

Series: *Colossians: The Supremacy and Sufficiency of Christ*
Part 2: *Living out the Sufficiency of Christ (chapters 3-4)*
Lesson: *All Wrapped Up In Jesus, Part 3 - Our Local Church*
Text: **Colossians 3:12-17 (L11)**
Date: **Sunday, March 25, 2012**

*Colonial Hills
Baptist Church*

Key



= Teacher Information



= Discussion Starter

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TEACHING TIP

Consider timing yourself as you prepare for each lesson, writing down roughly how much time you want to allow yourself per main point, both with the teaching and the discussion. You will probably discover that you want to devote more time to some points than others, and that within those points, you want to devote more time to teaching or discussion. It's helpful to map all that out in your preparation, and then to keep an eye on the clock on Sunday so that you can be guided by your time allotments. For example, with last week's lesson, if I had 35 minutes to teach, I would have aimed for the following time schedule: 3 minutes on the introduction, 7 minutes on main point I (with limited discussion), 20 minutes on main point II (with 10 of those minutes given to discussion), 3 minutes on main point III (with no discussion), and 2 minutes on the conclusion.

In this week's lesson, you will want to avoid getting into a discussion about election (cf. first main point, subpoint 1). A footnote has been provided for the teacher's benefit, but a discussion may cause the focus of the lesson to be missed.

NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

Colossians 3:18-21 – *All Wrapped up in Jesus, Part 4 – Our Family*

INTRODUCTION

Colossians 3:12-17 introduces us to Part 3 of Paul's "Jesus-wrapped" emphasis, addressing our interactions within our local church. The language Paul employs is clearly local church language—"the elect of God," "one another" (3x), "one body," "word of Christ," and "singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs." Paul is demonstrating that especially in our interactions with the "bride of Christ"—the body which Jesus loves and for which He died—we should strive to highlight and live out the sufficiency of Jesus Christ.

In typical Pauline fashion, the author anchors his practical injunctions upon doctrinal indicatives by using the word "therefore." Paul's use of this word in verse 12 should remind us of three realities that compel us to respond in a Jesus-wrapped life. First, we've already been wrapped up by Jesus in our position (chapters 1-2) and, hopefully, in our hearts (3:1-4). Second, behavior is an important focus and it, too, should be "Jesus-wrapped" (3:5-9). Third, the new humanity that Jesus is creating is characterized by unity, which should

then be pursued in all of our interactions (3:10-11). “Therefore,” because of those three truths, we should “put on” Jesus Christ in our local churches.

Paul uses four commands in this passage to emphasize, again, our need to actively cooperate with God’s grace and Jesus’ recreation—“put on” (v. 12), “let rule” (or “must rule,” v. 15) “let dwell” (or “must dwell,” v. 16), and “do” (implied in the Greek in v. 17). Every member of Colonial Hills Baptist Church has a personalized responsibility to wrap this church up in Jesus Christ. How we do that is Paul’s message in verses 12-17. Paul tells the Colossians that they should wrap their church up in Jesus Christ by putting on the character of Christ, the peace of Christ, the Word of Christ, and the honor of Christ.

PUT ON THE CHARACTER OF CHRIST (vv. 12-14).

Paul’s first imperative heads the comments he makes in verses 12-14, which emphasize several virtues that believers should “put on.” We can summarize his teaching here under two considerations, both of which we’ve already seen from Paul’s pen.

1. Remember who you are.

Paul uses three modifiers to describe who the Colossians were “in Christ.” First, they were “the elect of God.”¹ & ² Believers have been chosen by God

¹ While election may not be a popular topic, it is certainly a teaching affirmed in Scripture. The Greek word here is the adjective *eklektos*, meaning “chosen.” It is used in the following places in the New Testament to refer to the doctrine of election—Matthew 24:22, 24, 31; Mark 13:20, 22, 27; Luke 18:7; 23:35 (of Christ); Romans 8:33; 16:13 (of an individual); I Timothy 5:21 (of angels); II Timothy 2:10; Titus 1:1; I Peter 1:1; 2:4, 6 (of Christ); 2:9; II John 1, 13; Revelation 17:14. The verb counterpart of this adjective is *eklegomai*, meaning “to chose.” It also is used in the New Testament to teach the doctrine of election—Mark 13:20; Luke 6:13 (of the disciples); 9:35 (of Christ); John 6:70 (of the disciples); 13:18; 15:16, 19; Acts 6:5 (of Israel); Acts 1:1 (of the apostles); I Corinthians 1:27-28; Ephesians 1:4; James 2:5. Also, cf. John 6:37, 44, 65; Acts 13:48; I Thessalonians 1:4; II Thessalonians 2:13; II Timothy 1:9; Revelation 17:8.

