

Colossians 3 (Part 1):1-17 • Living in the Power of the Spirit

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We're in Colossians chapter 3. So, open your Bible there, please. We're going to get into the third chapter of Paul's letter to the Colossians, and I'm going to read the first 17 verses, and then we'll pray.

Goes like this: *¹If then you've been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ²Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. ³For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.*

⁵Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. ⁶On account of these the wrath of God is coming. ⁷In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. ⁸But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. ⁹Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices ¹⁰and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. ¹¹Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.

¹²Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, ¹³bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. ¹⁴And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. ¹⁵And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. ¹⁶Let the word of Christ 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. ¹⁷And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. (ESV)

Let's stop there and let's pray.

Heavenly Father, we thank You so much for the opportunity to gather today and to dig into Your Word. We pray that the ministry of Your Holy Spirit would find ready receptacles in our hearts to hear Your voice, to receive all that is there for us, and then Lord, to apply it. We confess to You, Lord, that we need You. We need You to open our minds, open our hearts, to make things clear to us. We pray that You would do that, and we ask that You would do it in the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior, amen.

Last week, as we were finishing up Colossians chapter 2, you guys might remember that the Apostle Paul was talking about avoiding things like legalism and empty spiritualism, or if you will, mysticism, because they have no ability to change our lives. Legalism looks good on the outside: keeping rules, forcing the body not to do this or to do that, or whatever. But Paul said it has no ability whatsoever to change your heart. It can't get any— it can't go past the surface, if you will.

So, he's going to be talking here now— in fact, he's outlining in these verses ways that we are to live, things that are effective for you and I. And you probably noticed these verses are just literally filled with exhortations about how we live, and they all involve action words, verbs. Remember your grammar? Verbs are action words, and there's all kinds of action. In fact, I call these the action points that Paul kind of lays out in this first half of the chapter.

Let me— I took them all, and I just put them in a little list—so let me put them on the screen for you. These are the action words and phrases that Paul is using, things like:

- Seek the things that are above
- Set your mind on the things that are above
- Put to death what is earthly
- Put off the old self
- Put on the new self
- Let peace rule
- Let the Word of Christ dwell
- Do everything in the name of Jesus
- Giving thanks

Seek the things that are above; set your mind on the things that are above; put to death what is earthly; put off the old self; put on the new self—look at all these actions that he's asking us to do— to let or to allow peace to rule in our hearts; to let the Word of God dwell in our hearts richly; to do everything for the glory

of God and in the name of Jesus; and then, of course, to be giving thanks, actively giving thanks.

So, we're going to look at these this morning, but before we do, I need to encourage you about one thing. It is absolutely essential, going through these verses here, in the second half of Colossians chapter 3, or first half rather, of Colossians chapter 3, that you understand that all of those things— no, go back— that all of those things are only possible through the power of the Holy Spirit.

You can't do this on your own. Bottom line, okay? Don't even try. If you want to be a miserable Christian, go ahead and try, I suppose, but I'm just telling you, you can't do these things. And that's why I think that there ought to be a warning sticker—and you already got a peek at it.

WARNING: DON'T TRY THIS IN THE POWER OF THE FLESH!

Don't you feel like sometimes that sticker ought to be in certain chapters of the Bible? They should just, you know. Paul assumes that you know that going into these things—when he talks about these things— he assumes that this is something that only born again, washed in the blood of the Lamb, and empowered by the Holy Spirit believers can do.

Do you guys remember—oh man, it was a long time ago now—but back in 2012, we were going through the book of Matthew, and we hit the Sermon on the Mount, which encompasses three chapters in Matthew 5, 6, and 7. One of the most incredible sets of chapters— I absolutely love it, which is why I took so long to go through those— the Beatitudes and all the other things.

Well, you'll remember, for those of you that were around way back in 2012, that when we covered those chapters, I said over and over and over again that the Sermon on the Mount is not for unbelievers. You can't do it. You cannot do it. It's only for people who know the Lord and who are empowered by the Holy Spirit.

And so today, everything that we talk about is, this is a message for believers. If you have yet to bow the knee to Christ, then you can listen, but don't try this because you're not going to be able to accomplish it. And the reason I'm emphasizing this is because anything that we attempt to do in the flesh is doomed to failure.

If you try to live the Christian life in the flesh, you will fail, and you will fail miserably because, without the Holy Spirit, verses like these first 17 are just simply the letter of the law. It becomes the law without the Spirit. Okay? And we all know what the letter of the law does, right? We know what the letter of the law does.

