

THE EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS

INTRODUCTION

- A. An outline of the Epistle to the Colossians
 - 1. Introduction (1:1-14)
 - 2. Doctrinal Instruction (1:15-29)
 - 3. Warnings against false teaching (2:1-23)
 - 4. Instructions on living the Christian life (3:1-4:6)
 - a. Live what you believe (3:1-17)
 - 1) The Christian life is tied to the glorified Christ (3:1-4)
 - 2) The Christian life is a work in progress (3:5-17)
 - a) Do away with the remnants of the old life (5-11)
 - b) Nurture the new life in Christ (12-17)
- B. Review from last week
 - 1. A Christian's old nature is dead so one should not live like it is still alive.
 - 2. Sanctification is the process whereby a Christian participates with the Holy Spirit in becoming in practice what he is in position.
 - 3. Sanctification demands rejection of old desires and habits and pursuing a life in conformity to Christ.

COLOSSIANS 3:12-17, LIVE WHAT YOU BELIEVE - PART 2

- A. Do away with the remnants of the old life (5-11) - Part 1
- B. Nurture the new life in Christ (12-17) - Part 2
 - 1. Put on Godly characteristics of the new life (12-14)
 - a. Paul declared that Colossians Christians were to put on Godly characteristics because of who they were (12a), ***Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved,***
 - 1) When a person comes to faith in Christ, he puts on a new self which is in the image of God, Colossians 3:10, *and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.*
 - 2) Paul reminded the Colossian believers that they are important to God.
 - a) They were chosen by God, 1 Peter 2:9, *But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.*
 - b) They were holy (set apart) to God, 2 Thessalonians 2:13, *But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth.*
 - c) They are loved by God, 1 Thessalonians 1:4, *For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you,*
 - 3) Christians have an exalted purpose, 1 Peter 2:9-10, *But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.*
 - 4) Christians are to live in accord with their new position, T. Constable, *Paul reminded the Colossians of who they were because an appreciation of who one is affects how he or she behaves. God has specially selected believers, has set them apart for great things, and has made them the objects of His love. In view of this privilege the following characteristics are only reasonable.*
 - b. Characteristics to be put on by Christians (12b-14), ***compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, 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. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.***
 - 1) This list complements the *fruit of the Spirit* list.
 - a) Galatians 5:22, *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,*
 - b) J. McGee, *You and I cannot produce them in our lives. The minute you and I think about the wonderful position that we have in Christ and the high calling we have in Him, we have to recognize as we look at ourselves that we are impotent. We are weak and powerless, unable to "put on" these fruits.*
 - c) Our responsibility is to choose to put them on, empowered by the Holy Spirit.

- 2) Notes concerning Paul's list.
 - a) William Barclay, *It is most significant to note that every one of the virtues and graces listed has to do with personal relationships between man and man. There is no mention of virtues like efficiency, cleverness, even diligence and industry—not that these things are not important. But the great basic Christian virtues are the virtues which govern and set the tone of human relationships. Christianity is community.*
 - b) God has not called us to be successful but to be godly.

- 3) The *put on* list.
 - a) Compassion
 - 1] *compassionate hearts, to have pity for others from one's seat of emotions.*
 - 2] *Literally, tender sympathy of heartfelt compassion.*
 - 3] *It is concern for others suffering and in need.*

 - b) Kindness
 - 1] *It is goodness expressing itself in deeds.*
 - 2] *Ephesians 4:32, Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.*
 - 3] *T. Constable, ...manifests itself in a sweet disposition and thoughtful interpersonal dealings.*

 - c) Humility
 - 1] *It means modesty, without arrogance, proper estimation of oneself.*
 - 2] *Philippians 2:3, Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.*
 - 3] *G. Osborne, To the Greeks humility was a sign of weakness, not a virtue, but Christ elevated it to the apex of the godly virtues. It is the opposite of the arrogance of the false teachers; it describes people who live not to satisfy their own demands, but to serve and help others.*

 - d) Meekness
 - 1] *It means gentleness of attitude and behavior.*
 - 2] *It describes a condition of mind and heart, a disposition of the heart which is considerate of others.*
 - 3] *The best picture of meekness is Jesus, Matthew 11:29, Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.*

 - e) Patience
 - 1] *It means a state of emotional calm in the face of provocation or misfortune and without complaint or irritation.*
 - 2] *T. Constable, Patience is the quality of being long-suffering, self-restraining.*
 - 3] *M. Anders, The believer is to be clothed with patience which is the capacity to bear injustice or injury without revenge or retaliation.*

 - f) Forbearing
 - 1] *It means to put up with, endure discomfort, bear with.*
 - 2] *2 Thessalonians 1:4, Therefore we ourselves boast about you in the churches of God for your steadfastness and faith in all your persecutions and in the afflictions that you are enduring.*
 - 3] *G. Osborne, We practice Christian forbearance when we empathize with others and seek to understand why people act the way they do, as opposed to criticizing and looking down on them.*

 - g) Forgiving
 - 1] *It is to bestow the favor of forgiveness unconditionally, not holding a grudge even if there is cause for blame (complaint).*
 - 2] *Forgiving others is mandatory, Ephesians 4:32, Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.*
 - 3] *J. McGee, Paul's thought here is that Christ has forgiven us so much that it won't hurt us to forgive somebody who has stepped on our toes.*

 - h) Love
 - 1] *agape*
 - a] *It is brotherly love with an emphasis on doing what is best for others.*
 - b] *The greatest example of love is noted in Romans 5:8, but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

- 2] *above all*
 - a] This gives focus to the importance of love which gives meaning to the other virtues.
 - b] The characteristics of the new life in Christ are not for show but for serving others in love.