When considering this topic, it is helpful to establish some parameters within which to appropriately understand this doctrine: (1) election is simply the biblical teaching that in eternity past, God chose to save some from the everlasting penalty of their sin unto adoption into His family through the saving work of His Son; (2) this does not mean that God also chose to damn some or that He died only for the elect, for while those conclusions may seem logical, they are extrapolations beyond the biblical text and at times contradict the clear teaching of Scripture; (3) God is both fair/righteous (i.e., He gives what is deserved) and does favors (i.e., He gives some better than what they deserve)—thus, when He does favors for some only, He is still being fair, and no man gets treated less than he deserves; (4) it is best to understand God’s election to be unconditional—that is, His choice was not conditioned upon our future response, but was conditioned solely on His good pleasure (cf. Romans 9:11, 15-16; Ephesians 1:4-6, 11—see footnote 2); (5) unconditional election is an outworking of God’s sovereignty, glory, and grace; (6) election nowhere serves to diminish man’s responsibility to believe in Christ for salvation; (7) election nowhere serves to diminish believers’ responsibility to “preach the gospel” or to be an aspect of our evangelistic message that we bind men with or to be a filter through which we engage in selective evangelism—rather, it motivates evangelism, giving us the hope that some

out of the predicament of sin and into the saving riches of being “in Christ.” Through election, their position, priority, and prospect has been drastically changed (cf. vv. 1-4), and the diligent and “Christ-wrapped” believer will live in this memory.

Second, believers are “holy.” This is not only a reminder of what they will be in practice, but of who they are already “in Christ” (cf. 1:2). They are no longer profane, defiled, corrupt, base, unclean, and destitute; they have become partakers of the divine nature, because Christ was sufficient to reconcile them to God (cf. 1:21-22).

Third, Christians are “beloved.” Identified with their Head, who is also beloved (cf. “dear” in 1:13), believers are loved by God with a unique and everlasting love that will never be broken (Romans 8:31-39), even when their practice fails to conform to their position (Ephesians 1:4-5).

As believers strive to put on the distinct and righteous character of Christ, they should remember that they have already been given that wardrobe—they are “the elect of God, holy and beloved.”

2. Dress the part.

Because of who we are, we should dress the part. That is Paul’s emphasis in verses 12-14. We bear the image of Christ in our position, the name of Christ in our title (i.e., “Christian,” cf. Acts 9:26), and the DNA of Christ in our church (i.e., we are His body). Therefore, we must represent Him well among and to ourselves.

Paul lists several virtues that we should strive to practice one to another. As we learned last week, “put on” literally means to dress or clothe oneself. God would have His people clothe themselves with the character of Christ as they wrap themselves up with Jesus.

will indeed respond in saving faith; (8) the doctrine of election was always meant to be a post-salvation meditation, encouraging believers to worship and service (cf. Ephesians 1:3-6), not excusing them from those responses.

² While some understand I Peter 1:1-2 to contradict this assertion, it is important to understand that “foreknolwedge” is also used in verse 20 to refer to Christ, and Peter probably uses this word the same way in both places. The word is closely related to “election” and consistently refers to knowing people relationally or facts experientially, not knowing future decisions (cf. Acts 2:23; 26:5; Romans 8:29-30; 11:2; II Peter 3:17). Therefore, election based on foreknolwedge (i.e., that God looked down time to see who would exercise faith in Him, and He chose them) is also an extrapolation beyond Scripture. Furthermore, the doctrine of unconditional election (i.e., that God choses based only on His own will and for His own glory) best fits with the sovereignty of God and the doxological focus of all of Scripture.

a. *Mercy*

Concerning “bowels” BDAG informs us that “in the ancient world, inner body parts [often] served as referents for psychological aspects...[e.g.,] of the seat of the emotions,”³ and is therefore often translated as “heart” in modern translations. “Mercy” is a “display of concern over another’s misfortune: pity, mercy, compassion.”⁴ It is a characteristic of God of which we are a blessed recipient (Romans 12:1; Philippians 2:1). God took pity upon us, when we were His miserable enemies. We, therefore, should have compassion on others, even if they are oppressive (Matthew 5:44-45). While we should strive to “put on” mercy, this is a supernatural response of the new man as it empowered by the Holy Spirit.