If you need a little reminder, 2 Corinthians gives it to us, chapter 3:

2 Corinthians 3:5-6 (ESV)

Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, who has made us sufficient to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

⁵*Not that we are sufficient in ourselves (Paul writes) to claim anything as coming from us (right?), but our sufficiency is from God, ⁶who has made us sufficient to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter (and that means the letter of the law) but of the Spirit. (Here's why.) For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.*

You can take with the Holy Spirit these first 17 verses of Colossians chapter 3 and they will give life. If you are not a believer and you attempt to appropriate these things and walk them out in the flesh, they will become the letter of the law, and it will kill you. Bottom line.

I don't know if you've ever actually talked to somebody who tried Christianity, and you're talking to them about the Bible or God or whatever, and they're like, I went to church for a while; I tried Christianity, but it just didn't work for me. And usually that's their way of saying it was just too hard. It was just too hard. And you know what? It's very possible that what they're telling you is accurate, that they were given the letter of the law because they did not have the Spirit of God living within them, empowering them, enabling them, right? And so, it became the law to them. It was do this, do this, do this. And then there are a lot of Christians who are misguided, and they'll say to people that, well, this is what Christians do, and Christians don't do that. And it just becomes a very law-based approach to walking with Jesus.

But that's not the way we're to live. We're to live by the Spirit, empowered by the Holy Spirit. Good grief. There's no possible way I can live the Christian life.

I've tried. Even as a believer, I have reverted to the flesh and tried to do things, and just failed miserably.

So anyway, be careful about laying things on people. And I encourage you, if you've been—if you're witnessing to somebody, if you're talking to somebody at work, you're encouraging them in the things of the Lord, be careful what you tell them from the Scripture. If you're talking to somebody about Jesus, keep it all on Jesus on the cross and what He did on the cross. Keep it there. Don't vary. Don't veer off. Stay right there until you know that you know that that person has accepted Jesus Christ and what He did and has received the Holy Spirit, and you can see the eyes brighten, and you can see the light coming on. There are all kinds of ways you can know that somebody's gotten saved, but don't move on to this is how we're to live, because it'll just be the law.

So, there's my little intro. So, apart from the Holy Spirit, it isn't happening, okay?

Here we go. Verse 1—and that's why Paul begins in verse 1 by saying, ¹*If then you have been raised with Christ*, (right—he has to start it that way. If this has happened, now we're going to talk about it. He says—he begins by saying) *seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God*.

This is the first thing he tells us to do. He tells us to seek the things that are above, and lest we confuse which “above” he is referring to, he says *where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God*. So, seek. That's our first action word. Seek, right? You have to do it. The Greek means to strive for something earnestly. It means to seek something out with the desire to possess it. I want this. I'm going to seek it.

And by the way, again, we're getting back to grammar—and I don't want to make it sound like I know a lot of grammar because I've told you guys many times I slept through high school; I did all my learning post high school. But this verb that we translate “seek” is in what we call the present imperative tense, and that suggests a continuous action. So, it's not just seek once; it's keep on seeking, keep doing it, keep moving towards seeking that which is above.

So, what is above? Where Christ is seated? I mean, what are we supposed to be seeking? Paul just simply—he doesn't get into a great deal of detail. He just says the things that are above. So, what is above, right? What is above? What am I supposed to be seeking? Well, we're supposed to be seeking all of the blessings that we've been given. We're supposed to be focusing on all the

blessings that we've been giving because you understand that they're above, right? They're not below.

This is challenging for a lot of Christians, particularly people who take the Old Testament and try to apply it to their Christian lives because, again, the Old Testament was all about blessings below. You guys know that, right? Israel was promised blessings below. Here's the land. Here's your enemies; you'll conquer them. Here's your crops; they'll grow well for you. Here's your children; they'll be strong and healthy. Here's this—it was all below. But that's not you and me. We have a different covenant than Israel had, and our blessings are not below.

Let me show you something from Ephesians chapter 1 verse 3 again.

