

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

Putting on Righteousness Colossians 3:12-17

So we will read Colossians 3:12-17 this morning, the section we are in, “And so, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. And beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful. Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.”

So, we will be looking at how to put on righteousness this morning after having looked at how to put off sin last week. Three weeks ago we looked at how to pursue God with our heart and our mind. Really, if we are going to ask God to take our heart, take our mind and take our will then we need to be pursuing Him with our heart, with our mind. We need to set our mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. We need to keep seeking the things above, not the things that are on earth.

So hopefully that’s your heart, your mind’s attitude. But we still have a choice to make and that’s where our will comes in. We must choose to put on righteousness. And so these passages help to put us in a position to make that choice, this morning.

Now verse 12 starts off with an interesting phrase. “***And so as those who have been chosen of God.***” So we are going to look first of all at who we are in Christ.

This summer I will be heading back to Georgia. I go there every summer. I spend at least a week there in the summer. I go to a small town of about 10,000 people in a county of about 36,000 people. There is not a whole lot to do there so I get a chance to read and think about things. One of the things I think about is churches. I drive around and I look at churches. Someone drives me around actually, I don’t get to drive when I’m there, other people drive me places and I look at the churches I pass by.

I look in the phone book and I look in the newspaper for churches. I counted all the churches one time. You won’t be surprised that the most common church back there in the so-called “Bible-belt” is Baptist. I counted in a town of 10,000 people, in a county of 36,000 people, 49 Baptist churches. I wondered to myself, how did we get 49 Baptist churches in this town?

It’s interesting; one way that there are different churches is because there are doctrinal reasons and verse 12 hits the doctrinal reason why there are so many different churches. As we look at who we are in God we come face to face with this phrase “*chosen of God*” and this is one reason why you have different churches. Because some people believe that man chooses God and other people believe that God chooses man. Some people will read the phrase “*chosen of God*” and believe that well everyone is chosen of God. Or they will say that God chooses people but His choice depends on whether they chose Him and once they choose Him then He chooses them.

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Other people like myself read this for what it says, it says chosen of God and that means that there are people that are chosen of God. This isn't just one verse, there are many, many verses in the New Testament that explain this. He thinks it is a pretty important concept and He thinks it is so important that it pops up in so many books, in fact in long sections of books like Romans chapter 9.

He says just in one place within a whole theme about this subject “***then does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy (Romans 9:16).***” Jesus put it this way, in fact that same chapter that we sung about and that Mark read to you, John 15, He said this, “***you did not chose me but I chose you and appointed you (John 15:16).***” So here we are face to face with the chosen of God.

Now not everybody believes those words and that's why you have the Primitive Baptists and the Progressive Baptists; the Freewill Baptists and the Calvinist Baptists; the General Baptists and the Particular Baptists; the Separatist Baptists, the Missionary Baptists, and they all disagree on this point.

My favorite is the Duck River Association of Baptists. Actually there are two Duck River Association of Baptists. There's the Duck River Association of Baptists that believe in free will, that God allows people to chose Him for salvation and He then chooses them. Then there is the Duck River Association of Baptists that believe that God chooses people for salvation, they both claim the title Duck River Association of Baptists.

Then there is the United Baptist, the United Baptist believe that this isn't something that should divided people and so they believe you can believe whatever you want and we can be united, but don't get them confused with the United Freewill Baptist. So this is one reason why there are 49 churches in this town.

Obviously, Paul didn't stick this phrase in there because he wanted people to be un-united and arguing about things. I think he stuck this in there for a good reason. He was trying to bring about the purpose of his writing, which is to bring holiness about. I think we would have to conclude that this isn't to cause us to stumble but to cause us to grow.

So the meaning of chosen of God, the reason for the doctrine of election is important for growing in righteousness is because it is our need to appreciate God's grace. As we appreciate God's grace more and more we will be in a better and better position to respond to Him in righteousness, then we won't just sing about holiness and righteousness we will actually have a greater and greater development of that within our lives. Now this appreciation of God's grace really has two sides to it. On the one side if we appreciate God's grace we will come to recognize our inabilities more and more. That we are not as smart as we think we are, we are not as worthy as we think we are.

When I was young in the faith I remembered the calculated, cold, hard decision that I made to follow God and that's what I thought happened, that I weighted the facts and I said I think I choose to follow God out of my free will. Then as I read more and more of the Scripture I came face to face with these phrases. I'm chosen of God, predestined before the foundation of the earth and I had to conclude that might have been how looked from my vantage point, but really God was acting and I was only responding to His initiative.