With any of these virtues, you may start discussion by having your students turn to one of the biblical references cited and asking, “What does this verse teach us about this virtue?”

b. *Kindness*

“Kindness” is “the quality of being helpful or beneficial: goodness, kindness, generosity.”⁵ It is not natural to mankind (Romans 3:12), although God has abundantly displayed it to us (Romans 2:4; I Peter 2:3), most evidently in Christ (Ephesians 2:7; Titus 3:4). Like mercy, “kindness” is a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22); thus, while both virtues are commanded of us, they must be created in us by the power of the Holy Spirit. Moralistic self-effort will not suffice to “put on” the character of Christ. Christ alone is sufficient to continue His saving work in our lives by recreating us into His image.

c. *Humility*

“Humility” is often commanded of believers (Ephesians 4:2; Philippians 2:3; I Peter 5:5), and it ought to be a natural response to an understanding of who we are and who Christ is (cf. Isaiah 6). Godly humility is not a show of self-abasement (cf. 2:18, 23), but is mindset and lifestyle of worship because Christ humbled Himself for us (Philippians 2:5-8). Without this characteristic, Christ and His sufficiency will not be magnified as He ought (John 3:30).

d. *Meekness*

BDAG defines “meekness” as “the quality of not being overly impressed by a sense of one’s self-importance: gentleness, humility, courtesy, considerateness, meekness.”⁶ This definition is certainly borne out in II Corinthians 10:1, in which Paul writes, “Now I, Paul myself, beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, who in presence am base among you, but being absent am bold toward you.”

Like the previous virtues, “meekness” is both commanded of believers (Ephesians 4:2) and a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:23). It is vital to our evangelism (II Timothy 2:25; Titus 2:3; I Peter 3:16), our reception of God’s Word (James 1:21), our discipleship (Galatians 6:1), and our true profession of faith (James 3:13). It doesn’t avoid boldness (I Corinthians 4:21; II Corinthians 10:1), but practices deference when possible, being willing to give up one’s rights and rightness. MacArthur notes, “It is not weakness or spinelessness, but rather the willingness to suffer injury instead of inflicting it. The gentle person knows he is a sinner among sinners and is willing to suffer the burdens others’ sin may impose on him.”⁷ Meekness reflects our Savior (Matthew 11:29).

e. *Patience*

As Colossians 1:11 demonstrates, “patience” (or “longsuffering”-ness) is the “state of remaining tranquil while awaiting an outcome: patience, steadfastness, endurance.”⁸ Those who have been faithful before us provide us an example of this kind of endurance (II Timothy 3:10; Hebrews 6:12; James 5:10).

In some contexts, Christlike “patience” takes on the additional quality of “being able to bear up under provocation: forbearance, patience” (II Corinthians 6:6).⁹ “This is the spirit which never loses its patience with its fellowmen. Their foolishness and their unteachability never drive it to cynicism or despair; their insults and their illtreatment never drive it to bitterness or wrath.”¹⁰ Patience is not natural, but supernatural (Galatians 5:22), and it is the context in which all of our ministry should take place (II Timothy 4:2). It cannot be divorced from the other virtues, for it is essential to a successful Christlike wardrobe (Ephesians 4:2).

³ Arndt, William, Frederick W. Danker, Walter Bauer. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd Ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000. P. 938.

⁴ Ibid., p. 700.

⁵ Ibid., p. 1090.

⁶ Ibid., p. 861.

⁷ MacArthur, John. *Colossians*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1996. P. 155.

⁸ Arndt, p. 612.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ William Barclay. *The Letters to the Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians*. Louisville: Westminster, 1975. P. 158. Quoted in MacArthur, p. 155.

In grace, God is longsuffering in His dealings with us, and provides both the reason and model for our patience (Romans 2:4; I Timothy 1:16; I Peter 3:20; II Peter 3:9, 15).

f. Forbearance

Paul now uses two participles to demonstrate what mercy, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience look like when those clothes are put on. Someone who is wearing the previous virtues will be a “forbearing” and “forgiving” person.

