

NOTES FROM STEVEN DRIVER'S SERMON July 2nd am Series in Colossians "Rooted and built up in Christ" Pt 9 "Putting on the new self" Text: Colossians 3 verses 12-17 Scripture references from the ESV

Colossians 3: 12-17 Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, ¹³ 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. ¹⁴ And above all these put on 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 one body. And be thankful. 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. 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.

We often look at people in our culture who have carried out amazing feats of endurance and think 'I could never do that.' This passage in Colossians may have given you a similar feeling! We have already seen the need to put to death all forms of self-worship (**Col 3:1-11**) – a seemingly impossible task in itself, but vital if we are to live out the freedom we have in Christ. We put off our old self by coming to Jesus and declaring that we give him control and that it is Christ's glory that matters not ours. We are to rid ourselves of everything that stands in the way of God and dishonours him. It is a tough thing to do.

However, what Paul talks about here seems to elevate this calling to an even higher level. We are called to replace our self-worship with a life of worship that is completely Christ-centred and is reflected in how we relate to one another.

Pushing the boundaries of the seemingly impossible, as some do in feats of physical endurance, is just a shadow of the actual seemingly impossible life we are called to as Christians. As we set our minds on things above instead of the earthly things to which self-worship draws us, Paul tells us that we are supposed to be a completely distinct people group (**v12-14**). We are:

- **A chosen people** – brought together not by any human connection such as ethnicity or class or because of any quality of our own. We are brought together because God chose us, and because he has chosen us to be part of this particular Christian community.
- **Holy** – we are set apart for God’s glory. Even now, we belong to him and not to this world. We are his people, but not his slaves, because:
- **We are dearly loved** – no other religion can claim that people do not have to earn favour with God. Moreover, we don’t just get favour from God, we also get all of his self-sacrificing love poured out on us. We have a father-child relationship with him, not master-slave.

That seems an impossible identity, yet that is who we are in Christ

A chosen people, holy and dearly loved

God has done an impossible work! We have an identity which crosses every dividing wall of class, age and race that no other people group has ever achieved. We are set apart from the powers of this world, and loved perfectly and unconditionally for all eternity.

That is an impossible identity, made possible by God in Christ

We are called to live out a seemingly impossible reality - a life of Christ-centred corporate worship. We are to live out the freedom that has been won for us, and no longer to be confined by the prison of our self-worship.

- What does worship look like in Christ’s chosen people? We are to clothe ourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

Worship is not just singing. Worship is putting on and living out our new identity in Christ. We cannot fake it!

A look at what **compassion** means makes the point. Literally the word means ‘bowels of mercy’, because it refers to the stomach or entrails where we are physically moved inside by the needs of others. That is impossible to fake, as are kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. We might be able to fool people into thinking we have these things for a while, but it will not last if we seek to do it in our own strength.

The outworking of this worship as Christ’s community, his chosen people, shows as we

- **bear with one another** – we are all Christ’s handiwork and as such we are all a work in progress. None of us are perfect, and if we are honest, we are all a terrible mess! The potential to upset one another and do or say the wrong thing is high. The word patience can be translated as big-hearted and, as a Christian community, that is how we should be to one another.
- **forgive one another** – just as Christ has forgiven us, we need to forgive one another when inevitably we fall short, are weak or have done something that is just plain stupid. However hard it is to be compassionate towards someone who has hurt you, that is what you are called to do.

This worship can be defined by one very clear but mighty word – Love

- **love one another** – over all these virtues put on love (v14). This is not greeting card love, but self-sacrificing agape love. It is a call to live an interconnected, interdependent community life. That life may involve some heartache and certainly will come at a cost, but it is vital for keeping a church full different people from different walks of life together. The Bible does **not** teach that church is just about turning up on Sundays! How we interact with one another should be the clearest distinguishing mark between us and the rest of Broadstone.

**By this, all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another
(John 13:35)**

How do we do this?

We are not to do any of it in our own strength. To attempt to do so would be like trying to make yourself an item of clothing when you have no skill, so that it ends up full of holes and impossible to wear. As we live out our Christian life, we are tempted to try to make it on our own. At best, we end up with something that quickly falls apart and everyone else can see right through.