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So He makes me more humble, more appreciative of His grace because it wasn't my great decision that I made--that other people weren't making--but it was simply God's grace in our life, my life, apart from any ability that I had or great decision that I made.

But on the other side of this is, if its God's grace then His grace is able and sufficient to accomplish what His purposes are. This is His work within us not simply our work to work out ourselves. And this is the other phrase we see as we focus on who we are in Christ. We see the word "holy," as those who have been chosen in God, holy, we are chosen for the purpose of holiness.

He didn't just choose us to save us from hell, He chose us so that we could become holy, ultimately we will be holy, we will be completely pure when we are in His presence in heaven. For now we are in the process of putting on holiness and putting off unrighteousness. But that's His purpose for choosing us, that's His stated purpose. Whatever the reasons behind it are not fully revealed to us, but the goal for our being a Christian is holiness and being beloved. Holy and beloved, God chose us because He loved us, He loved us.

Romans 5:8 puts it this way, ***"and when we were yet sinners, God demonstrated His love for us."*** Before we knew Him, while we were still in our sin, God loved us and sent His Son to die for us. What a wonderful love. So because we are holy, because we are beloved, because we are chosen, this should move us to want to pursue Him with our will, to make the decisions in our lives that will bring about righteousness.

Now to our next section. How we should be through Christ. Moving from who we are in Christ, chosen of God, holy and beloved, to how we should be through Christ. Through Christ's power, He has a desire for us to put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience, bearing with one another, forgiving each other. Whoever has a complaint against anyone just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you forgive. Beyond all these put on love which is the perfect bond of unity. We should be putting these on. Not just in our actions but in our heart. Put on a heart of these things within ourselves, within our being, righteousness and holiness must be dwelling in us.

First we will look at letting Christ's righteousness reside in our heart. These items that are listed out for us, we'll look at these. First is compassion, put on a heart of compassion. What is compassion? Compassion is the manifestation of sympathetic feelings toward another. We see that in Jesus. Hebrews 4:15 says, ***"We do not have a high priest who can not sympathize with our weakness but one who has been tempted in all things yet without sin."***

We have been tempted also, and when we are tempted, we sin. Christ was tempted but He didn't sin. In that temptation it helps us to appreciate the temptations that others undergo and we can be sympathetic as Christ is sympathetic with the weakness of others and be compassionate, put on that heart of compassion, that's what the Lord did, so should we.

In addition to compassion, kindness. What is kindness? Kindness is a helpful spirit that seeks to meet the needs of others in a friendly manner. If we are kind we will seek to help others meet their needs in a friendly manner. Not just "Hi, how are you doing? Nice to see you" sort of friendliness but a friendliness that really loves, that really extends itself.

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Jesus was friendly wasn't He? He was even friendly at times when He said strong things to people, like to Peter, He said, "get behind me Satan," He rebuked him at one point in time. To help Peter, to help him become more like the Lord would like him to be, more holy, more righteous. So we can be friends to people, we can be helpful, kind. And in that, we might even be rebuking.

Proverbs says, "Better is the blows of a friend than the kisses of an enemy (Proverbs 27:6)."

Humility, putting humility in our hearts. What's humility? Humility is regarding others as more important than yourself. Philippians 2:3 says this and then goes on to explain that in 2:5, "Have this attitude to yourselves it was also in Christ Jesus." He gave Himself for us. He humbled Himself to the point of death. He considered others as more important and put their needs ahead of His needs. If we are humble, we will put others needs ahead of our needs. That kind of a heart is what we should be putting on.

Gentleness is the next item. Gentleness is a submissiveness to God that brings caring to the lives of others. If we are gentle, we will be caring and gentleness as is described in this illustration in 1 Thessalonians 2:7-8, "But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing {mother} tenderly cares for her own children. Having thus a fond affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us." So as we seek to care for people we impart to them our lives. We seek to help them grow. That caring is gentleness.

Patience. Patience is being long suffering in unpleasant circumstances. And we all have unpleasant circumstances. We can be long suffering in unpleasant circumstances because of our hope for God's will to be done. If we have no hope that God's will is ever going to be done, then we might lose patience, we might feel like we are very stuck. But if we are having that hope we will be able to be patient. James 5:7-8 describes this, it gives the illustration of a farmer being patient as he plants, then verse 8 makes the application, you are to be patient, strengthen your hearts for the coming of the Lord is at hand. The coming of the Lord will be here and He will fix everything, we can be patient for that We can also have patience knowing that He is able to do what He wants to accomplish, being patient and trusting.

