

Aug. 16, 2020

# **Your New Relationship with Virtue**

## **Part 3**

Colossians 3:15-17

*The Soul-satisfying Grace of God should make us gracious toward one another.*

LTS: Eph. 4:1-6

This morning as we come together on the first Sunday after the launch of our second church plant, we are eager to dive back into the word of God. So please turn in your bibles with me to the book of Colossians chapter 3. At this point in Paul's letter he is taking us from the deep rich theology that undergirds the Christian life to a place where he is eager to talk about the practicality of how God wants us to live the Christian life.

By way of reminder, Paul's theme in this section of the letter is the expectation that spiritual changes in the believer's heart will manifest themselves in a changed life. A changed heart always produces change in one's attitudes and behavior. Where there is life - there is growth. And the growth that Paul is concerned about in this passage is growth in spirit-wrought virtues. Just as your salvation brought you into a new relationship with God, so it has also brought you into a new relationship with both SIN and VIRTUE.

Now it's important to note that while the fruit of the spirit listed in Galatians chapter 5 is presented as the work of God in the heart, Paul's emphasis here is the believer's active participation in his own growth. We see this emphasis in a few different places in this letter. For example, Paul says in chapter 2 verse 6, "Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him." In other words, Paul is NOT only concerned about what we believe but also how we behave. Believers are called to behave in a manner that is consistent with the fact that they live in union with Christ.

In chapter 3 verse 5 Paul continues with the theme of active participation by commanding us to "put to death therefore what is earthly in you." We have an active role to play in our own sanctification. Regarding our impulses to sin in various ways, Paul says (3:8), "but now you must put them all away..." In other words, throw them off like an old filthy suit of clothes. Then (3:12) he says put on then as God's chosen ones holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another, and if one has a complaint

against another forgiving each other. Then, he points to the virtue that is most central to the Christian life and the health of every local church; namely (14), “Love, which, he says, binds everything together in perfect harmony.”

Beloved, these are Paul’s inspired, authoritative instructions. When a man (or woman) surrenders his life to Jesus, God expects him to cultivate a new relationship with sin and a new relationship with virtue. In fact, beyond the virtues that we have covered, Paul has a few more to add.

In the verses before us this morning Paul is going to exhort us to put on peace, thankfulness, the ministry of the word of Christ, singing, and a worldview that believes that everything we do should be for the glory of God. And that catches us up to our verses for today - Verses 15-17.

Read 3:12-17

But before we dive into these final virtues, I want to point out one more thing.

Many times, when Christians come to a list in the N.T. like this one, we tend to rush through it as if it is somehow less important.

- We start into Colossians chapter 1 and our hearts say, “Behold! Here is Jesus manifest as the eternal creator of all things!
- Here is the Father irresistibly calling his elect into the kingdom of His Son!
- Here is God the Son wielding his sovereign authority over the angelic hosts!
- Wonder of wonders, here is the fulness of God in the body of a man!
- These are some of the deep, rich doctrines of Paul -and we are greedy to devour them like a starving beggar who suddenly discovers a great a store of food!
- But then we come upon a LIST and it’s like, “O bummer. Here is one of those old stale lists of Paul. I think I’ll skate through to something more spiritually rich and deep and meaty; Something stimulating. Maybe something that could provoke debate!

We tend to think of items on biblical lists like so many dry wafers on a table otherwise abounding with rich spiritual food for the soul. I men, “Skip the wafers, man, and pass me the beef! But it would be wrong to view the lists this way. I can tell you for certain that Paul never did.

In Paul’s mind, the rich doctrines of grace flow from the deep heart of Christ as from a fountain of living water. But the river of truth that flows from the heart of Christ was never meant to be something we merely observe, marvel at, study and discuss. No, this Jesus whom we serve NOT only creates the life-giving river of truth but bids us to leap headlong into its currents where invisible faith turns into active – often risky - obedience from the heart. Every doctrine in

the Bible calls for real change in how we live. Formal theology always urges us toward practical theology. So, in addition to the original seven virtues Paul adds five more. The first of these is...

## I. The Virtue of Peace:

1. Paul writes (15) And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts. Its important to note that when Paul speaks of Peace here, he is not really thinking about a personal sense of peace in contrast to anxiety. Rather, he is speaking about peace between believers who perhaps disagree on secondary or tertiary issues.

2. We know he is speaking about relational peace because his next words are “to which you were called into one body.” With rare exception, whenever Paul refers to “one body” in his letters, the point he is making has to do with unity between believers in the local church. Paul calls it “the peace of Christ,” which means, The peace that Christ gives. Paul speaks of this kind of peace in Eph. 2:14 where, teaching about how the church is made up of both Jews and Gentiles, he says:

For he himself [i.e. Christ] is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility.