Ephesians 1:3 (ESV)

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places,

This is very, very important: ³*Blessed be the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ, (look at this) who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing (and then notice where those blessings are located) in heavenly places. Right? That's where your blessings are. They're in heavenly places. Stop looking for your blessings below.*

And it doesn't mean that He doesn't bless us below. He does. He blesses us with sunshine and rain, and He allows us to be able to earn wealth so that we can buy food. And there's a lot of blessings, but this is not primarily where our covenant blessings are. He blesses everybody that way. The Bible says He sends rain and sun upon the just and the unjust. Right, but the special blessings that are ours in Jesus Christ are above. And that's what he is saying there in Ephesians. And so, he's telling you and I, when he says to seek that which is above, he's telling you and I to recognize the fleeting nature of anything that is on this planet. Any blessings that come our way, man, they can leave just as quickly as they come, let me tell you.

Just hang around and talk to somebody who was around in, like, 0809 when that had a lot of financial investments, and then suddenly we had this—everything kind of tanked with the economy and many people lost thousands, some hundreds of thousands of dollars, and some even more. The more—I've never met those people, but I've read about them. Anyway, it can just be gone so quickly, but your true blessings are stored above. And that's what Paul is telling you to do: to seek after those things earnestly. Right? Because if you have your

sights focused here, you're going to lose sight of what's up there, what has been stored for you.

And when we start to amass earthly treasures, and we start looking like this is where all the blessings are supposed to be, and so forth, we find that our hearts are starting to drift away from the Lord, right? It's like, Pastor, I don't know, I just don't feel as close to the Lord as I used to. Well, maybe you've been focusing on earthly treasures. Maybe life on earth—guys, I got to be careful how I say this, but so much of what came out of this recent pandemic was the fear of losing the only blessing that most of the people on this earth have, and that is life on this planet. So, they're going to do whatever they can to save it.

This is not our blessing. It just isn't. This is fleeting. The Bible has said repeatedly that our life on this planet is like a vapor. It's like the grass of the field that springs up, looks great for a day or so, and then it gets scorched by the sun, and then it's done.

And there is this overwhelming drive among the people who don't know the Lord to hang on to the only blessing they've got, or the only one they can see, anyway, and it has become this overwhelming sort of a thing, and some of us Christians have gotten sucked into it. We've gotten sucked into the fear. We've gotten sucked into the focus that this life is all there is and we got to hang on to it with a white-knuckle kind of a grip. And you know what's going to happen if this life becomes your treasure? Then your heart's going to be here. Remember what Jesus said, Matthew chapter 6:

Matthew 6:19-21 (ESV)

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

¹⁹*Do not lay up for yourselves treasures (here on this planet) on earth, (because you know what, you got things like moth, you got things like rust, you got thieves that can) break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not (in fact, cannot) break in and steal. (And then this is the most important thing right here,) for where your treasure is, (that's where you're going to find your heart). That's where your heart's going to be.*

So, you see, listen, I don't fault the world for going overboard. Although I do roll my eyes from time to time, but I don't fault them because it's where their treasure is, and so it's where their heart also is. I get that, right? But it should not be so for believers. This is not where our treasure is, and so our heart should not be here either. So, Paul's telling us to earnestly seek the blessings that are above.

But notice that he also speaks of something else that is above. Just read verse 1 with me again, will you? Verse 1 again: *'If then you've been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above* (and then this is the other thing), *where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.* And so, part of seeking the things above is putting our attention on the fact that there is a sovereign rule, which is owned, operated by Jesus Christ, exercised—that's the better word—right now, at the right hand of God. Jesus Christ is seated at the right hand of God.

By the way, the right hand is always power. You remember that in the Bible? Everything about the right hand is all power, so it's a symbol for power. Jesus is seated there. Paul says, *seek* (that which is) *above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand.* And, man, isn't that important for us to focus on right now?

Just about the time you and I get just completely overwhelmed with what's going on in the governments of this world, and all of the violence, and all of the lawlessness that's happening in our society today, everything that's happening in our country, we begin to realize our great need is to refocus our attention on the throne of Jesus Christ. Because—I'm not saying you should ignore what's happening in the world; I'm simply saying—if you focus on it, it will break you. Okay? Be careful.

I mean, I'm thankful that there are news services, kind of, but I'll tell you something: if you focus too much on them, you will get overburdened, and pretty soon, you're going to have your focus so much on things below that you're going to lose your joy, you're going to lose your peace, and the people you work with and live with are going to be looking at you like, I thought you were a Christian; thought you guys had hope; I thought you guys were supposed to have supernatural joy. Where is it? Where is it? Well, I've been watching NBC News lately, and it's gone. Stripped away.

Years ago, I used to kind of be a news hound. I hung out in the news quite a bit online and so forth, and finally, I realized it was eating away—it was literally like rust—it was eating away at my faith. And so now I just have Sue tell me what's going on in the world.