Bearing with one another is the next one, verse 13. Bearing with one another is being willing to continue to endure people who are causing difficulties. You cause difficulties, you want people to bear with you. I cause difficulties, I want people to bear with me. So we should be enduring people who are causing difficulties. Romans 15:1-2 speaks of this, it says "Now we who are strong ought to bear with the weakness of those without strength not just to please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor for his good for his edification." People are weak, we should bear with them.

Next is forgiving. Forgiving is continuing to desire good for someone who has caused harm. Continuing to desire good for someone. Forgiving isn't just forgetting. Jesus didn't just forget when you sin. He wants to help you. Hebrews 13 says "whom the lord loves He disciplines."

So when you do things that are rebellious, He loves you and is trying to help you not do that. He responds to that for good, for your good. So He forgives you in this sense, He continues to try to seek for your good.

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Doesn't mean He forgets, doesn't mean He treats it as if it never happened, but it does mean He continues to seek for the good, to build you, to develop you. Because He does this for you so should you for others. Forgiving each other, who ever has a complaint against anyone. Just as the Lord forgave you so you should also. He is our model. And what did He say when He was enduring harm? When He was on the cross He said, "Father forgive them they do not know what they are doing." And Steven echoed those same words when he said, "don't hold this sin against them" as he was being put to death in Acts 7. So we should be forgiving as God has forgiven us.

Love is the next one. Love is the central moral quality that brings a mature heart-felt connection within a fellowship of believers. That comes from verse 14, "beyond all things put on love which is the perfect bond of unity." This bond of unity is like the glue that holds us together because love is the fulfillment of the law according to Romans 13:8. Earlier in the book Colossians 2:2 there is a phrase that said this, it described the Colossians as having been knit together in love. In love they were formed together, knit together, bonded together, glued together, they had a unity because of the love that they had for each other. So if we love we will be unified.

Now, all of these items here in this list that we have gone through should sound very similar to the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23, "the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control." Those sort of things are coming from the Holy Spirit within us and as we are yielding ourselves to the Spirit these attitudes are dwelling within our heart and become manifested.

Each one of these qualities, as the fruit of the Spirit, brings unity. They build to bring unity in the church.

And though I said earlier that one reason there are 49 churches in this town in Georgia, not a special town, an average town, I suspect it is mirrored across the South and I think it is found to some degree even here. There is more than just a doctrinal reason, there is a moral reason why there are so many different churches. It is because people cannot get along. They cannot be unified. They are not being submitting to the Lord, they are not pursuing the Lord with all their heart and their mind and their will and as a result, these character qualities that we have just read in the Scripture are not being manifested, and because these are not being manifested then there becomes arguments, disagreements, complaints and ultimately division. So we'll go start our own church because these people are just to difficult to live with.

We want unity and that is one of the themes of this chapter. Love brings the perfect bond of unity, but there is more.

The next part of putting on Christ righteousness is to let Christ peace rule within our hearts.

This word rule is used for an umpire, a referee. Like an umpire who has the authority in a game to determine the application of the rules and to decide who has violated the rules and like the people playing the game to respect the authority of the umpire, the referee, Christ peace must rule in our heart. If His peace is ruling in our heart, we will find unity. We can put it this way, if Christ is the referee that guides our relationships then the body of Christ will be unified and at peace.

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Psalm 133:1 says, “how good it is for brothers to dwell together in unity.” If Christ is the judge, His word is the means by which we are living our life and we will not be in dispute with each other, arguing about things that are not essential, we will be able to be unified and at peace. We will be looking to put the needs of others above us and bearing with one another, forgiving each other and be at peace. But only if Christ is the referee can we live in peace.

The next thing to do if we are to have Christ righteousness in us, we are to put that on and put off sin to let Christ’s Word richly dwell in our heart. Verse 16 says, “**let the Word of Christ richly dwell within you.**” Because these things, these moral character qualities are not going to be accomplished apart from the Word of God. Let the Word of God richly dwell within you. Not just once in a while, as you think about it, but richly dwell within you.

How does that happen? How can we let God’s word richly dwell within us? Well it requires several things and I will list them out for you.

First, it requires an attraction to God’s Word. And interest in God’s Word. We need to be wanting to know God’s Word. This is something that comes from God. It is not something that we can create ourselves. So if God is at work in our lives, we will begin to be interested in what He says and we will be attracted to His Word. So we need that, we need that desire.