While “forebearing” can carry the idea of “undergoing something onerous or troublesome without giving in”¹¹ or “enduring” (I Corinthians 4:12; II Thessalonians 1:4), it fundamentally means “to regard with tolerance [especially something that is undesirable]: endure, bear with, put up with”¹² (cf. Acts 18:14; II Corinthians 11:1; II Timothy 4:3). This is a characteristic of Christ in His earthly and ongoing ministry (Matthew 17:17; Mark 9:19; Luke 9:41) and should characterize His body, as well (Ephesians 4:2;).

This word is beautifully practical, for there are times in the body of Christ when feelings of mercy, kindness, and love are difficult, and at those times especially we are called upon to simply “put up with” one another. While this should not be our goal, it may at times need to be our practice.

g. Forgiveness

Someone who has clothes himself with the virtues of the new humanity will also be a “forgiving” person, for this is exactly how Christ has dealt with us (i.e., lit. “just as also the Lord graciously forgave you, so also you [must graciously forgive one another]”; cf. 2:13; Ephesians 4:32). As we saw in 2:13, this word for “forgive” means “to show oneself gracious by forgiving wrongdoing”¹³ and is related to the Greek word for “grace.” At the heart of all forgiveness is a demonstration of grace, for there may be a legitimate complaint (i.e., “quarrel”). Here the passage “literally reads, ‘forgiving yourselves’ [reflexive pronoun]. The church as a whole is to be a gracious, mutually forgiving fellowship.”¹⁴ Therefore, forgiveness is a demonstration of grace that can only be practiced in the power of Christ (II Corinthians 2:10; cf. Matthew 6:14-15; 18:21-35).

h. Love

“In all these virtues” (lit.) we must put on “love” (i.e., “charity”) in our churches. “In keeping with the motif of putting on clothes, love is the belt or sash that pulls all these things just mentioned together.”¹⁵ The Colossian believers are instructive for us, for their love was evidently displayed and warmly related to Paul by their pastor (1:4, 8). Love is the trademark of the believer, for it is a trademark of God’s nature (I John 4:8, 16). It is the only marketing tool spoken of in the New Testament (John 13:35) and is a manifestation of the Spirit’s control (Romans 5:5; Galatians 5:22).

Furthermore, without it, Jesus prayer and desire for unity within His body (cf. John 17) cannot be accomplished. Paul saw love as the glue that accomplishes unity, for he echoes his comments in 2:2, writing here that love “is the bond of perfectness” or the perfect bond. “Believers will never enjoy mutual fellowship through compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, or patience; they will not bear with each other or forgive each other unless they love one another. In fact, the way to sum up the commands of 3:12–13 is to say, ‘Love one another.’ Paul said in Romans 13:10 that ‘love does no wrong to a neighbor; love therefore is the fulfillment of the law.’¹⁶ Without love, the prejudices of the old humanity will continue to thrive (3:10-11), and our practice of these virtues will be legalistic and unpleasing to God (I Corinthians 13:1-3).



Application: How should we respond as “doers” of the Word to verses 12-14? (1) Remember who you are and strive to dress the part. A reoccurring meditation on your position in Christ as elect, holy, and beloved will always provide a standard and motive for obedience. (2) These virtues are headed by the command to “put them on”—in our part of sanctification, we often focus on “putting off” sin and fail to aggressively practice positive righteousness. Consider targetting one of the above virtues, one that you see lacking in your wardrobe, and map out a process whereby you will practice putting it on. (3) Make sure that all of your “putting on” is done [a] in light of your position, as an expression of obedience and worship, [b] in dependence upon the Holy Spirit, lest your self-effort lead to legalism or externalism, without the virtues taking root in your heart and being long-lasting, and [c] in the context of love, which can only be produced by [a] and [b]. (4) Consider how these virtues should be applied to situations of disagreement regarding preferences, “gray issues,” and standards within the church – the differing parties should still display these Christ-like characteristics one toward another (cf. Romans 14).

¹¹ Arndt, p. 78.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid., p. 1078.

¹⁴ MacArthur, p. 156.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

Transition: To maintain a Jesus-wrapped local church, believers must first put on the character of Christ in their interactions with one another. Secondly, they must put on the peace of Christ.

PUT ON THE PEACE OF CHRIST (v. 15).

