

What Christ Wants

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[0 : 00] Okay. Let's see if I'm ready. I want you to pay attention today. And I go, I always do.

Yeah, now that laugh is actually betraying the truth, right? I know what I'm going to say. You don't. And it may be a little dense. Yeah, I heard that. No, not like you. I'm going to dance. But it may not be. I don't know. Again, I know what I'm saying, but I'm not sure how it's going to come out.

So what I want you to do, since it's my task today to take up Colossians 3, chapter 3, verses 12 through 17, open up a Bible to chapter 3 of Colossians, find verse 12.

It's a small passage, only like five verses, but like most of Paul's letters, it's packed with meaning and application for believers. In fact, chapter 3 begins back when Steve preached last week, but it begins the application phase of this letter in particular, showing us how to live out the first two chapters that we have a lot of theology in.

[1 : 17] Okay. Okay. Now, I know most of you don't. Well, in fact, how many of you think you're theologians? Raise your hand. I want to see.

How many of you all shake your head? No, that's not true. You are actually theologians. I once was at a math conference up in Seattle or somewhere, and the presenter said, how many of you are mathematicians?

Well, a lot of people raised their hand, and I said, not me. And she said, oh, you're wrong. And I said, I just teach math. I'm not a mathematician. Then you're a mathematician. You are theologians. But you know what? Most of you are what Peterson, if you know Peterson, would call practical theologians.

You know what that, what's the difference? A theologian can be somewhat up there, out there, thinking abstractly about a lot of things.

[2 : 18] But practical theologians do what? They take the truth they find in the Bible, and they try to do what with it? Apply it to their lives. They're practical theologians.

They say, I need to know God. I need to know about God. I need to know what he wants of me. I need to know theology. But I don't need to know it just to know it. I need to know it so I can live it. And that's what you are. You're practical theologians. As you read and ponder and consider the Bible, what God has told us in the Bible, you become those who seek to understand who God is, and what his purpose is for creation.

I asked that this morning. I gave them two minutes. Here it is. What is God's purpose? And they said, and what? And I go, what is God's purpose, period?

And they had to think about that for a while. And they came up with some pretty good ideas. That's theology. And then the whole lesson that we had talked about, so what?

[3 : 19] So what? How does that affect me? And then that's what we're studying, Philippians. And that's what Philippians and Colossians and Ephesians and all those other books do, is they tell us the so what?

How does that work out? How does that work out? Okay. In the first two chapters, Paul spent a lot of time talking about the truth of the gospel, the good news of Christ, and comparing it to the false theologies and the false philosophies of the world.

And now we're going to continue to explore the ramifications of those truths, i.e. practical theology. If we accept the truth that we find in the Bible, and particularly in the New Testament, because that's where we're at, and in particular the book of Colossians, we're compelled to ask, how does this affect us?

And if we truly believe all that we know to be true, and that sounds like an oxymoron, I believe it so it has to be true, so it has to be true. The problem is that many of us know the truth, but the truth hasn't entered into our more than just acceptance phase of our lives.

Do you know what I'm talking about? It hadn't got from here to here. There's no practice in the theology. There's just a lot of theology. And that is particularly true about Christ and God's purpose in sending Him.

[4 : 46] Then we don't have to respond in faith to salvation, which most of us in here have done. We heard the good news, and we responded to it. We accepted it as true.

We said, Christ died for my sins, Christ died for my sins, and I accepted that sacrifice on my behalf, and I've been set free and made a new creature in Christ. We've got to do more than that, though. We need to allow that truth to work its way deeply into our hearts and minds and transform us from what we were to what we were meant to be. And that is to become increasingly like Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit.

Now, I think you've already missed some... No, you haven't. All right, there's our first slide. We're going to read this, and I'd like someone to read it for me so my voice doesn't fail.

I tried real hard to sing low today so that my voice would hang in here. So if somebody would read our passage, and you can read it out of your own text. This is the New English translation.

