

## 02.27.11 / Colossians 3:12-17

**Passage Insight**

Today's passage begins with the words, "Put on then, as God's chosen one . . ." This means that whatever comes next is supposed to stand in direct contradiction to something, that as chosen ones of God, we are to look different than that which is not of God. We are to look different from that which is earthly. In the verses immediately preceding today's passage, verses 5-11, we see a clear picture of that which is earthly. Verse 5 says, "Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry." Verse 8 says, "But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth." If these things are to die in us, then what lives in us instead? Christ lives in us, as we see in verse 11, and we see from this that our own efforts to destroy the fruits of our sin will always fall short. It is solely the power of Christ, who lives in us, who is able to end the reign of sin in our lives and to replace the fruits of sin with the fruits of God. Standing in stark contrast to the earthly things mentioned above, these fruits of God are what lie at the heart of today's passage.

So, what are these fruits of a life lived by the power of God? Verse 12 displays an impressive list when it says, "Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness and patience . . ." Christ in us leads to an ever deepening recognition of our need for grace and the Lord's forgiveness, leading us to, ". . . [forgive] each other, as the Lord has forgiven [us] . . ." Finally, as we understand all the more that which has been done for us in the finished work of Christ, we see the fruit of gratitude in our own lives toward our God.

When these things happen among believers, there is unity among the body, as we see in verse 15, which reads, ". . . let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body." But what is the first step in living out this unity? It is allowing the very truth of God to consume us, to replace the lies of the flesh and of the enemy. When we do this, the results are simple and powerful. When we "Let the word of Christ dwell in [us] richly . . ." we will find ourselves ". . . teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in [our] hearts to God." The fruit of unity is quite simply the result of the complete and total surrender of our lives to the God who Himself is the picture of unity in the form of the Holy Trinity.

Three times in this passage, in verses 15, 16, and 17, we are told that we should be thankful to God as we interact with one another in the body of Christ and live as Christians. The Spirit of God lives inside of all who are saved by Him, and so the truth of the matter is that when we interact with one another in the body of Christ, we are brushing up against God Himself. Gratitude starts with an awareness of our need for Christ's grace, an awareness that only the Lord can provide as He draws us toward Himself and shines light into our darkness. We will only be grateful before God if we see what He has done for us. Christ has saved us from the absolute worst, eternity separated from the Father, and instead given us the absolute best, eternity with the Father. If we're not grateful for the grace He gives us in this, we can't be truly grateful for anything.

Verse 17 is perhaps the summation of what our lives as Christians should be about: "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." When Christ lives in us, there is nothing, absolutely nothing, in our lives that should be done according the flesh. We would all be wise to check our own motivation for our actions and ask that the Lord reveal those motivations which are earthly rather than of Christ.

**Application Questions / Prayer****Unity Among the Body of Christ**

- 1) We are called to peace and unity. What are the factors that you regularly see inhibiting this in the body of Christ?
- 2) Where do you contribute to disunity?
- 3) At the heart of disunity is affection for something other than Christ. Where is your affection for something other than Jesus?
- 4) Your affection for Christ will be kindled and stoked to a raging fire as your awareness of your own need for grace increases. Pray as a group for a better understanding of your own need for grace.

**The Word of Christ Dwelling in Us Richly**

- 1) We are called to let the word of Christ dwell in us richly. What, instead of the word of Christ, do you allow to dwell in you richly?
- 2) According to this passage, what are others in the body of Christ missing out on as a result?
- 3) What do you need to die to in order that you may live by the power of Christ in you?

**Gratitude**

- 1) Verses 15, 16, and 17 all call us to gratitude toward God. Where in your life do you have an attitude of entitlement or dissatisfaction rather than gratitude?
- 2) What's at the heart of this?
- 3) Christ has saved us from the worst and given us the best. If we're not grateful, perhaps we don't understand our need for His saving love. What's getting in the way of your understanding?
- 4) Pray again as a group for a better understanding of your need for the grace of Christ.

**Sources**

- Prayer