

Peace Calls the Shots

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 01 November 2020

Preacher: Rev. Aaron Roberts

[0 : 00] Well, welcome everyone. We are looking at Colossians 3, 9 to 17. Folks, in order to understand this small piece that we're looking at, we need to look at the chapter as a whole.

So, if this is the whole chapter right here, chapter 3, it has these two halves, these two halves. And it pivots, it pivots at verses 9 and 10. Let me remind you of it.

And this is really, really key, 9 and 10. 9 and 10, you have put off the old self and you have put on the new self, which was being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.

So, what's it saying here? It's saying in order to be the people that God wants us to be. And I'm not saying in order for us to be nice people. No, I'm not talking about that. It's talking about people that reflect God's image.

It's talking about being actually the most human you can be. So, in order to be that, verse 9 and 10 says it involves a putting off, a putting off of old self and a putting on of a new self.

[1 : 05] The putting off, that's last week's sermon. That's verses 1 to 8. That's the first half of Colossians 3. This week's sermon, Paul says, so last week, sorry, last week 1 to 8 was like, you know, put off like immorality and slander and malice.

All these things that wreck our souls and destroy community. Now, I just want you to imagine for a moment if that's where Paul ended this chapter. With a list of don'ts.

People could rightfully say, well, that's just tired old Christian moralism. And unfortunately, there are some brands of Christianity that are just quite negative and it's just all about no's and don'ts. But Paul doesn't end in verse 8 because he's talking about transformation.

And he's talking about us. He's talking about you watching this. He's talking about us becoming humanly, as humanly human as we can be. Becoming people who are as beautiful as humans can be.

And that requires not just a putting off. It requires not just verses 1 to 8. It requires putting on Christ-likeness. You have put off the old self with its practices.

[2 : 11] And have put on the new self, which is being renewed in the lodge after the image of its creator. So we kill off things in our life because we have died with Christ.

And we set our hearts on other things because we've been raised with him. And you say to yourself, this period of my life called non-Christian is over. We make a decisive break from that.

And we follow Jesus. And he renews us. Sometimes we just have to remind ourselves of these very basic truths. I'm a Christian. It means not just forgiveness. But it means transformation.

So, in summary so far. Last week, put off. Put off. This week, put on. So let's dive into the passage now and see some of the things we are to put on.

We'll start with verse 12. It's interesting. It says, put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved. So Paul begins with a reminder of how God sees us.

[3 : 10] He sees us as holy because of Christ. Chosen just because God chose. And we are his beloved people. That's God's estimate of us.

This estimation of us. That's who we are. And now Paul calls us to live into that. And he starts listing some things. Put on, as God's chosen people, holy and beloved. God, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, patience.

Let's talk about these quickly. Compassion. You know what compassion means in the Greek language? It literally means the bowels of mercy. Isn't that brilliant? In the ancient Near East, our guts were the place that would sort of hold all that emotion.

And actually, there's something actually to that, isn't there? It's brilliant that way. Put on compassion. Put on the bowels of mercy. Compassion means that we move towards people with as much understanding and practical love as we can.

Next, kindness. Kindness. Put on kindness in your life. Jacinda Arden is the Prime Minister of New Zealand. And I don't agree with everything she stands for politically.

[4 : 19] However, I think she's a remarkable leader in many ways. In an interview with the UK newspaper earlier this year, the Guardian, she was asked this question. She was asked, if you were to summarise the qualities that have underpinned your path to this leadership role, what do you think has been the most important to you?

Here's what she says. Kindness. And not being afraid to be kind. Or to focus on. Or be really driven by empathy.

She goes on. She says, I think one of the sad things I've seen in political leadership is we've placed over time so much emphasis on notions of assertiveness and strength that we probably have assumed that it means you can't have these other qualities of kindness and empathy.

I think that's absolutely spot on. I love that line. Don't be afraid to be kind. Put on kindness like you would put on a shirt before going outside.

The third trait to put on, humility. You know, in the ancient world, humility as a characteristic was always talked about negatively. In the ancient world, the goal was to always seek honour.

[5 : 34] Humility was a terrible thing. I think today we still do that. We're still seeking honour, but we're a bit more subtle about it. And I think maybe something like virtue signalling on social media is probably today's equivalent of that honour seeking.

Paul says, put on humility when you interact with people. Next, gentleness. Gentleness means a lot, but I'll just say one thing about gentleness.