Next, Paul says, look at verse 2 with me: ²*Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.* (And he tells us why.) *For you have died* (You didn't know that, did you? Or maybe you did), *and your life is* (he says) *hidden (now) with Christ in God.* (And) *when Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.* I love that. Speaking of the rapture.

But first, Paul told us to seek the things that are above; now he exhorts us to set our minds. So, in other words, after you've sought them and found them, now set your mind on them. So, you see, the first one speaks of concentrating. Excuse me. The first one seeks of striving, and the second one speaks of concentrating.

So, he'd just as well be saying, concentrate your mind on things that are above, the things that are eternal, not temporal. He adds a thought along these lines to the Corinthians in 2nd Corinthians chapter 4. He says:

2 Corinthians 4:18 (ESV)

...as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

¹⁸*as we look not to the things that are seen* (in the world, right?) *but to the things that are unseen.* (And then he tells us that) *the things that are seen are transient* (and that means they are coming and going quickly), *but the things that are unseen are eternal* (they're not going anywhere). Problem is, we can't see them.

Isn't that interesting? We're told to fix our minds on things that are unseen, and that really kind of messes with us because we like things that appeal to our five senses. I want to see it. If I can't see it, I at least want to feel it, or smell it, or taste it, or something like that, or hear it. But I can't! And so, there's this other sense I have to use, and sometimes it gets way out of practice. You know what it is? It's faith. I got to exercise faith. I can't see it, so I got to have faith. I can't smell it. I can't feel it. Can't hear it, right? Got to have faith. I got to have faith that it's there.

All right, here's the next action point. Look at verse 5: ⁵*Put to death therefore what is earthly in you:* (then he lists some of the things in there that needs to be put to death, like) *sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.*

Because you see, if he wouldn't have given us that list and all he would have said was, put to death, therefore, whatever in you is earthly, well, that's too broad, isn't it? I could say, well, you mean, like hunger? The need to buy clothing? The need to build a house? The need to sleep in a bed? Those are earthly things, right?

Now, don't go too far. See, that's where the legalists—and remember that last week we talked about asceticism, which is that whole idea of I'm going to deny myself of all these earthly pleasures because it's going to make me holy, and we found out it doesn't, right? The monastic life will not make you closer to God or something like that. So, he says, listen, you got to live. I'm not telling you to put to death your appetite for food or something like that. He's talking about things that are actually going to distance you in your relationship with God, because sexual immorality is going to cause a problem between you and God, impurity, passions that are connected with evil desires and covetousness, and so forth and so on.

So, he says, put it to death, put it to death. Whoa, strong, huh? Put it to death. Again, this is a Greek verb and it means just what it says: to make dead. Make it dead. So, it doesn't just refer to resisting sin. We are to resist the devil. Sin we're to put to death. We're to eradicate it. We're to destroy it.

Now, I want to pause here again just for just a moment for a commercial.

Remember, you can't do this except in the power of the Holy Spirit. If you're hearing me today and you've been convicted of some sin in your life, and you're hearing what's coming from the Word of God where He's saying to put it to death, and you're thinking to yourself, yeah, I got to do that, man. Oh, man. And I know people just get so deflated by their sin, but I am not telling you to just work harder because it is an impossibility. It is an impossibility for the flesh to beat the flesh, right?

Paul speaks several times throughout the New Testament about our condition apart from Christ as it relates to sin. Let me show you just one of them from Romans chapter 7 verse 14. It's very simple.

Romans 7:14

...I am of the flesh, sold under sin.

¹⁴*I am of the flesh sold under sin.* That's Paul giving you and I an understanding of our condition, our spiritual condition apart from Jesus Christ. We're slaves,

sold under sin. Of course, through Jesus Christ, that control has been broken—praise God—over our lives, and the reason is because we died, we died with Christ, and so sin no longer has mastery over our lives, and I'm now free to serve a new master. My new master is God; my old master was sin, right? Now, I can serve a new master.

But be careful here, Christians. Be very careful. Just because I'm free from sin doesn't mean I'm sin-free. You with me? Very important that we understand that. I get emails from people all the time, new Christians who want to know why they mess up if they've been saved. If I'm saved, why am I sinning? Why do I still sin? I have to remind them, listen, Jesus Christ set you free from the mastery of sin, but it doesn't mean you're sin-free because you're still going to, from time to time, choose to go back and live in the slave quarters even though you've been emancipated.