The next thing we need is an acceptance of God’s Word. We have to see that it is what it says it is. Inspired of God and truthful. We need to accept it because there are many people that are reading God’s Word but they don’t accept it as the Word of God, as the authority, as for what it is intended to accomplish, which is to equip us for every good work. So if we don’t see it as the authority in our lives then we won’t be having it richly dwell within us. It may be information but it won’t be information that we are responding to as it was designed for us to respond to.

Beyond acceptance and attraction is attentiveness. An attentiveness to God’s Word, giving it some attention to what it says. So many things are crying for our attention, pay attention to this, pay attention to that, and the Word of God can begin to dissipate because other things are attracting our attention. We must give attentiveness to the Word of God if it is going to richly dwell within us. Its words must be of interest and intrigue to ourselves, attentiveness.

Beyond that is absorption. Have it absorbed into our being. Inculcated into our life, apart of ourselves. There are lots of things that we have learned about and remembered and become apart of our lives. And that is true for everybody here. And I know that you may have a hard time remembering things but you remember some things and some things have become a part of your life. It is possible. And so God’s Word must be absorbed into your life so you can retain His Word, so you can keep it. And even better, so that you can pass it along to someone else in time of need. So you can continue in it, absorbing it.

Next is accuracy. It is not enough to just know it, have it within you. You must know it accurately. Not twisted, not pretending it says something it doesn’t. I’ve met people that think they know what the Word says. They can quote it back to you, but they don’t use it very accurately.

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We need to give some attention to what it says in its truthfulness, what it really means by what it says, not just checking off a box--I memorized it--this sort of thing.

And finally and most importantly is applying it. The application of God's Word is essential if it is going to richly dwell in you. Because this is its purpose, to change your life. Application, if you don't use it you will lose it. If it is not apart of you in what you actually do then it's just going to be information. If it's just information it may be retained in your brain for awhile but it isn't going to take on the significance it deserves. Application.

The places in the Scripture that I have applied are the places that I remember and know most well because it has made a difference in my life, it has changed my life. If I don't have it change my life it will just pass, so application is really pivotal in letting Christ Word richly dwell within you. So having His Word, purely coming to Him.

I probably own more Christian books than you do. I probably have read more Christian books than you have, at least most of you, but that's no substitute for the Word of God. It's not what somebody says about it, it's what it says that enables it to dwell richly within you. So hopefully you will give attention to God's Word richly dwelling within you so that you can have a manifestation of the character qualities that the Lord would have for you.

Now as we read the rest of this verse, verse 16, "let the word of Christ richly dwell with in you with all wisdom, teaching, admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your heart." We see what results from God's Word richly dwelling within us. And as we see what results from Gods Word richly dwelling within us, that sounds very familiar, I hope. It sounds very familiar to Ephesians 5:18 because those same things result from being filled with the Spirit in Ephesians 5:18.

So I think we can conclude this, being filled with the Spirit and letting Christ Word richly dwell within you are synonymous to one another. They are part of the same thing. If we are being filled with the Spirit we are letting Christ Word richly dwell within us. If we are not letting Christ's Word richly dwell within us, we can't be filled with the Spirit. We need both. Having Him dwell within us and yielding ourselves to the will of God, being filled with the Spirit.

And these things are this, "with all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your heart to God." So it results in teaching and admonishing each other. If the Word of Christ is dwelling within us we will be teaching others. We will be admonishing others and this should harken you back to a passage we dwelt with earlier on in Colossians 1:28-29, which says, "and we proclaim him admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom that we may present every man complete in Christ. For this purpose I labor, striving according to his power which mightily works within me."

So this is the purpose of a church, to proclaim Him by admonishing and teaching. So the Word of God must be dwelling within us richly so that we are in position to admonish one another, so that teaching will flow out from us for the purpose of presenting other people complete in Christ, mature as God has intended it, so that their lives will be manifesting the Word of God so that they will be able to teach and admonish one another as well and will move on to maturity.

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Now what's interesting about this teaching and admonishing with all wisdom is that vehicle by which it is done, with all wisdom, teaching, admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your heart to God.

These songs I think are reflecting back to the songs of the Old Testament. And hymns are songs of praise to God, that's what that means. And spiritual songs are any songs with spiritual significance to them. So the means by which we are teaching and admonishing is by singing songs. Music is a means of instruction, so this is why we have music. It's not just to keep your toe tapping, that you enjoy it, that you sing along with it, its groove, that it's really cool. No, it's to instruct you. It's so that you can be built up in the faith and you can be taught and you can be admonished. This is why the words of the songs are important, not just the groove to them.