One of the things it means is that you're under control in terms of how you act with people. Lastly, patience. Patience means that we're...

One of the things patient means is that we're willing to endure wrongs for a time. Now imagine being a community.

We were putting all of these things on as we interact with each other. Wouldn't that be amazing?

Okay, now look at verse 13. Verse 13 is very important. Bearing with one another, and if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other as the Lord has forgiven you, you must also forgive.

[6 : 37] So we have these list of traits, right? Gentleness and compassion and humility, etc. And then Paul brings us face to face with the realities of what this means.

For example, he says, what this means is that you've got to put up with each other. You've got to put up with each other. Bear with one another. That's what this means. We don't naturally click, all of us in a Christian community.

We don't always click, you know, but God has put us together. I work with an Australian. An Australian.

Folks, we bear with one another. We forgive one another. Now, look at the text, verse 13 again. Why do we forgive?

Why? Because it says right here, because the Lord has forgiven you. So do you see what's happening here? Paul doesn't just sort of go, just forgive, forgive, forgive, because it's nice and we are nice people.

[7 : 36] No. He says Christ has forgiven you, so you forgive others. And this, folks, is how the transformation happens. As we seek the things above, that's last week's passage, as we seek the things above, the more we grow in our understanding of how Christ has dealt with us, which is with forgiveness and patience and kindness and humility.

And the more we see that, the more we can extend patience and kindness and humility and gentleness to others. Look at verse 14 now.

Verse 14. And above all, put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. Paul says, all that stuff I just talked about, that's what love looks like.

That's what love looks like in a community. Okay. Let's move to the last little section now, verses 15 to 17. And it sort of pulls the whole chapter together, the chapter together.

And it does that in a couple of different ways. It says, for you to be transformed, for you to be a community that reflects the new humanity that God has called us to be, Christ must be central.

[8 : 46] And it talks about that in a few different ways. Look at verse 15 there. People often misinterpret this passage.

And they think the peace in your hearts thing is about decision making. And it's like, I didn't know what to do. Then I had a peace in my heart about this. I mean, that's wonderful.

But that's not what this is talking about. That's not the gist of this. Look at it closely. The peace. The peace is not in your heart. The peace is ruling your heart. It's talking about how you act.

It's talking about a peaceful community. And the word rule there is very important. The Greek word means umpire. Umpire. So let the peace of Christ be the umpire in your life.

Let the peace of Christ be the umpire in our life together. Like an umpire in a game. The umpire gets to call the shots. Peace gets to call the shots in our community.

[9 : 48] So in our community, you come and you say, what can I do to make peace in this community? In my interactions, when I interact with other people, does peace rule?

It should rule. And why do we do that? Because God has made peace with us. And it was very costly. We extend that to others. Now look at verses 16 and 17.

Let the word of God dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through it.

That's great stuff, isn't it? Again, Paul is encouraging us to put Christ right at the center of what we do. And he gives us an example. He says, put Christ at the center of your worship music. Which is why we don't just sing like chipper, happy tunes.

We sing songs that are rich in the word. In this way, as we sing, we're not just giving ourselves good feelings. There's nothing wrong with good feelings. I hope you have good feelings when you sing.

[10 : 52] But Paul is saying, when we sing, we're not just having good feelings. What we're doing is we're teaching one another. We're helping each other put Christ at the center of our life. That's what it's saying.

Okay. I'm going to finish up here. Colossians 3, as a whole, says, set your mind on Christ so you can be transformed.

It means putting off some things which wreck your soul, destroy community, ugly things, malice, slander, immorality. And put on things that you have experienced from God.

And what have you experienced from God? You've experienced his patience, kindness, humility. Now, the trick is, of course, how do we do that in COVID times?

How do we be a community of kindness? How do we be a community of contrast in COVID times? We have to work very hard at this and very creative at this because you know what COVID has done for us?

[11 : 56] One of the things it's done for us is for some of us, it's made us selfish. And it's made us insular. We were just about ourselves. So I think these words are very important to us, folks.

God wants to transform us in the way we interact with each other in our communities. He wants us to be not just nice people. He wants us to be as genuinely human as we can be.

And what that looks like is Christlikeness made in God's image. Now, imagine again. Imagine a community where this is what we're aiming for. Wouldn't that just be wonderful?

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.