

## Christian Living, from Colossians #3

We have been looking at Paul's instructions to the Colossian believers in practical Christian living, starting in chapter 3. Chapters 1 and 2 are doctrinal, but we need to be able to put correct doctrinal knowledge into effect in our lives, to glorify God and to be fruitful in Christ.

Last time we saw that the NT does not describe us as having two natures (one, the old sinful nature, and another, the new redeemed nature). Our conflict is not between two natures, but between the flesh and the spirit. We have now just one nature, new and redeemed and spiritual, but we still live in bodies of flesh, and minds that can be tempted with fleshly desires. This is the battle we constantly face in this life.

The old nature is seen in Eph. 2:3 – “Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.”.

But the new nature is seen in verses 4-5 (and following) – “But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)”. It is also seen in 2 P. 1:3-4 – “According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.”

In the first two lessons we saw that we are to put off the old man, and some of what that means, and that we are to put on the new man. Now we will look at what Paul lists as examples of putting on the new man.

### **Colossians 3:12-15 – What is it that we are supposed to “put on”?**

“Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering, ...”

#### **Bowels of Mercies**

From Thayer's Greek Lexicon - “In the Greek poets from Aeschylus down the bowels were regarded as the seat of the more violent passions, such as anger and love; but by the Hebrews as the seat of the tenderer affections, especially kindness, benevolence, compassion ... ; hence, equivalent to our heart (tender mercies, affections, etc.)”. The word translated “mercies” means compassion, pity, or mercy. Thus, “bowels of mercies” means that we should react to others' plights with deep emotions and genuine, heartfelt compassion. It is an empathy that is the opposite of being hard-hearted and uncaring. It is an ability to see value in others, to enter into both their joys and sorrows. Beyond emotions, it should stir us up to try to do something to help, like the “Good Samaritan”.

This is in contrast to the Roman bloodlust at the Coliseum, or some of today's love of extreme fighting.

#### **Kindness**

In the Greek, this means kindness (imagine that!). What do we mean by kindness? Treating others with gentle consideration, benevolence, “niceness”, helpfulness, etc. But to really be kind requires sincerity and genuine affection, more than just giving words or actions motivated by duty.

#### **Humbleness of Mind**

Humility is the opposite of pride. It is to think of oneself with a modest opinion, not to be lifted up in self-congratulations, or thinking on how much stronger, faster, smarter, wealthier, better looking, more clever, or more knowledgeable you are than others. A humble person does not see themselves as inherently better than others. If they really are better in some way, they acknowledge that all that they are, and all their abilities and acknowledgements, are really gifts of God.

Phl. 2:3 – “Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.”

It is significant that the political, social, and economic leaders of the world actually see themselves as vastly superior to all “the masses”. They see no problem with jetting around the world and meeting at posh resorts looking for “solutions” for global warming, fossil fuels, population control, and world government, while telling us we should eat bugs, eliminate beef, get rid of gasoline powered cars and gas stoves in the kitchen. They want to cut the world population by billions, apparently to make room for them to enjoy life without all of us nobodies. Thomas Sowell

refers to them as “The Anointed”, because that is how they see themselves. Because of this, the rules they want to impose on society do not apply to them. Why? Because they are special.

The Christian does not say, “I am a worthless nobody” and call that humility. He sees himself as a being of great worth in the eyes of God. This worth is partly as being a human being created in the image of God (which is a reason we should give respect to other people). But as a blood-bought and redeemed believer, we see our worth as sons of God. We have value because God values us, and that, not for our inherent worth, but simply because he has sovereignly chosen us to be vessels of mercy. Why us and not others?

Dt. 7:6-9 – “For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: but because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers ...”

1 Cor. 1:26-31 – God does not choose many high and mighty in the world, but the base and despised, the things which are not anything special. But God makes us special – Christ is our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Why? So that no one can boast before God (“God chose me because he saw that I was better than other people.”), but on the contrary, “He that glorieth, let him glory in the LORD.”

### Meekness

This word can mean either meekness or gentleness. It is the opposite of someone who is loud, abrasive, boisterous, pushy, and dominating. It does not mean to be weak or a spiritless pushover. E.g., Moses. Jesus himself is a good example of someone who was completely unafraid, with strength of will, capable of indignation and even anger, and yet his gentleness is seen in the way he treated the little children, and the woman caught in adultery. His gentleness was seen also in his compassion towards human suffering. Mt. 11:28-30 (“Come unto me all ye that labour ...”)

### Longsuffering

The Christian is to be patient and longsuffering even when being wronged (why else call it longsuffering?)

**We are to be longsuffering towards people.** (Mt. 5:10-12, 5:38-41, 1 P. 2:18-23). 1 P. 2:21-23 gives us Christ as an example of longsuffering – “For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously”.

**We must also be patient in circumstances.** Some things are not pleasant, but need to be patiently endured. A job, an automobile, a physical trial, etc. Being patient does not mean to just accept it and suffer. It means that as we experience these things we overcome them by exercising faith and prayer, believing that God will show his faithfulness and in time deliver us from the difficulties.

Jas. 1:2-4, 12 – “My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations [*trials*]; knowing this, that the trying [*testing*] of your faith worketh patience [*endurance*]; But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. ... Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.”

This means that hard circumstances are meant as trials, to test, or prove our faith, and that by patiently going through these trials by faith, we develop the character of endurance. Anyone can say they can be strong and not give up, but that is not the same as the cross country runner who has developed the necessary endurance by actual running without quitting.

Not only do we develop endurance through trials, but we gain a personal knowledge and confidence in God’s faithfulness, and a testimony that will be to the glory of God at Jesus’ appearing.

1 P. 1:6-9 – “Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice wuth joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.”