[5 : 52] 12 through 17. So I've got to volunteer. Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and dearly loved, hold yourself with a heart of mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, bearing with one another and forgiving one another if someone happens to have a complaint against anyone else.

Just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also forgive others. And to all these virtues add love, which is the perfect bond. Let the peace of Christ be in control in your heart, for you were in fact called and one body to this peace.

And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you, rich in teaching and exhorting one another with all wisdom, singing songs, hymns, and spiritual songs, all with grace in your hearts to God.

And whatever you do, in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him. Thank you, Phil. Next slide.

We start out with a big therefore. And therefore is always there for a reason. And in this case, as usual, it refers, it connects what Paul has already said to what is coming next.

[7 : 12] And that is particularly about the new self. Or the new self. This is a term that I'm not used to using, and I came across it in my commentary, and the guy has an interesting definition.

We would say new man, but new self is more than just an individual. Do you know that Christianity is a team sport?

Did you know that? Most of us treat Christianity as an individual effort, the long distance runner. I can do this by myself. Just tell me where the track is. I can go do it.

But that's not how it works. It's not even a relay race, although it is in a sense one generation passing it on to the next. But it's really a team sport. We're in this together. We either win or lose together.

And this new self is actually a community. A fellowship. A body. What body? The body of Christ.

[8 : 14] That's what God has given us and put us in. This new self is a Christian community. It's characterized by koinia, using the Greek word, which means fellowship or common life.

It isn't... There's an old song, and I've used it before, but it goes, me and Jesus got our own thing going. Well, that happens to be heresy.

We have something going with Jesus. In fact, the early church said, you cannot be saved by yourself. You have to be saved within the church.

I'm not sure... I think a person can be saved outside the church, but they need to get in the church real quick if they want to stay healthy spiritually. This new Christian community, this new self, is formed by and in Christ, who is our head.

And it is the church. By the way, what is the Greek word for church? Ekklesia. What does it mean? Called out ones.

[9 : 26] Called out of what? The world. And that's what Paul's been telling them in the last couple of chapters. As you've been called out of the world, don't act like them. Don't believe like them.

Don't listen to them. Don't follow their philosophies and don't follow all their ideas because they're false. They won't get you closer to God. The only way to get closer to God is in Christ.

And this community that we are in has brought us to a place where all the boundaries of our culture are transcended. Now, if you read the news today, everything is about boundaries.

The problem is our world right now is in the process of making boundaries and dividing people up. The problem we have is not racism but that there are Asians and then there are African Americans and then there are the, I hate the word whites, there are the Caucasians and then there are these and then there are those and you're not allowed to share a common life.

You have to be within your little narrow place. And people get upset when they can't predict how that little group is going to act. Like vote. The liberals are in uproar.

[10:41] Why? Because some of these minorities are saying, we don't like the Democrats anymore. And the Republicans don't know what to do with them. The world is in the process of dividing us up.

The church is in the process of bringing us together. I love about our fifth Sunday things. Who's there? Everybody.

Who cares who you are or what you look like as long as you are in Christ, right? We're going to spend eternity with them. We need to get ready to spend a few days here with them.

We have a new identity, a fundamental identity that is determined by Christ. Christ. Christ. We are a new people made up of reborn new people in a new relationship with each other in our body, in the body of Christ.

And if that's true and it is true, then that means things have to change. Some of the old ways have to change. They can't, you cannot continue being what you were now that you're in a new situation.

[11:56] I'll give you an example. You go to Columbia, can you act like an American? Well, you could if you wanted people to laugh at you and point their fingers at you and go, I think you're an oddity.

But if you want to belong, you've got to act like a Colombian. If you're in the church, you need to act like those that belong to Christ. And they don't act like, or are not supposed to act like, those that are not belonging to Christ out in the world.

We have a new identity, a new reality, and we need to live that out in everyday life. We need to practice the reality of our new relationship in the body of Christ because we have a, a new, we are new.

Now, here's the point that's going to, do you know that our identity is rooted in history?

And I'm not talking just back to the time Christ lived. Do you know that our identity goes beyond Christ, goes back beyond Christ?

