

COLOSSIANS
Put On The Lord Jesus Christ
Colossians 3:12-17

INTRODUCTION

A little girl in her nightly prayers knelt beside her bed and prayed, "Lord, make the bad people good and the good people nice." This young girl had learned at an early age that many Christians are not nice, or at least they are not as nice as they could be and should be.

Sometimes a Christian's understanding may have a souring effect upon him. He may not do much wrong, but he is cold, rigid, negative and unpleasant to be with. He has put off certain negative, gross sins in his life but has not been able to put on positive virtues such as warmth, graciousness, sensitivity and love. Christianity is not just a list of negative taboos but it is actually putting on Christ in our experience. ***"Rather clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature."*** (Rom. 13:14).

We cannot read through the gospels without noticing that Christ was an attractive person. He was no sour puss. People loved to be around Him. Little children enjoyed His company. Christ was alive, warm, gracious and fun and He drew people to Himself. As we put on Christ by faith, Christ will draw people to Himself through us.

In Romans 13:14 when it says, ***"Rather clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature."*** It means we are to clothe ourselves (put on) the virtues, characteristics and graces of Christ. We are to pattern ourselves after Christ and mold ourselves to Christ as we seek to emulate Him in the power of the Holy Spirit. As we love Christ, obey Christ, interact with Christ, occupy ourselves with Christ, think like Christ, we begin to take on the characteristics which belong to Him. We are being conformed to Christ, being made Christlike (but not perfect) in our experience.

Augustine, who lived a very wicked life before his conversion to Christ, tells us in one of his books how he was saved. For the first 30 years of his life, he lived for pleasures of his flesh, even conceiving an illegitimate son. For some reason, he visited the home of a Christian. He was escorted to the patio-garden area, and his host had to leave the patio for some reason. Then Augustine heard a child's voice from over the fence saying in Latin, "Tolege, Tolege!" which means, "Take up and read." He looked down on the table and saw only one book, a Bible. He picked it up. Opened it at random to Romans 13, and his eyes fell on verse 14 which reads, "But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof." Immediately Augustine was convicted of his sin and soon after became a Christian.

PROPER MOTIVATIONS 2:12a

New Man: ***“Therefore”*** -- The “therefore” takes us back to what has been taught in Colossians 3:1-11. The Christian has put on the new self (man). The new man has started a new history in Christ. His old self (man) with his history in Adam has ceased. The new man still has a sin nature but is being renewed (changed, renovated). The new man is perfect in Christ as to his standing or position before God, but he is not perfect in his experience. The new man in Christ brings a lot of sin, excessive baggage and garbage into his Christian life and needs to be sovereignly renewed by the Holy Spirit. The new man in Christ is not only being renewed but he shares the resurrected life of Christ because he has been raised with Christ. Since the Christian is alive in Christ, he can put on in his experience the graces and virtues of Christ.

In my office, I have a sign which says, “Please be patient, God isn’t finished with me yet.” You see folks, I’m merely a new man in Christ who is under construction.

Chosen: ***As God’s chosen people*** -- One of the basic motivations for positive Christian living is God’s sovereign choice of the Christian to salvation. Perhaps the greatest incentive to godly living is a realization that in our unsaved states we were sinners, lost, selfish, blinded, dead spiritually and not seeking the true God of scripture. We deserved nothing but judgement and hell. But God who is rich in mercy chose to save us in Christ. He chose Christians out of a mass of rebellious humanity who did not want Him or care for Him. ***“But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth.”*** (II Thess. 2:13). Understanding God’s elective love and grace, we the elect of God, have a burning desire to love, appreciate and obey our Savior.

There are many who believe in their head the doctrine of sovereign election but have never been touched in the heart by the grace of a sovereign God. Consequently, people become proud and harsh about election instead of humbled by it with the incentive to please Christ. Election demands good works. ***“For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”*** (Eph. 2:10). Our sanctification is as much a product of our election as our justification. The elect of God follow Christ. ***“My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.”*** (Jn. 10:27).

Holy: ***Holy*** -- Holy comes from the same root word as “saints” and actually means “set apart” or “consecrated to God.” Christians are chosen and set apart to God for the worship of God and the service of God.

Loved: ***And dearly loved***, -- Christians are chosen, set apart and dear to the heart of God. God loves each Christian with His infinite love and this love is an incentive for us to love God and want to do His will.

PROPER VIRTUES 3:12b-14

Clothe: ***Clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.*** -- As new men and women in Christ, who have put off the old man with its history in Adam and put on Christ with a new history in Christ, we are to clothe ourselves with certain virtues and graces. We are to put on Christ in our daily experience to become what we already are positionally in Christ. Notice that all of these graces have to do with our relationships with people, especially Christian people.

Compassion. This is a ready sympathy, a pity, a tenderness expressed towards the suffering, the hurting and the sick.