**It is easier to go to Mars or row across the Atlantic than to live out the Christian life in
our own strength!**

In any case, we have missed the point! While we are trying to put on our home-made compassion, there is a whole heavenly wardrobe in front of us, made by the ultimate master tailor!

Our job is not to create our own love but to open that wardrobe and put on everything Christ has given us so that we can start living out the impossible reality

We can see two things that Christ has given us to empower us to do just that.

1. **Christ gives us his peace (v15).** This takes us back to who we are meant to be worshipping. He is the one who is shaping and moulding us as he calls us to live out this life. He is the only man who has perfectly lived this out.

He is Jesus Christ, the man who saw the crowd one day and was moved to compassion.

- He is the one who sits and eats with the outcasts of society when no one else will.
- He is the one who shows perfect patience to us when we sin against him
- He is the most big-hearted person who ever walked the planet

Christ bears with our fallenness so much.

In fact, he made the way for total forgiveness of our sin by displaying the ultimate expression of love and taking the punishment that we deserve. In doing so, he released us from the captivity of the powers of this world.

It is Jesus Christ that we are to set our hearts and minds on. When we do, we start letting the peace of Christ rule in our hearts and start gaining inner confidence in who we are in him.

That is because his rule is a rule of peace.

Previously, when someone did something that offended or hurt us, we would react in anger and malice. As we recognise who we are in Christ, and live in the freedom and fulness we have in him, we begin to recognise our own sinfulness in any given situation and we will want to resolve the situation for the sake of Christ's glory.

- We will stop and ask ourself: 'What is the reason I am feeling this right now?'

When you feel angry or upset, stop and ask whether this feeling comes out of self-worship or is Christ-centred. Sometimes you may need a third party to resolve a disagreement, but the attitude of members of a Christ-centred community is that of peacemakers – compassionate, kind, humble, gentle and patient. These are people who always seek to bear with one another and are always ready to forgive.

When we let Christ's peace rule in our hearts, love abounds

2. **Christ gives us his Spirit-empowered word (v16).** We have been given the Word of Christ, which is how we are to grow. **Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ (Col 1:28).**
- We are to let his word, the whole of scripture, dwell amongst us, and let it inform and equip us in every part of our life. We need to keep the word before us and not be deflected from reading our Bible. The latter is a trick of the devil to prevent us from growing.
 - We are to teach and admonish one another wisely, not going at it like a bull in a china shop! Consider taking the person to one side and simply asking them how they think God would view what they have said or done.

As we do this, we are promised that the Spirit will work through his word, convicting, encouraging, correcting and conforming us more and more into the likeness of Christ. It is no surprise that the list in this chapter resembles so closely the list in **Galatians 4:22-23:**

**But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,
²³gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.**

The Spirit, who transformed our hearts of stone into hearts of flesh, aligns with the word and impacts our mind, body and soul. Thus our compassion, kindness and humility are not artificial but Spirit-led, and we have Spirit-led love. We are all called to speak the message of Christ over one another, knowing that we are aligning with the Spirit's work of bringing us individually and corporately closer and closer to the likeness of Christ.

One of the fundamental ways we teach and learn is by singing together. It unites us as a corporate body, and many of us come out of our gatherings singing the truths we proclaim! It is easier to remember the words we sing, so it is vital that what we sing is based on the truth of scripture. The songs we sing are not just designed to teach, but to be a corporate expression of our worship to God. When we sing together, we are ministering to one another and are being ministered to by God as we praise him! The Spirit-empowered word is at work in our hearts,

breaking our hearts for what breaks Christ's heart, and transforming us from the inside out into people who are Christ-centred worshippers.

Christ gives us his peace and he gives us his Spirit-empowered Word

Christ makes a way for us to start living out the seemingly impossible Christian life.

- He frees us from the captivity of sin
- His fullness empowers us to put to death all self-worship
- His peace enables us to be peacemakers
- His Word transforms us from the inside out, moulding us more and more into his likeness.

As a result, Paul can say with confidence:

Whatever we do, whether in word or deed, we can do it all in the name of the Lord

Jesus,

giving thanks to God the Father through him

Christ gives you everything you need to put on and live out your new self. You won't do it perfectly. You will be tempted to go back to self-worship and try to do it all yourself, but each time, all you need to do is repent and turn once again to Christ.

Remember that you are chosen, loved and holy.

Then open up that wardrobe and put on the clothes he has designed for you.