[13:06] Let me give you an idea. We are the people of God, correct? Coming out of and following on the historical people of God, who was?

Israel. Israel. This new self, this new community of believers is the new Israel with the same purpose as the original one.

Now, some of you are going, well, I know they're debating that. There's a lot of talk about that. Let me give you some verses. Next slide. in Colossians 1, 27, 29, which is back, it says, God wanted to make known to them, not those in Christ, the glorious riches of the mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

We proclaim him by instructing and teaching all people with all wisdom that we may present Christ, every person mature in Christ. Was not that, take the Christ part out?

Wasn't that the purpose of Israel? They were supposed to be God's people, what? Telling the rest of the world who God was and how to live in peace with him. And they failed.

[14:29] And God knew they were going to fail and he promised them a Messiah who would come and he would make it right. What did Jesus do? He came, he died, he sacrificed himself, was risen, and he called people unto himself as the new people of God.

What's the purpose according to this? It's the same as what the Israelites had. We are to proclaim the riches and glory of our God to all the Gentiles because we're no longer Gentiles in a sense, are we?

We're the people of God and we're going to see that in a minute. So we have a continuity with Israel. We are Israel except the new Israel.

And the new Israel are what? Jews and Gentiles put together in peace, the barriers torn down, unity has been given, we're doing, we're supposed to be doing what they were supposed to have done before Christ came and failed today.

To proclaim the riches and glory of the Creator and God eternal and all powerful and to declare His purpose to sum up all things in Christ and to establish His kingdom. How do we know that's true?

[15 : 42] Next slide, we'll show you. Paul wrote this in this letter. Good morning. He said, we are the elect, which is the same word as chosen.

I don't like the word elect because it has too many connotations, but chosen is pretty good. We are the chosen people of God, holy and dearly beloved or dearly loved.

Do you know that this is a standard way of describing Israel in the Old Testament? as well as the church in the New Testament. We are His people for this simple reason.

He chose us. Just like Israel's existence and status as the people of God depended solely on God's decision to choose them.

God is now forming a new covenant in the people by choosing individuals from among the Jews and the Gentiles.

[16 : 55] And because of that choosing, just as Israel became holy unto the Lord and dearly loved by Him, we too now are holy and dearly loved. Next slide, Deuteronomy, Old Testament, 14, 2-3 says, For you are a people holy unto the Lord, your God.

He has chosen you to be His people, prized above all the others on the face of the earth. Paul is taking this very same statement and applying it to the church.

Peter did the same thing. Next slide. Peter said, But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a royal nation, a people of His own, so that you may proclaim the virtues of one who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.

We have inherited the call, the choosing, of Israel into the church. We are the people of God. They were the people of God and they became, I've been reading another book, they became apostate. What does that mean? They left the truth. They weren't practicing what God told them to do. And so He chose new people to be in His body and to be in His community, to be His people.

[18 : 21] And we're it. He said, I'm going to the Gentiles. You forfeit it. Those that believe, come. But those that don't, too bad. I'm going to add to my people out of the rest of the world.

Like I intended from the get-go, that all people should know me and worship me. I think there's a day coming and it's coming now.

We can see it. That even in the church, people of God, there are those who are becoming apostate. Who are leaving the truth. And in some ways, that's good news.

Because the prophecies say that Jesus won't come back the second time until there's a great falling away. That's another story. Let's go on.

Do you understand what I'm saying about that we are the people of God? That we are the now inheriting the role of Israel? Paul goes on to tell us as God's chosen, holy, and dearly beloved people, we need to, next slide, clothe ourselves with heart of mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.

[19 : 31] that means that we need to cultivate these virtues that will foster our community of faith in Christ. To be indeed the people of God in practice.

The verb here used, clothe yourself, is the same verb that he used up in chapter 10, or in verse 10, rather, that means to put on. It's just like we put on the new self, the new man in Christ.

Just like we put on Christ. We're to put on these things. As a community of God's people, these five virtues parallel the five vices that Steve spoke about last week.