William Barley in his commentary on Colossians says, “If there was one thing the ancient world needed it was mercy. The sufferings of animals were nothing to it. The maimed and the sickly went to the wall. There was no provision for the aged. The treatment of the idiot and the simple-minded was unfeeling. Christianity brought mercy into this world. It is not too much to say that everything that has been done for the aged, the sick, the weak in body and in mind, the animal, the child, the woman has been done under the inspiration of Christianity.”

Kindness. This is the goodness of the heart which enables a Christian to meet the world with a smile and to act generously towards others, responding generously to every call for help. Someone has said that kindness is “sweetness of disposition.”

Humility. This is the absence of pride, a concern to put others first and a realistic grasp of where we really are in the body of Christ. Humility was not admired by the ancient world but it was praised by Christ. ***“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.”*** (Philip. 2:3,4).

Gentleness. This is actually the word “meekness.” Meekness accepts, without murmuring, what God brings into the life and, without resisting, any evil men may inflict. Meekness is not weakness. Moses was a strong leader but was meek. ***“Now Moses was a very humble (meek) man, more humble (meek) than anyone else on the face of the earth.”*** (Num. 12:3). Jesus, the ideal man, was said to be meek. ***“Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle (meek) and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”*** (Matt. 11:29).

Patience: ***And patience.*** -- This is the ability to bear injury and insult without complaining or resorting to hasty retaliation.

Bear: ***Bear with each other ...*** -- To bear with each other means to put up with one another, accepting a person in spite of faults, unpleasant ways or personality quirks.

Forgive: ***And forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.*** -- Forgiveness deals with taking out of our heart all resentment and ill-will. We are to get rid of grudges and personal hurts due to confrontation, neglect or misunderstanding with others. We Christians are to forgive because we have been forgiven by Christ. Forgiven people should be the first to forgive!

Christians came from various backgrounds and environments, and have different interests on earth. They do not always understand one another or agree with one another about certain things such as child-training, business methods, secondary doctrines and politics. Yet, if they have the love of Christ in their hearts and remember they are forgiven people, surely they can forgive one another.

Love: ***And over all these virtues, put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.*** -- Love is pictured as the outer garment or belt which completes the outfit and unites all other virtues. Love ties all virtues together. It is the thread which ties all the other virtues together so they are not done mechanically but by a heart motivated through genuine concern and care for the one loved. Love is thinking the best of and doing the best for the one loved. We Christians can love because we have been loved by Christ

PROPER ATTITUDES 3:15-17

Peace: ***Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace, and be thankful.***

Christ lives in the heart of every Christian. In Colossians 1:27 it says, ***“Christ in you, the hope of glory.”*** Christ has promised peace to all His people. ***“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”*** (Jn. 14:27). He gives a subjective peace to the hearts of His people concerning guidance, crisis, tribulation and persecution.

The peace given by Christ should rule, govern and arbitrate in matters of knowing God’s will. The ruling principle must be Christ’s peace. This literally means “To act as an umpire” and an umpire administrates, rules and decides. The meaning seems to be we should expect Christ to give us peace and we should wait patiently and pray until He does.

Some personalities have a harder time receiving peace but there will come a peace, an assurance, a confidence that Christ is leading and directing. However, you may have to wait long for this peace. It may not come immediately.

In context this peace is related to the body of Christ, the church. In all inner conflicts, disputes and differences among Christians, Christ’s peace must give the final decision. Nothing should be done to violate this peace.

We are told that we are to be thankful for the subjective peace Christ brings us. When we experience Christ’s peace, there is always great thankfulness of heart.

Word: *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.*

Now the Christian is commanded to let the word of Christ dwell in them abundantly. The “word of Christ” may refer to the voice of Christ as He speaks quietly to our inner self. However, it probably refers to the message of Christ or the teaching about Christ which is found in the whole Bible. It is Christ’s objective Word which gives balance to Christ’s subjective peace. Christ speaks to His people through the Bible and when Christ is obeyed there is subjective peace.

The Word of Christ is to “dwell” in the Christian. This means to dwell in one’s house - hominess. Christ’s word is to be settled down in us as a deep conviction. It is to dwell richly or abundantly. It is to remain as a rich treasure. The general sense is that we are to submit to the demands of the Christian message and to let it be so deeply implanted within us that it controls our thinking.

Through Christ’s objective Word, the Bible, we are to teach and admonish one another with all wisdom. Christians are to teach and share with one another God’s Word. They are also to admonish one another which means “to encourage, exhort, reprove and warn one another.” ***“And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another-- and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”*** (Heb. 10:24,25). When we exhort, warn or even encourage we must do it with wisdom, that is, with tact and sensitivity.

It also indicates in this verse that Christians are to teach and admonish one another through music. Music is instructive. It is a powerful medium to express our inner feelings to God. We not only sing to God but there is a sense in which we sing to one another to instruct and encourage in our worship of God.

