly different from the legal one that provides a specific command for every situation. In this contrast we see a basic difference between the New and Old Covenants.

(Constable TL. *Notes on Colossians*)