The five vices will destroy a community of faith. The five virtues will build it. And Paul is contrasting the two. The vices come from the way of the world.

The virtues come from our life in Christ. And it's also significant that these five virtues are often attributed to or associated with Christ himself.

[20 : 50] So we're to put them on just like we put on Christ. These characterized Christ and they should characterize us. So let's look at them briefly. We're to practice these.

The New English Bible, which by the way was the first Bible I had as a Christian. You can't hardly find it anymore. England, they got the revised English Bible and it's not as good.

But the New English Bible then said it this way. Put on the garments of Christian grace. You understand? These virtues are Christian grace in this sense.

Alright, first, next slide. There it is. It's a heart of mercy. It can also be translated as compassion or tender mercies. It's sort of a large word that doesn't necessarily fit just right in one English translation.

Mark used it in his Gospel of Christ. He said he had compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd. Compassion. Same word. Heart of mercy.

[22 : 00] Luke used it to describe the actions of the Good Samaritan and also to describe the Father's response to the Prodigal Son. He had compassion and mercy on him.

So it means to be moved by a situation so deeply that we seek to act on the behalf of the person that's caught in it. it's the response of a loving heart that reaches out willing hands to serve another. You see a need and you say I've got to do something about it and you become involved out of an act of kindness and love. Next one is kindness.

Now this is interesting. It's the word that Jesus said when he said my yoke is easy. What he was really saying is my yoke is what?

Kind. Kindness is a tender goodness to it. My yoke is tender and good. A goodness that is for the well-being of another person.

[23 : 11] So Jesus is calling you put on my yoke not to punish you or to burden you but rather what? To give you what you need to be well. It's a virtue of a person whose neighbor's good is as dear as his own.

Next slide. Third one. Humility. Humility is a typical Christian virtue but it was viewed negatively in the ancient world when Paul was writing about it.

A call to humility is based on the supreme act of humbling that is Christ taking on human form and going to the cross on our behalf. You get that?

Christ humbled himself it said humbled himself by. So it involves putting others above ourselves. Not only looking out for our interests but the interest of others first.

Fourth is gentleness. Again it's not a value of something that was valued in the ancient world. A gentle person would have been conceived as being weak.

[24 : 30] But a gentle person is one who is self-controlled so probably the strongest of all people. If you know what I had problem with self-control when it comes to some things like anger.

A gentle person is one who is self-controlled because he's God-controlled. Such a person knows themselves and operates out of an inner realization of God's control in his life.

When Christ is in control of our lives we do not need control over others. We can be gentle with strength. And the last one, the fifth one is patience.

And it literally means long suffering. It denotes self-restraint. It allows one to suffer injury or insult without resorting to hasty retaliation.

Now you know if you're patient or not because you can feel it boiling up inside of you when someone says something that's really got your goat right? And you're going do I say it or not?

[25 : 34] If you're patient you go ten, ten, ten, ten, ten. If you're like me it comes out they get it all. By the way it and several others on this list are fruit of the spirit and also a trait of God.

God is patient. It says that God is patient not like something of patience. following patience next slide are two participles bearing with and forgiving and what they do is they expand on the thought of patience.

Those Christians who are truly patient will have an attitude of bearing with those whose faults are irritating. Anybody got anybody in here you know have irritating faults? Not a I don't think anybody's right?

We're all this got it together and a willingness to forgive those who have a grievance against. So if you're patient you're going to be willing to bear with those that you know are going to just get your go and you're willing to forgive those that cross the line.