Because you see, you can do that if you want to. You've all been set free from the mastery of sin, but we can choose to go back there if we want to. We can go back. We can even put the chains back on that were on us before. We can sleep in the same slave quarters that we used to sleep in before we knew Jesus Christ. We can choose to go back there, and we do from time to time because of the weakness of our flesh, because we don't tie into the power of the Holy Spirit like we should and can. So, we still mess up. It's important that we understand that.

Then Paul adds the reason here in verse 6 why we're to put to death sin. Look at verse 6, he says, listen: ⁶*On account of these the wrath of God is coming.* This is the kind of stuff—what he's asking you and I to put off is the kind of is the reason that judgment is coming. And so, he says you used to walk in this stuff. This is the kind of stuff you used to live in all the time. You lived in it. This was your address. But now you have to put all this stuff away.

And then he mentions some other things like anger, wrath, malice, slander, obscene talk from your mouth. He goes on verse 9 to say: ⁹*Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have (done something else, you've) put off the old self with its practices* (the NASB, the New American Standard Bible says, with its evil practices. Verse 10), ¹⁰*and you have put on the new self, which is (not being destroyed, it's) being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.*

So, this is great. I like these verses right here because Paul's using a different term now to describe the process of sin and how we're to treat it. We're to put it off and then put on, but he's talking about natures. He's talking about—and I love it—he says, it's the old self, we're to put off the old self, which is the old

natural man, the old man that used to live under the bondage of sin. We're to put off the old sinful nature, and we're to put on the new Christ-like nature that dwells within us through the Holy Spirit.

Now, you'll remember in the last chapter here of Colossians, Paul spoke of this process of putting off sin, and it's important we go back and revisit this. Here's why. Here it is on the screen. He wrote about it saying:

Colossians 2:11 (ESV)

In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ,

¹¹*In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, (it was a work of the Spirit) by putting off the body of the flesh (and the flesh there means the sinful nature) by the circumcision of Christ.*

But I want you to notice something about that verse. It says in Him you were circumcised. Did you catch that? It's past tense, and that's—again, we come back to grammar, but past tense “you were”—and see that squares with what he is saying here in verses 9 and 10 when he says put on the character of Christ, put off the old nature because the tense in those two terms, actually, is past tense as well.

Isn't that interesting? So, here's what's going on, guys. The Apostle Paul is making you and I aware of the fact that when we came to Jesus Christ, there was a fundamental change in our identity. There was a fundamental shift in our identity, literally, who we are. And it's already happened. It happened when we met Jesus at the cross, when we recognized that it was our sin that put Him there, when we embraced what He did for us on the cross by faith and accepted the forgiveness that He offers us.

Through His sacrificial death, something happened. There was a, like I said, a radical change of identity that took place in your life at that time, and now he's exhorting you and me to bring our behavior, our daily activity into a place of consistency now, with that new identity. The identity has been created. The work has been done. Now—he's saying now, bring your daily life into line with what Jesus has done past tense in your life when He circumcised you with a circumcision, not done with human hands but by the Spirit, and through that circumcision, put off the sinful nature. Now, well, it's been done. It's been done. Now walk it out.

Wouldn't it be great if everything God has done for us was just magically constant in our lives, and we never even had to think about it? Wouldn't that be great? The Bible says that I've been spiritually circumcised in the sense of—and again, what is circumcision? Cutting away the flesh. So, it's been done. It's been accomplished. Wouldn't it be great if that was it, and I never ever had to worry about sin again? I never even had to think about sin in any way, shape, or form. Was like, eh, we all walk around with a halo; we're levitating a few inches off the ground and everybody can see it; we're glowing. It's like, eh, well, there goes a Christian. They don't sin anymore. Wouldn't that be just wonderful?

See, the deal is, you and I have to walk it out, and it's challenging to understand, sometimes, the dynamic of what we're dealing with. But we walk it out by faith, not by grit. That's how some Christians are trying to walk out their Christian life. This is why we said earlier, you can't do it by the flesh. There's a warning on these scriptures. Don't try this at home in the flesh. It won't work. You do it by faith and through the power of the Spirit. Because it has been done, now, walk it out. It has been done. Past tense. Now walk it out. Present tense.

Okay. He says in verse 11—I love this too, this work that He's done in us. He says: ¹¹*Here there is not Greek and Jew (and that's basically Gentile and Jew), circumcised and uncircumcised (and that's speaking of the physical circumcision), barbarian, Scythian, slave, free.* Don't matter. There's other passages where he says in Christ, even male and female don't matter in the grand scheme of eternity.