You see, beloved, there should be NO disunity-creating hostility in the church body. Not over ethnicity, not over cultural differences, or music preferences, or opinions about masks, or any other tertiary matter because by his death on the cross Christ has broken down the wall of hostility, and made us ONE.

Now, it makes sense that Paul would mention this kind of peace here because starting in verse 12 he has already mentioned the need for humility meekness patients and forgiveness. Apparently, there was some kind of tension in the church that Paul doesn't specifically name. What is Paul's remedy for such disunity? It is to let the peace of Christ rule in your heart.

3. The word “rule” is interesting. In Greek it is the word for umpire. As in our day, whenever there was a competition, an umpire would be designated to make sure the contestants follow the rules. He was the one who could declare a contestant disqualified and his was the privilege of naming the victor.

4. So Paul is saying that when there is conflict between members of the church, let the peace of Christ (i.e. the unity purchased by Christ) be the arbiter between you. Let the divine command to preserve the peace rule like an umpire over the dispute. Do not let your passions rule you. Do not let your own preferences rule! Don't let your emotions rule! Discipline yourself to let the “peace of Christ rule your hearts. Let Jesus' call to peace prompt you to exercise humility, meekness, patience and forbearance. And remember the stunning words of Paul in 1 Cor. 6:7 where he suggests, “Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be defrauded? In God's way of valuing things, peace in the church is more valuable than most of us believe.

5. Someone will say...

- A. Pastor, are you advocating “Peace at all costs?” NO, but I am advocating peace as significant, cost. Personal cost. Sometimes Jesus wants you to die to your precious desires and opinions for the sake of His church.
- B. To be sure, there ARE some issues worth dying for. There are a few convictions worth breaking fellowship over. But they are very few. And most of the time Christians end up dividing over things that hardly amount to a pound of beans in light of eternity.
- C. The Lord places a HIGH priority on unity in the body of Christ. “To this” (Paul says) “we were “called.” So be willing to sacrifice your precious opinions and preferences for the sake of Christ. “Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts to which you were called in one body.”

6. This is the virtue of Peace.

## II. The Virtue of Thankfulness:

1. One of the ways in which we can become dissatisfied and disenchanted with life is by focusing on the things we want but don't have, and the things we have that we don't want. James talks about this in the fourth chapter of his short epistle, but we don't have time to go there this morning.

2. The point is that when you want something so bad you are willing to sin to get it, or sin because someone is preventing you from getting it, then it has become a sinful desire. It has become an idol upon which you are willing to sacrifice things that God calls precious.

3. One of the remedies for this spiritual malignancy is to cultivate thankfulness. So, in addition to letting the peace of Christ rule our hearts, we are to practice thankfulness. When we get Christ, we get a new relationship with Thankfulness.

- (1:12) Give thanks to the Father
- (2:7) he says that Christians should “abound in thankfulness.”
- (3:17) Paul exhorts us that in everything... we should give thanks to the Father.”
- Four times in in this short letter Paul highlights the need for Christians to be thankful.

What should we be thankful for? EVERYTHING! For example:

4. In chapter one Paul encouraged the Colossians to “give thanks to the Father who qualified them to share in the inheritance of the Saints in light.” In other words, be thankful for your Salvation! This is the ultimate gift that transcends all other gifts. If you have that, you have everything? How could we ever be dissatisfied? How could we ever allow earthly things to become so precious that we are willing to sin to get it. Compared to the gift of union with Christ, the value of everything else melts away.

5. So, beloved, do you find yourself frequently discontent? Perhaps the reason is that you are not cultivating thankfulness for what God HAS given you. If you are a Christian, there is so much you can be thankful for.

- 1) for the forgiveness of your sins
- 2) For our salvation
- 3) For God’s goodness
- 4) For answered prayer
- 5) For people in the church
- 6) For your children
- 7) Your spouse
- 8) Your job
- 9) For God’s provision
- 10) For your suffering
- 11) For your need
- 12) Because of our privileged position as sons and daughters of God, the Bible calls us to be thankful IN all things and FOR all things.

6. Beloved, we are talking about the Christians uniform. Paul expects our lives to be clothed in these virtues. Is your life marked by discontent and dissatisfaction? Then perhaps it’s time you take the leap from the banks of God’s river of truth and plunge yourself into the refreshing currents of obedience. Beginning today, cultivate ta heart of thankfulness.

7. One practical way to do this is to create what we called a “Thankful Journal. Every evening before you go to bed or first thing in the morning, record something for which you are thankful to God. Then go to him in prayer and give thanks. This is a good way to cultivate thankfulness.

8. the next virtue that we are to put on is...