The peace of Christ is both objective and subjective. Objectively, Christ has accomplished peace for us with God (Romans 5:1; Ephesians 2:14)—“the war between the believer and God is over, and the treaty was paid for by the blood of Christ.”¹⁷ Therefore, believers can enjoy the subjective attitude of being at rest or secure (John 14:27; Philippians 4:7).¹⁸

The word “rule” was used in compound form in 2:18 to refer to the false teachers who were acting as umpires deciding the outcome of an athletic event. BDAG defines this word as being “in control of someone’s activity by making a decision: be judge, decide, control, rule.”¹⁹ MacArthur applies this understanding of “rule” quite helpfully:

*The peace of Christ guides believers in making decisions. When faced with a choice, the believer should consider two factors. First, is it consistent with the fact that he and Christ are now at peace and thus on the same side? Does it perpetuate that oneness with the Lord that is the believer’s possession?...Second, will it leave him with a deep and abiding peace in his heart? These two factors are also the two greatest deterrents to sin in the believer’s life. Sin offends Christ, with whom he is at peace, and thereby shatters the rest and security in his heart.*²⁰

More specifically to the context at hand, Paul wants this “peace of Christ” to “rule,” controlling our decisions and interactions, within our local churches. He just wrote that love was “the perfect bond” (3:14) to unite believers in the church of Christ’s new humanity (3:10-11). Consider three observations about this relational and local church application of the peace of Christ.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 157.

¹⁸ “This verse has been a favourite with Christians for it is claimed that Christ’s peace will act as a kind of umpire within our hearts, giving us some private and inward peace of the soul when we need guidance or help in making a decision. But *the peace of Christ* does not refer to a private and inward peace of the soul. Instead, it is the peace He embodies and brings (cf. Jn. 14:27) and is equivalent to salvation. Further, it is not a question of Christ’s peace ‘acting as an umpire’. Rather the verb means to rule; Christ Himself, who is the Lord of peace (cf. Eph. 2:14; 2 Thes. 3:16), is to be present and ruling in their midst. He is to control every area of their lives as they relate to one another. Since the Colossians are said to have been called into this peace (through the gospel), then it must also describe the realm or sphere in which they, as members of Christ’s body, now live” (Carson, D. A. *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, 4th Ed. Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994. Colossians 3:12–17.).

¹⁹ Arndt, p. 183.

²⁰ MacArthur, p. 157.

1. Where should Christ’s peace “rule”?

Paul commands us to be ruled by peace “in our hearts.” We cannot always make peace rule in our relationships, but can only, “if it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men” (Romans 12:18). We cannot always make peace rule in our circumstances, for a sin-cursed world brings much trouble (Job 5:7). Nonetheless, we can always allow peace to control our hearts.



You can begin discussion on each point by having your students answer each question, rather than simply providing the answers to these points.

2. Why should Christ’s peace “rule”?

Again, Paul grounds his imperative to an indicative, reminding the believers that they “were in fact called as one body to this peace” (NET). Believers have been redeemed from prejudice and division unto “one new man” (Ephesians 2:11-22; cf. Colossians 3:11).

3. How may Christ’s peace “rule”?

The verse ends with the admonition to “be ye thankful.” Thankfulness is the channel through which peace flows. One cannot rehearse the objective realities of “peace in Christ” without having that peace dominate his heart and mind. This was Paul’s teaching in Philippians 4:6-9, too—through prayerful thanksgiving (right praying), godly meditation (right thinking), and obedience (right doing), “the peace of God...shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” and “the God of peace shall be with you.” Peace and thanksgiving, then, are closely linked.



Application: The application is obvious—we must cultivate a habit of thanksgiving and of reminding ourselves of the objective peace of God, in order that we may be a harmonious body of believers. This will also mean that we will have to cause other things to cease ruling in our hearts, lest they destroy the unity that God wants to characterize His people. What can we be thankful for as a local assembly that will allow peace to continue to make our decisions for us in our interactions with one another? *Open discussion.* What things do we need to keep from ruling in our hearts in order for peace and harmony—i.e., unity—to characterize our church? *Open discussion.*

Transition: We should wrap our church up in Jesus Christ. To do that, we must clothe ourselves with Christ’s character and peace, both of which flow from a mind that is dominated by Scripture. Therefore, we learn thirdly that in order to wrap up our church in Jesus Christ, we must put on the Word of Christ.

PUT ON THE WORD OF CHRIST (v. 16).

In grammatical parallelism with verse 15, Paul commands that the Word of Christ also control local church believers.