This is why, I think, the hymns we sing have lasted and have some continuity through the many years. Of course when Paul wrote this, believe it or not, some people might have a hard time believing this, these hymns were not written yet. But they were written quite a while ago, and it's not just because they have a catchy tune to them, though in some they do, but it's because many of them have depth of meaning and give an ability to be taught and admonished in the words of those hymns.

I suspect that the songs we sing that will have a greater lasting value to the church will be those songs that have greater depth of meaning to them rather than some piece of fluff that we don't really grasp much about God. This is one purpose of our music ministry and this is one reason why I think people are motivated to write music, to instruct, to admonish, and some, I think, of our best songs we sing are written by some people in this congregation.

Now, you may not be a song writer, you may not be a musician, that sort of thing, but you can still do this, you can still pass music to other people and use it to instruct. Because somehow God has put within the human nature, the human being, a sense of music and there's a connection to music. And as we use music as a means of instruction I find that we can see ministry increase in the lives of others. It's useful, it's also a manifestation of God's Word richly dwelling within us.

What else is a manifestation of God's Word richly dwelling within us? Another manifestation of God's Word richly dwelling within us is continually expressing thankfulness to God. Continually, it says in the present tense, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. It's not just in verse 16, it's in verse 15, "and be thankful," it's in verse 17, "giving thanks through Him to God the Father."

Thanksgiving is an essential element of the Christian life, that we can exhibit thankfulness to God. If Christ's Word is richly dwelling within us it will happen. We will not be the kind of person that grumbles and complains and finds all the problems--though there are problems, things that need to be addressed and need to be corrected, no doubt--but our attitude will be more thankful than grumbling and complaining and discontented because God's Word is dwelling in us and we will be able to see His work around us and be able to thank Him for what He is doing. All underserved, no person deserves it, but yet He in His grace is bringing goodness to the lives of people, even to unbelievers.

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Matthew 5 says He sends rain to the righteous and unrighteous and He sends His sun to shine on the righteous and unrighteous, so when we see goodness happen we can be thankful to God. That is a manifestation of the Word dwelling within us. Hopefully that is in your heart, thankfulness. It really should be.

Now the last thing we look at, after what we should be in Christ, is what we should do. This is verse 17. What we should do for Christ. “And what ever you do in word or in deed do all in the name of the Lord Jesus giving thanks through him to God the Father.” This everything in the name of the Lord Jesus is essentially saying according to His will. The name of Jesus, the name of someone is their being and doing all according to the Lord Jesus, what He desires, what He is interested in, His will.

We should do His will. We should do His will in word, in what we say. Whatever you do in word, not the slander, malice, abusive speech of what we should put aside but what we should put on. The teaching, the admonishing one another, the helping words that edified.

What we should do in deeds. Not the destructive behavior of immorality and evil desire, but the righteous behavior of humility, gentleness, compassion, bearing with one another, loving, forgiving. Doing God’s will in deed and even doing God’s will in prayer. Giving thanks through Him to God the Father, not just saying, “God, I need this,” “God, I need that,” “God, I need the other thing,” but thankfulness should be a central part of your prayer life, because God is giving grace and we should be thankful for it.

What is most interesting about verse 17 is where it is. In this section of an exhortation to grow in our relationship to God, it’s at the end. So it doesn’t start out with a call to do God’s will, it concludes with a call to do God’s will and it concludes based on what we have covered.

So we can look and see that what we should do for Christ is preceded by what we should be through Christ and that is preceded by who we are in Christ. Who we are in Christ, we have been raised up with Him. If we have been raised up with Him we should pursue Him. We should set our minds on the things above because we have died and our life is hidden with Christ in God. That’s who we are and because of who we are we should be a certain way we should put off sin and put on righteousness. As we become more righteous then we are able to do His will.

If we get those things backward then we are telling people to do things they don’t have the power to do. The right order is essential; it is essential to get this in the right order. If we mix up the order here and we are telling people to do God’s will without giving them the information and the means, the mind set to do God’s will. We are setting them up for failure.

Let’s pray that we can do God’s will from our inward being. Let’s bow together.

Lord we thank You for Your Word. We thank You that it can richly dwell within us and You have given us a heart to desire it. We pray that we would indeed be fulfilling all righteousness, that Your work would be accomplished in our heart. That we could put on a heart of compassion and gentleness and love and forgiveness bearing with others, being humble. We pray that we can put off the evil deed of the world. We pray that we can put off evil words that the world uses. In Jesus’ name, amen.