### III. The virtue of Word Ministry:

1. In verse 16 Paul says, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing each other with all wisdom.”
2. The first thing we should observe in this verse is that Paul refers to the Bible as the “Word of Christ.” Elsewhere in the Bible we read of the “Word of the Lord,” or “the Word of God,” but here it is the “Word of Christ.”
3. This is significant because it reminds us that throughout this epistle Paul is seeking to exalt Christ in everything. Now what does he say about the “Word of Christ?”
4. Paul says that the “Word of Christ should dwell in you. In other words, let it take up permanent residence within you. Make the Word of God completely at home in our hearts. The word of Christ should be frequently on our lips. It should not live within us in a beggarly way, but richly!
5. And notice what we are to do with the word of Christ that dwells richly within us? Paul says we should employ it to Admonish one another with all wisdom.”
6. There are other places in the bible where God calls believers to sit under the preaching of God’s word. But here, Paul has in mind the idea of every-member-ministry. Do you know the word of God well enough that you can offer wise counsel to one who comes to you for help?
7. Here at CBC, we believe in the sufficiency of Scripture. And while it is true that certain men in the church are called to Preach the Word, all of us are called to minister the word. And this is why our church is so committed to training people for biblical counseling. Biblical counseling is simply bringing the wisdom of the word of Christ to bear on the every-day problems believers face.
8. The word for Admonish here means to exhort, to instruct, to advise, or counsel. It involves ministering to people in a way that helps orient their thinking, their desires, and their values back to the word of God. And beloved, this is something ALL of US should be equipped to do.
9. This is why I am so excited about the men’s E4M (equipping for ministry) training that begins next month. We want to see our men (especially) be trained in the word of God

well enough that they can minister the word of Christ to one another regardless of the need. This is one of the most vital ministries of the church.

10. That brings us to the next virtue that should clothe the believer's life:

#### IV. The Virtue of Singing:

1. In his list of virtues Paul includes, "Singing Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual songs." Now I realize that not everyone is gifted to song, but all of us are called to sing. And since we are all called to sing, we should try our best to sing on tune to make a sweet offering to the Lord.

2. Psalms are songs that come right out of the Psalter (the book of Psalms). Hymns are songs that specifically offer praise to God. And spiritual songs are any kind of spiritual truth that is set to music for believers to sing. We sing all three varieties here at Calvary. And notice that even our singing should be with our hearts full of Thankfulness in our hearts to God.

3. And isn't it wonderful to have such talented men and women who can help lead us in singing?

3. This is the virtue of singing. And then, just in case he may have missed anything, Paul points us to...

#### V. The Virtue of Glorifying God

1. He writes, "And whatever you do, in word or deed, do EVERYTHING in the name of the Lord Jesus, Giving Thanks to God the Father through Him."

2. You see, every Christian man woman and child should have world view that compels them to approach every activity and decision in life from the perspective of how it might glorify God. Every word. Every deed. Everything choice we make should be consistent with "The name," of the Lord Jesus.

3. In the Hebrew mind, the "name" of God speaks of His being, its character, its attributes. So, Paul is calling us to live in such a way that is consistent with the mind and heart of Christ. If He loves it, we love it. If he hates it, so do we. And as we cultivate this virtue in our lives, notice HOW we are to do it; namely, Giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

4. Do you see how important giving thanks is to God. And when we give thanks, and when we sing, and when we pray, and when we minister the word to one another, we offer it all through the only Mediator between God and man – the Man, Christ Jesus.

Now, let me close today by making a clarification. If you don't know the Lord Jesus Christ; if you are not yet one of His followers by grace through faith, none of these virtues can get you there. The virtues are Fruit, but what you need is the root. It is by grace that we are saved, through faith. And this is not of ourselves. It is the gift of God. It is NOT of works so that no one can boast.

This morning, if you are sensing a need to be reconciled to God in Jesus Christ, I want you to know that no amount of good behavior will get you there. Only God Himself can save you, and he will if you come with empty hands and a heart of faith in the work Jesus completed on your behalf when he died on the cross for your sins.

Every believer should clothe themselves with these wonderful virtues by which we glorify God in our lives.

<sup>12</sup> Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, <sup>13</sup> bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. <sup>14</sup> And above all these, put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. <sup>15</sup> And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. <sup>16</sup> Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. <sup>17</sup> And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

## Announcements:

- Sep. 13 will be a big day for us. This is when we plan to
  - open up Sunday school for adults and children alike.
  - Student ministries



- Begin a church-wide Scripture Memory plan
- New Playground:
  - We do have some funds set aside, but we want to give you all the chance to contribute to the project. Please give your gifts towards the playground project over the next month marked "playground" in the memo.
  - This is phase 1 of 2. The second phase will include a plan to add shade to the patio area. So although we will use some designated funds which the elders have set aside, we do anticipate further expense .Details on the Shade Structure (Pergola) are TBD.