In a letter which emphasizes the person and work of Christ, Paul refers to the Word of Christ, rather than ‘the word of God’ (1:25)...Of Christ could mean that Christ Himself is the speaker when His word is proclaimed, but it probably refers to the message that centres on Christ, the Word of Truth, i.e. the gospel (1:5). That Word is to have its gracious and glorious way in their lives, individually and as a community. The rich indwelling of Christ’s word (cf. Rom. 8:11; 2 Cor. 6:16; 2 Tim. 1:5 for the indwelling of God himself, the Holy Spirit and faith) would occur when they came together, listened to this Word as it was expounded to them and bowed to its authority.”²¹

Such a control by Christ’s Word should be both internal and external.

1. *We must put on Christ’s Word internally.*

“To dwell” means “to live in or be at home in.” God’s Word should take up residence and be at home in our lives. “Richly” demonstrates the extent to which God’s Word should live within us—it should abundantly or exceedingly possess our lives. MacArthur explains what this looks like, “The Word dwells in us when we hear it (Matt. 13:9), handle it (2 Tim. 2:15), hide it (Ps. 119:11), and hold it fast (Phil. 2:16). To do those things, the Christian must read, study, and live the Word.”²² In Colossians’ sister-letter, Ephesians, Paul demonstrates that letting the Word of Christ dwell in us is identical to allowing the Holy Spirit to control us (Ephesians 5:18).²³ Thus, this third point of our outline is crucial to the first—the character of Christ cannot be manifested unless it is cultivated by the Holy Spirit within us, and the Holy Spirit works through the Word. “The Word in the heart and mind is the handle by which the Spirit turns the will.”²⁴

²¹ Carson, Colossians 3:12–17.

²² Ibid., p. 158.

²³ “It is clear that these two concepts are identical because the passages that follow each are so similar. Colossians 3:18-4:1 is a more brief parallel to Ephesians 5:19-6:9. The result of being filled with the Holy Spirit is the same as the result of letting the Word dwell in one’s life richly. Therefore, the two are the same spiritual reality viewed from two sides. To be filled with the Spirit is to be controlled by His Word. To have the Word dwelling richly is to be controlled by His Spirit. Since the Holy Spirit is the author and the power of the Word, the expressions are interchangeable” (ibid.).

²⁴ Ibid.

2. *We must put on Christ’s Word externally.*

When Scripture truly possesses our heart and mind as its dwelling place, it will seek to impact its neighbors, too. The KJV confuses the punctuation a bit in this verse, but we can still see two evidences of a Word-filled life.

a. *Through ministry*

First, a Word-filled heart will express itself by “teaching and admonishing one another with all wisdom.” This phrase echoes, almost verbatim, 1:28—“We preach [Christ], warning every man and teaching [or *admonishing*] every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.” This was Paul’s ministerial mission, and he labored diligently toward that end (1:29).

“Teaching” is the positive imparting of truth and the instruction of appropriate response to such truth. Teaching is a natural response to having the God-breathed Scriptures (II Timothy 3:16-17), and all believers are expected to engage in teaching one another as part of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:20). The Greek word for “warning” means “to counsel about avoidance or cessation of an improper course of conduct: admonish, warn, instruct.”²⁵ Paul regularly engaged in such counsel (cf. Acts 20:31; I Corinthians 4:14) and thereby modeled what should be the constant conversation between believers (Romans 15:14). MacArthur begins the application, “If there is sin in the life of a believer, other believers have the responsibility to lovingly, gently admonish them to forsake that sin.”²⁶ Therefore, teaching and admonition must be undertaken with great care or “wisdom.”

b. *Through worship*

Second, a heart that houses God’s Word will also be heard in worship—“singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with grace in your hearts to God.” “Psalms were taken from the Old Testament psalter, the book of Psalms...[and] put to music.... Hymns were expressions of praise to God.... Spiritual songs emphasized testimony (cf. Rev. 5:9–10). They express in song what God has done for us.”²⁷ This singing should (1) flow from an understanding and appreciation of God’s grace, (2) reflect a sincere agreement between our mouth and our heart (i.e., “in your hearts”; cf. Amos 5:23), and (3) be directed primarily to God in worship for His character and work (i.e., “to the Lord”), which will secondarily serve to accomplish teaching and admonition.

²⁵ Arndt, p. 679.

