

**As the Lord Forgives
Colossians 3:12-17**

September 29, 2019

12 As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. 13 Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. 14 Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. 15 And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. 17 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 (NRSV).

In the Scripture today there is a lot to reflect upon. Today is one of the easiest sermons to give because it is so rich in meaning - how Christians are to live. The main thing (as is typical in the New Testament) is love and forgiveness.

The Scripture starts with some really good news. Verse 12 "As God's chosen ones." You are God's chosen. You are the people of God. That is a really wonderful thing. God loves you and chose you. That by itself is reason to celebrate and express thanks to God. You are God's chosen! Since we have this wonderful blessing, the least we could do is embrace Christian virtues. Notice that the author writes to clothe yourselves. This has specific meaning. It is not enough to just have the five virtues that are listed: compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. It is not enough to think about being patient, or to consider having kindness once in a while, or to try to have compassion from time to time. Clothe yourselves means to have all, completely, and fully. These virtues are to define your personality. You are to take ownership of these characteristics to the point where others identify you by them. These are not just virtues to have, but virtues to embrace fully; virtues that make you who you are.

Verse 13 "Bear with one another." I boldly claim that with each and every church conflict, one or both, is not living by verse 13. To bear with one another is not a suggestion. To bear with one another is a biblical commandment. It is sound theological doctrine. "If anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other." This is sound doctrine. This is a solid rule to live by. Here is a rule for addressing complaints. Most of time when we hear complaint we respond by trying to fix it. But did you ever notice that complaining is not a Christian virtue? The Christian virtue is forgiveness. So, a rule for addressing complaints is to teach forgiveness. "Just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive." The Scripture addresses how much we are to forgive. It is not just a matter of forgiving. The Scripture clarifies the degree of forgiveness is "as the Lord has forgiven you." As a Christian you are to model Christ. This includes forgiving completely, 100%, as Christ does.

Verse 14 "Above all, clothe yourselves with love." There you have it. Above all is love. Themes of the New Testament are love, forgiveness, and compassion. Love is a primary Christian virtue. Again, it is not just a matter of love, but clothe yourselves with love. Be covered in love. Let it shine. Be engulfed in love. It is love that binds everything together in perfect harmony. Love is the binding agent, the cement, that keeps everything together in perfect harmony. People of love are in perfect harmony and a church of love is in perfect harmony.

Verse 15 "And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts." We are to walk daily with Christ in our hearts. We are to be examples of Christ and let peace rule to which we are called in

the one body. Scripture teaches that we are chosen and called. We are selected as agents of peace. This is Scripture based doctrine, to be a person of peace, an agent of peace, an advocate for peace.

Verse 16 "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly" Here is another commandment to live by the word. You have to follow the lessons of the Bible. Jesus said to make disciples and teach them to obey everything. You have been taught and now you have the responsibility to teach others to live by the Bible, to teach others about Jesus, and teach them to obey Jesus. Teach and obey with gratitude, thankfulness, appreciation, and joy. In your hearts you are to have sincere thanksgiving for the wonderful blessings bestowed upon you. With gratitude you are to "sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God." This is one of my most favorite parts. This is the easiest commandment to follow. To sing praise to God, since we are blessed we can't help but pour out our joy.

Verse 17 "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." To do something in the name of Jesus means to be like Jesus; in the character of Jesus. So, negative emotions get flushed out of your system. All praise, all thanks, all credit, goes to God. Praise the Lord, hallelujah, amen.

I believe that if we could just live life by today's Scripture alone the world would be in harmony. There would be no church conflict. Disharmony is never about the other person. Disharmony is about the inner self - you not being willing or able to follow the Scripture. It is up to each individual to live by the word of God. Live by today's Scripture. When you see or hear a complaint, or a conflict, point them to the Scripture. If you look at the Scripture as rules, it is hard to follow. However, if you look at Scripture as a response to your blessing, the Spirit is in you and it is easy to follow Scripture. The basic principles of love and harmony are like a magnet that automatically guides you.

You are God's chosen. You are loved by God. The knowledge of this is enough to fill you up with wonderful serenity. You have been blessed by God. This is a sound theological foundation that sets up your attitude and character. You are modeled after Christ. When you take on the persona of Christ, you have love, compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. You bear with one another and forgive. You are a person of love and you are truly thankful. As such, we can't help but have a joyous response. God gives you grace. You are loved and richly blessed. Our response is a very happy, appreciative, and joyous response.