 - 3] *perfect harmony*
 - a] It is literally, *the uniting bond of perfection.*
 - b] Plato, *But two things cannot be held together without a third; they must have some bond of union.*
 - c] Love is that which binds the characteristics together.
 - d] M. Anders, *When love is present, there is harmony and unity in the community. It is not clear whether love binds the virtues together, completing a lovely garment of Christlike character, or whether love binds the members of the community together in mature oneness. Perhaps the ambiguity is intentional. Both ideas make good sense.*
2. Follow four principles (commands) of the new life (15-17)
- a. *Let the peace of Christ rule in your heart* (15a), ***And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body.***
 - 1) *peace of Christ*
 - a) It means a sense of rest, contentment, tranquility provided by Christ.
 - b) Philippians 4:7, *And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*
 - 2) *rule in your hearts*
 - a) It means to govern; literally, *to act as umpire.*
 - b) G. Osborne, *He charges us...to surrender to the lordship of Christ and to the peace that accompanies it.*
 - c) John 14:27, *Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.*
 - 3) *to which you were called in one body*
 - a) Every Christian is to experience peace, not only personally, but corporately, through unity in the body of Christ.
 - b) Ephesians 4:4, *There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call-*
 - b. *Be thankful* (15b), ***And be thankful.***
 - 1) It means to be grateful.
 - 2) 1 Thessalonians 5:18, *give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*
 - 3) T. Constable, *Realization of the unity of the body and the peace of Christ results in thankfulness that should also mark our behavior.*
 - 4) N. Geisler, *An attitude of gratitude contributes to an enjoyment of spiritual tranquility, whereas grumbling makes for inner agitation.*
 - c. *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly* (16), ***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.***
 - 1) *the word of Christ*
 - a) This phrase is only used here in the New Testament.
 - b) It is Christ's teaching during His earthly ministry as well as all of Scripture.
 - c) John 20:31, *but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*
 - 2) *dwell*
 - a) *Dwell* means to reside, to be given the run of the house.
 - b) 2 Timothy 1:5, *I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well.*
 - c) T. Constable, *His Word should permeate our whole being so that we make all decisions and plans in its light.*

- 3) *richly*
 - a) It means generously, in a great amount.
 - b) 1 Timothy 6:17, *As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy.*
 - c) W. Wiersbe, *Many saved people cannot honestly say that God's Word dwells in their hearts richly because they do not take time to read, study, and memorize it.*

- 4) There are results of Christ's indwelling presence through His word.
 - a) Education through wise instruction.
 - 1] There is *teaching*.
 - a] It is positive instruction or truth which produces mature believers.
 - b] Colossians 1:9, *And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,*
 - 2] There is *admonishing*.
 - a] It is negative correction or warning against error.
 - b] Colossians 1:28, *Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ.*
 - 3] Both teaching and admonishing are based in *all wisdom*.
 - a] The false teachers said they had additional wisdom which the Colossians needed to be spiritual, Colossians 2:23, *These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.*
 - b] Paul proclaimed that all wisdom is sourced in Christ, Colossians 2:3, *in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*
 - b) Worship through music.
 - 1] *Psalms* refers to Old Testament psalms which were designed to be sung in corporate worship with musical accompaniment.
 - 2] *Hymns* are songs of praise and thanksgiving to God.
 - 3] *Spiritual songs* are probably the experiences of Christians put to music.
 - c) Instruction and worship should produce thankfulness to God in one's heart.
 - 1] Thankfulness may modify worship which means worship should take place with heartfelt thanksgiving, Ephesians 5:19, *addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart,*
 - 2] I believe it can modify education and worship since both should produce thanksgiving in the lives of believers.

- d. *Do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus (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.***
 - 1) There are two rules for the Christian life.
 - a) The basic principle of Christian living is to do everything according to God's will found in Jesus Christ.
 - 1] 1 Corinthians 10:31, *So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.*
 - 2] N. Geisler, *...there is no sacred-secular split in God's eyes; He is Sovereign over all.*
 - b) The basic attitude of the Christian life is thanksgiving to God for our new lives in Christ, 1 Thessalonians 5:18, *give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*
 - 2) Everything in the spiritual life points to Christ.
 - a) T. Constable, *When faced with a question about what the Christian should do, Paul taught that we should simply ask ourselves what conduct would be appropriate for one identified with Christ. This approach is vastly different from the legal one that provides a specific command for every situation. In this contrast we see a basic difference between the New and Old Covenants.*
 - b) M. Anders, *Genuine spirituality is not found by following false teaching which leads away from Christ. Genuine spirituality is found in having our lives transformed into the character of Christ.*

CONCLUSION

- A. Christians are to practice what they preach by living what they believe.
- B. There is no room for the old life once one possesses new life in Christ.
- C. Do what pleases the Lord with thanksgiving.