Music is such a powerful medium of communication. An 18th century politician said, “If he were allowed to make the ballads of the nation, he cared not who made the laws.” It is also true that those who make the music of the church are in many ways more influential than those who make the creeds or preach. Therefore, what we sing and how we sing are important. Music has always been essential to the church. Pliny, a Roman governor, not many years after the death of Paul, reported to the Emperor, “The Christians were in the habit of meeting before dawn “to sing a hymn antiphonally to Christ as to a god.”

C.H. Spurgeon the last years of his life had many battles to fight. He was involved in the “Down-grade Controversy” which was the liberal movement in England. He pointed out modernism in the Baptist Association and they turned and viciously attacked him. They terribly undermined his character, which nearly killed Spurgeon. When things got too rough and he didn’t know what to do, Spurgeon said, “I would get by myself somewhere and sing, “Jesus loves me this I know for the Bible tells me so!” Music comforts troubled hearts!

Notice carefully that psalms, hymns and spiritual songs must come from a heart of gratitude to God. Music comes from the heart, which is the seat of emotion, and music is to be an emotional release of worship to God. Music that does not come from the heart does not glorify God no matter how technically correct it may be. Certainly music is designed by God so we can express joy, happiness and excitement to the Lord.

Tertullian, an early church father, said, "In our Christian meetings we have plenty of songs, verses, sentences and proverbs. After handwashing and bringing in the lights, each Christian is asked to stand forth and sing as best he can a hymn to God, either one of his own composing or one from the holy scripture."

Paul makes a distinction between psalms, which are poetic songs and accompanied by musical instruments; and hymns, which are songs of praise to God (vertical worship); and spiritual songs, which are composed songs by Christians expressing their feelings, emotions and relationship with God and one another (a horizontal worship). Songs must be spiritual, and we sing them to one another which ultimately affects our worship of God.

There were a number of Russians who were taken prisoners by the Germans in WWII. In one case seven Russians were taken prisoner in Finland, and they were kept under ground in one of the public buildings in the city. It was like a dungeon.

The prisoners began to curse and swear. They beat their fists and heads against the wall until they were bloody. They were angry and frustrated, crying for help, and their families.

Then one of the prisoners separated himself from the others, sensing that their execution was coming soon. Suddenly this Russian soldier, who just a few minutes before was acting like a madman, began to hum a tune and then sing the words in Russian to a familiar Christian tune - "Safe in the Arms of Jesus." The other prisoners began to ask him why he was singing and what he was singing. He told them that he had been taught many hymns at his mother's knee who was a Christian but he had denied the Faith. He told them that this one song had come back to him and he kept singing it over and over again. It was a Sunday and these men were to die on Monday morning.

After awhile man after man in that dungeon came and sat next to this one man singing "Safe in the Arms of Jesus." They asked him to teach them the song and meaning of it. Their faces began to glow and their fears subsided. A few minutes before they were cursing and acting like madmen and now they were singing "Safe in the Arms of Jesus."

One of the German guards told this story. He explained how sunrise came and they led these men out to be executed. They left the dungeon singing. They asked that their hands might be freed for they were bound. They requested that they might not have the death cap over their heads and faces. They said they wanted to look up, and with their hands lifted and their eyes gazing towards heaven, they wanted to die singing the song, "Safe in the Arms of Jesus." Could it be that through this hymn seven men were converted to Christ?"

The German guard who recorded the incident entitled the article, Seven Men Went Singing Into Heaven."

Name: *And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.*

All that we do as Christians we are to do to the glory of Christ. We do all things in His name; that is, in His authority, in His presence and in His strength.

How many things do we do in life to please Christ - with just the motive to please Him, to do it in His name and for His glory?

What we do for Christ is always to be accompanied by a spirit of thanksgiving. Notice in 3:15 it says, "***And be thankful***"; in 3:16 it says "***With gratitude***", and in 3:17 it says, "***Giving thanks.***" A thankful heart to God will result in a consistent life of service to Christ.

CCNCLUSICN

We have seen today how the last part of that little girl's prayer is answered – "Make the good people nice." God is at work in renewal to make the man who is perfect positionally in Christ to be more Christlike in his experience by clothing himself with the virtues of Christ.

But what about the first part of that little girl's prayer - "Make the bad people good." How can a person who is sinful before a holy God be made good so as to make him acceptable to God? To live with God, a person must be as good as God is good. Surely no man has that goodness in himself. However, God can give a person a righteousness which will make him acceptable to God. How can he get this righteousness? This righteousness is not found in man; it cannot be worked for or earned and it cannot be bought or begged for. It is a gift which God gives to all who place their faith in Christ for salvation. "***God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.***" (II Cor. 5:21). It is Christ's righteousness that God accepts. When a man or woman accepts Christ through faith, Christ comes in to the Christian. Therefore, God accepts Christ's righteousness in us. God makes bad people good through Christ and Christ alone. Have you come to Christ through faith? If not, you will never be made positionally good and righteous and become acceptable to God.