²⁶ MacArthur, p. 78.

²⁷ MacArthur, p. 159.



Application: While church leaders should be the first line of defense against a local church’s drift away from God’s Word (II Timothy 4:1-5), everyone in the church has a responsibility to put on the Word of God in our interactions one with another. How can we do this? (1) *Chose to read, study, meditate upon, and memorize God’s Word so that your decisions, responses, pursuits, conversations, etc. are the offspring of a Word-inhabited heart.* (2) *Move beyond casual conversation in the foyer into Word-filled conversation about life, problems, decisions, etc.* (3) *Chose to take ownership of “teaching and admonishing,” by lovingly and boldly counseling people to righteousness and away from sin, even at times when such counsel is unsolicited.* (4) *Practice singing according to instructions in this verse, not just mindlessly following a tune, but engaging in heart-initiated worship.*

Transition: In order to have a Christ-wrapped local church, we must finally put on the honor of Christ.

PUT ON THE HONOR OF CHRIST (v. 17).

“The simplest, most basic rule of thumb for living the Christian life is to do everything, whether word or deed, in the name of the Lord Jesus. To do everything in the name of Jesus is to act consistently with who He is and what He wants. Paul expressed the same thought in 1 Corinthians 10:31: ‘Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.’...To put on the new lifestyle is to put on Christ. That is the obligation of every believer: ‘Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts’ (Rom. 13:14).”²⁸

1. Scope

Both in everything we say (i.e., “in word”) and in everything we do (i.e., “in deed”), we must magnify Christ, bringing honor, not reproach, to His name. And, it’s not just men who are watching, but the invisible hosts as

²⁸ Ibid. **Illustration:** “I wonder if you have read that moving story of Jerome K. Jerome’s called *The Passing of the Third Floor Back*? Roughly, the tale is of a poor class lodging house, where lived a heterogeneous company of needy and seedy folk, and where there was a poor, ignorant little servant girl, a good deal of a slut, and ready to sell her virtue for a worthless trinket. Into the place there came one day a lodger who at once seemed to be different, and who occupied the third floor back. He quickly revealed himself to have a very kind heart and way. He always had a kindly word for the little slavery, usually so ignored and downtrodden. She almost worshipped him. The other lodgers, too, owed him much for his many deeds of helpfulness. He was always doing something for somebody, in his kindly, sympathetic way. At last the day came for him to move elsewhere. The little maid watched him, open-eyed, as he walked with his bit of luggage to the front door; and as he turned to her with a smile and a gentle pat on the shoulder, she took her leave of him with the words, “Please, are you ‘I’m?’” (King, Guy H. *Crossing the Border*. Fort Washington, PA: Christian Literature Crusade, 1974. Pp. 92–93.) Believers should so clothe themselves with Jesus Christ that when people look at them, they see Christ” (Ibid.).

well (Ephesians 3:10; cf. Job’s experience). Even if they weren’t watching, Christ is worthy of our honor (cf. Isaiah 6; Revelation 5:12-14)!

2. Manner

Once again, Paul addresses the theme of thanksgiving (cf. 1:3, 12; 2:7; 3:15, 16, 17; 4:2), this time showing that thanksgiving contributes to bringing Christ honor and glory. We should “give thanks to God the Father by Him [i.e., Christ].” The best way to magnify God is by talking well of Him. Thus, striving to glorify Christ with our life is “always to be done without reluctance or despair or legalistic duty, but with giving thanks through [Christ] to God the Father.”²⁹

Application: Be thankful, put on Christ Jesus, concern yourself with His reputation, and contribute to a local church that points all eyes heavenward.

CONCLUSION

“Guy H. King relates the following story: ‘Years ago I was leading the Children’s Special Service Mission at one of our South Coast holiday resorts. As I was approaching the beach one morning, this little fellow was going along there, too. As he caught sight of me, he said, “Mummie, here comes the JESUS man.” He only meant that I was the man who spoke to the children about the Savior; but his remark meant far more to my heart that day. What right had I—have I—to be called a JESUS man? What degree of resemblance is there about us?’”³⁰

Paul’s burden was that the believers to whom he wrote at Colossae be known collectively as a “JESUS church.” For that to happen, they would have to wrap themselves up in the character of Christ, the peace of Christ, the Word of Christ, and the honor of Christ. May we, at Colonial Hills Baptist Church, do the same!

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.