

“¹² Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; ¹³ Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also *do* ye. ¹⁴ And above all these things *put on* charity, which is the bond of perfectness. ¹⁵ And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful. ¹⁶ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.” (Col 3:12-16)

In these verses, Paul comes to the very heart of the application of his message to the Colossians, and to us. Since we are risen with Christ, we are to put off the old man and put on the new. When you received the gospel message, you agreed with God's interpretation of the death of Christ: that you are worthy of death because of your sins, but believe that Christ's death was for you. This is a revolutionary change in your mental point of view: one that you could only accept because of the work of the Holy Spirit in your heart.

Because of this change in you, you are no longer obligated to live after the course of this world. You do not need to live after the course of the world, doing what everyone else is doing. A new power works in you. You are new in Christ.

This new man is renewed in knowledge (vs. 10), for the image of God consists in the non-material, non-physical part of your being. You can now be renewed in your soul--in your inner man. When Christ returns, you will put on a "spiritual body," like the one that Jesus has right now, so that you can go to be where He is, in Paradise.

Before all you are to put on love. Love is the ligament that joins the bones together. Every bone has its own function, shape, and size, but it is joined to its fellow by ligaments. Without ligaments you have a bone pile, you do not have a body. The church is more than a pile of bones--even of living bones. The "more" is love.

I. Let the peace of God rule your hearts. (vs. 15).

A. The "rule" here, is the rule of an umpire in an athletic event. Without the arbitration of peace, your affections as passions are out of control. This is the miserable condition of the ungodly man. He is filled with malice, envy, pride, ego, self-indulgence. The philosophy of the modern world is to allow these passions to vent, to rule the soul. Free-reign to feelings is encouraged. Let your frustrations out, say what you think, let your feelings go. Let your frustrations out.

1. Peace must rule the inner man. Man is to have peace in his heart: His inner state is not to be ruled by ego, by self-indulgence, by malice, by envy, by pride. A bridle is to be put on these; The peace of God is to keep your soul. A parallel passage is in Philippians 4:6-7: "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understand, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."
2. Peace begins in the heart. The biggest mistake that you can make in your relationship with others is to think that they are the problem. Proverbs tell

us, "When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him."

3. A friend of mine in college went to the Dean of Students. "I cannot get along with my roommate," he complained. "What's wrong with you," the Dean asked. "You don't understand," my friend said. "It's my roommate." "What wrong with you?" the dean asked again. Although it seems harsh, the Dean had a valid point. When you or I have trouble with someone, we need to look very deeply into our own souls and question our own behavior. "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." We would have much less problems with others, if we were much more careful about our own peace with God.
4. Peace is to rule our relationship with others. "Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceable with all men." (Romans 12:17,18)

B. Mercy and Truth

1. "Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart: so shalt thou find favor and good understanding in the sight of god and man." (Prov. 3:3,4) This passage helps us to find the right balance in human relations. On the one hand we must avoid the pride that causes us to constantly seek strife, trying to straighten everyone out, involving ourselves in contentions and wranglings. When we learn to put mercy on display about our neck, and write it in the depths of our hearts we will avoid the constant bickering which arises from pride, self-righteousness, and perfectionism.
2. But we also must display truth, and write it on our hearts. This will keep us from the cowardice that seeks peace at any price and avoids facing the truth about ourselves and the truth of the Gospel.

II. Be Ye Thankful.

- A. Thankfulness means a radical change of attitude toward your fellow Christian: Have you ever asked yourself what there is to be thankful for in your fellow Christian? The old man will seek to find something to be upset about, for I am prone by nature to hate both God and my neighbor.
- B. The immediate context concerns individual fellow Christians. We are members one of another, and God in His grace has given each one of them for our need and edification. But it also applies to other churches and denominations. Can you be thankful for other churches? Are we thankful for their success in evangelism, in reaching groups we cannot reach, for vibrant missionary efforts? Are we truly catholic in our view of the Church?
- C. Straining at Gnats and Swallowing Camels. It is a terrible and prideful mental attitude that causes us to be faultfinders. At the root of this doctrine lie the attributes of God Himself. We believe that God is good, that He is merciful, that He is all powerful and works all things after the counsel of His own will. But we find fault with others. We gripe about our parents, our relatives, our church, and our fellow Christian. By our behavior we show that we think that God is really not doing a very good job with our lives. We wish He would do better, for we are miserable!

This is the attitude of the old man, and is to be put off and replaced with the thankfulness of the new man.

D. The Benefits of Thanksgiving:

1. Humility. A thankful heart is a humble heart. When we are thankful for other Christians we will not scorn them, because we know that we need them.
2. Slaying of Self-Pity. How can you be sorry for yourself, when you are basking in God's blessings all around you, if only you had eyes to see. Self-pity raises its arm against the mercy and the goodness of God, and needs to be replaced with thankfulness. Then, when self-pity is put off, her two children, resentment and bitterness, will go with her.
3. Self-seeking. What a privilege to be of the church of Jesus Christ. We are called in one body into fellowship with Jesus Christ. How can we not be thankful that God has been gracious to us! It is better to be a door-keeper in the house of the Lord than to gain the fame and fortune of the world. Look around you: Are you thankful for your fellow Christian? "I don't know them," you say. Well, then, of course you are not thankful for them.
4. Two Contrary Attitudes: Thankfulness which grows out of humility belongs to the new man. The old man carefully watches everyone around, lest they encroach on his rights.

III. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.

- A. Verse 16 must always be joined to verse 15. When Paul talks of the peace of God he is not speaking of excessive subjectivism, where everything is judged by some inner state of mind or emotion: as if tranquility of heart is the highest good. It is not peace, but the peace of God that is commended. This depends upon Christ being formed in us.
- B. Let the Word Dwell Richly.
- C. "A good man, out of the good treasure of his heart...." are the words of our Lord. If your heart is filled with your own self; with pride; with jealousies; with envy; with wars and fightings, you will not be able to hold it in check: it will break forth in strife against your neighbor. The cure for this disease is the word dwelling richly in us.
- D. No Empty House
 1. Is your house empty?. Jesus told of the evil spirit that went out of a house, leaving it swept and empty. He came back with others worse than himself, and the latter state of that man was worse than the first.
 2. It is not enough that Christ has had some influence in your life. It is not enough that a few sprigs of what looks like wheat has sprung up in your life. It is not enough that you have felt some good things. Many do that, but when the tribulations, the trials, the temptations of life appear, then the plants wither and die.
 3. The word must dwell in you richly. It must replace all the other words. There are many words and philosophy competing for your heart. The flesh lusts against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh. If you have come to

Christ the war has just begun in your soul. The old philosophies and the old ideas are in conflict with the new.

E. War on Many Levels.

1. The war is in morals; how you live your life and what you consider right or wrong. The ideas of the world are at enmity with the Law of God. What is highly esteemed in the eyes of men are an abomination in the eyes of God.
2. The war is in terms of human relationships: are you going to decide those on the basis of the old man: malice, envy, pride, selfishness? Are you going to take your philosophy from the television or from the worldly people around you.
3. But mostly the war is in terms of ideas. Men live by what they believe is true, or what they pretend is true for them. You will live by your creed. Not by the creed that you might profess, but by the creed that dwells in your heart, by the things you really believe. A war is taking place in your soul. Many different philosophies with their life-styles are competing for you. If the word of Christ does not dwell in your richly, then some other word will.

F. How does the word dwell in me richly?

1. First of all by Bible reading and prayer. Christ's words will not dwell in you if you do not read the Bible. It will not dwell in you if you are not taught by the Holy Spirit.
2. Then, by using the means God has provided. You should not think yourself wiser than God. He has given you the preaching of the word and the use of the sacraments. You will be very poor in your soul if you neglect these things and you will not know the peace of God.
3. Third, Fellowship with God's people "teaching and admonishing one another." If you walk with wise men, you will be wise. If you neglect this benefit that God has provided for you, then you will be foolish and you will not know the peace of God.
4. The Word must dwell in all wisdom. Wisdom is the right and orderly arrangement of knowledge, and its right application. Without wisdom, a man may know a lot of things, but it will be all jumbled up and he will constantly be using it in the wrong way.

G. A manual for human relations

1. Here is the formula for getting along in this world without making a fool of yourself. First of all, be Christ related. (vs. 13) Forgive as Christ forgave you. We are not saved because we imitate Christ, but if we are saved, the likeness of Christ is being formed in us, and there is something of Christ in us. Put that on, and put off the old man.
2. Second, put on charity, or love. Don't be looking for faults and operating in pride and envy. Third, let the peace of God rule your hearts, and be thankful, for you are one body in Christ.
3. All of this depends upon your having a rich heart, a heart that is rich in the real treasures: knowledge of the word of Christ deeply embedding in the soul.

Conclusion: Two professing Christians are described here. One is a joyful, thankful, member of the body of Christ, who looks not only on his own things, but also on the things of others. He is not concerned so much with how he is treated, but is very concerned about how he treats others. He lives at peace with other Christians, because he has peace in his heart. He is content and thankful, and is never the source of strife, because he is not at all concerned about what others are doing for him, but is concerned about what he can do for others. He is so thankful that his sins have been forgiven, for he makes much of the grace of God, and is joyful that he has been counted worthy of being a member of the body of Christ.

The other professing Christian is empty in his life. Though professing to believe in the power and authority of God, his life is filled with bitterness and strife, for he is not content with what God has given him. He is not content with the opportunities that God has given him for service, but is constantly pushing to achieve more recognition and more respect. He scorns other Christians and other churches, and does not value them, because he is not thankful. He feels sorry for himself and this self-pity is the mother of resentment and bitterness. The unrest in his heart constantly involves him in quarrels with others, and he is quick to resent any slight, real or imagined. He really does not care about the church, if it prospers or if it declines; what is important is that his hurts and his resentments be aired and understood. His heart is empty of the peace of God, and his life is empty of the fruit of the spirit. He cannot lead people, so he attempts to drive them.

Beloved: I have been both of these people. I have been both at the same time. I am both of these right now. Way too often I have been more of the latter than of the former. In recent years, by God's grace, I have come to see the nature of my own heart, and have begun to see the necessity of putting off the old and putting on the new, and being content with the work of God.

The Glorious Body of Christ

What a glorious thing to be in the body of Christ! What a wonderful thing to be in the church, and to offer to God the sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving. What a wonderful thing to sing the praises of God with others who love the same Lord and follow in His ways. To have these things is to be rich and full; to lack these things is to be poor indeed.

For Information write:

Pastor C. W. Powell
6050 Del Paz Drive
Colorado Springs, CO. 80918