And finally he says on all of these put love. Now these were garments and I thought about wearing some strange clothes this morning and I thought well now that just wouldn't work because then they go he's talking about being strange and I'm not talking about being strange I'm talking normal Christian but he says put literally saying put love on as an overcoat on everything else you're wearing it's a stormy day you live in a hostile world put on a coat cover yourself in love now I think it seems to me that love is the source of all those other things that we've already talked about we deal with others kindly and patiently with compassion out of love for them love is the bond that pulls all these together and it's the bond that pulls all of us together elsewhere love is described as the sinew that holds the body together you know you know how your joints work

[27 : 57] I was amazed when I started learning anatomy you know that the very few bones actually snap into another bone they just rest against each other in fact I was surprised the shoulder I thought surely the shoulder is hooked you know the shoulder is not hooked to anything it comes up to the collarbone I rest on it and it rests on the shoulder blade and neither the collarbone is hooked

together but the shoulder blades just float so your arms are actually hooked to nothing it's the sinews the tendons and all that that hold it all together that's what love does in our fellowship it holds us all together because we're all different moving parts and we have love that is common and it pulls us together pulls us firm in fellowship in Ephesians Paul speaks of this bond he mentions it in amongst this big thing and he says that it comes from the

Holy Spirit we're going to skip that slide so we'll just skip that one there's unity in the body of Christ because there's only one body whose body is it Christ Christ it's the visible form filled with the Spirit it was established chosen and loved by our God and has its salvation in life and one Savior it shares one hope and I don't think a lot of us have really thought deeply about that hope and I sent out an email that had an article about hope in it and I really hope that you read it because hope is really important for us to hold as a body of believers without it we'll wander in the desert not knowing where we're headed when we break this bond we're actually putting our own or another purpose or spirit or love in place of what

God has established in Christ think about that when we break the bonds of love what's happened is we're putting something else in its place we're saying the reason I can't get along with you all is because of this is important more important now think of churches who have split did they split because they love one another or because they love something else more whether it be an organ or a pastor or a whatever a pew yeah when we allow the bonds of love to be broken it's because we're putting we're loving something more than each other we have a common peace with God through Christ and it's only in

Christ that we have that peace we are reconciled to God who brings us peace he reconciled us also to one another bringing about unity in the community of faith there's no what free or slave no male or female no you name it they've all been abolished and we become new people in Christ if we step out of that peace we're moving away from Christ think about that if we step out of that peace we're moving away from Christ we're called now to allow Christ to be in control of our hearts individually and corporately when he's in control everything works like it's supposed to in harmony and peace that's a good test is there discord in the church that's causing problems then Christ is not in control somebody else is trying to be in control there's peace and harmony either we're dead or Christ is in control cooperating together to serve the head who is Christ we're called also at the very end of that passage to be thankful allowing the word of Christ to dwell in us richly this word by the way is the gospel message more than just the gospel the five steps how to get saved it's the gospel the good news of Christ coming into the world and his purpose and our goal and end it's the authentic teaching which we have represented in chapters one and two of the book and that's been expanded and explained in those chapters and now it's all the other letters the Ephesians and Philippians and the gospels even revelation we're being encouraged here to put the message of Christ that is the word at the center of our corporate experience it should be the center of our corporate experience what is the one thing that we share in common Christ the word especially in worship and this message should take a permanent residence among us be the center of our community activities and worship it should be allowed to penetrate deeply into our hearts and minds and transform our lives of our fellowship community and all that gets summed up mark in the next slide in the last verse yeah one back please there you go whatever you do in word or deed do it all in the name of the Lord

[34 : 08] Jesus giving thanks to God the Father through him that's very similar to what Paul wrote earlier now you get the next slide you don't hit mark you know back there dueling chapter 2 he wrote therefore just as you receive Christ Jesus as Lord continue to live your lives in him rooted and built up in him firm in your faith as you were taught and overflowing with thankfulness that's those two complement each other he uses the words logos which means word and ergon which means deed Paul's telling us the totality of our interaction with the world everything we say and do should be governed by our consideration what it means to live in the kingdom of the risen Christ so every time we get together we should celebrate that we are the community of faith the body of Christ and we should celebrate and worship our

Lord and then when we go out into the world we should take that mindset with us we worship here the totality of our lives actually is worship do you know that you're either worshiping Christ or you're sinning is probably a good way of putting it you're either honoring Christ or you're dishonoring him there's very little neutral ground when you go out into the world your words and your deeds should reflect Christ now I'll be the first to confess that not doesn't always happen you put me out in the