Man comes up with all these distinctions. We call it racism or bias. They don't exist. They don't exist in Christ. They literally—that's life on earth. That's life down here. It doesn't exist. You think God cares the color of your skin for even a second? Good grief. The Bible tells us very clearly in the Old Testament, man looks on the outside, God looks on the inside. God looks at the heart. That's what He cares about. He doesn't care about the color of your skin, yours or anybody else's. We need to get over ourselves. There's something much deeper that God is concerned with. And that's what's happening in our hearts.

Verse 12, he continues to speak of what we have put on now in Jesus. He says: ¹²*Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience.* By the way, these are the attributes of God. He now has communicated those attributes to you and I through the Holy Spirit, and now we're to put them on, we're to walk them out. Yeah, but Pastor, I'm just not a very patient person. I get it. Me too. Mark me impatient.

But you know what? We have something that the flesh doesn't have. We have the Spirit, and that spiritual dynamic lives in you. So, you can't use the excuse, I'm just not a very patient person; I'm just not a very loving person; I know, I'm just not a very kind person. You're focusing on what's below. Focus on what's above. Christ has done a work in you to deposit His character in your heart. Walk out patience. His! Make it yours. His kindness. Make it your kindness. All those things, put them on, he says.

Verse 13. Now he's really going to get personal. You ready? ¹³*(B)earing with one another*. And it says, if somebody has stepped on your toes—that's my way of putting it—and you have a complaint against them, here's what you need to do. You ready? It's really tough. Forgive each other. But here's how you're to do it: as the Lord forgave you, so you also must forgive.

But Pastor, you don't know how hard it is. Oh, don't I? You know what I tell people when they say, I just can't forgive? I tell them, you're right, you can't, it's impossible. But you see, you've got Jesus living in you, His power, His ability. He's the one who was hanging on a cross and looked down at the people who were mocking Him and who just nailed Him to that piece of wood. And He said, Father, forgive them, they don't know what they're doing. That Guy lives in you. Don't tell me anymore what you can't do. I'll tell you what Jesus can do in you. And that's where we need to focus. Right?

It's okay to admit, I can't do this. If you have an issue where someone has hurt you deeply, and you're just struggling, and you feel like a second-class citizen in the kingdom of God because you just haven't been able to forgive, I got news for you: you've been trying in the wrong way. It's only through the power of the Spirit that you can forgive people and release them.

So, verse 14—and I like this too: ¹⁴*And above all these* (so this overshadows them, he says) *put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony*. Why? Because love is the most excellent way. Right? Isn't that what he said to the Corinthians? It perfectly fulfills what God requires of us as it relates to our relationships, one to another in the body of Christ and so forth.

Then three final exhortations:

Verse 15: ¹⁵*...let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful*. He says, *let the peace of Christ rule*. It's interesting there. The word rule is actually taken from the language of sports. Isn't that interesting? Essentially, he's asking, you're telling you to let the peace of Christ act as a referee or as an umpire in your heart. Let the peace of

Christ call it. That's what you do with an umpire. Strike! Or something or whatever. I didn't play baseball, played softball, but I got hit once in the head and then, explains a lot. The umpire calls it, right? He calls it. I was actually a basketball referee for a while, and we would call it. People would hate us but we'd call it anyway, and that's what the peace of Christ is to do in your hearts.

So, isn't that it—here's why he's telling you to do that, to let the peace of Christ rule. Because you see, if you don't, what you're going to attempt to do, which most people try to do, is they try to let their emotions kind of call it. And our emotions are up one minute and down the next, and they're just all over the place, and they get completely connected and conflicted in what's going on, and we frankly just end up—we don't know which end is up, because we're emotionally involved in so many things that are going on, and our emotions just overwhelm us.

And so, people are still, like, I don't know what to do. One day I just, I feel like this, then the next day I'm angry, and then the next day I'm sad, and then I'm just confused. I know what's going on: you've let your emotions rule. They're literally in that place of rulership. So, what are you going to be? You're going to be confused. Let the peace of Christ rule. Let God's peace rule.

Sometimes, you hear Christians saying, I just don't have a peace about that. And you know what, that's biblical. That's biblical to say, I don't have a peace about that. I don't have the peace of Christ. I've been seeking and searching for the peace of Christ about this situation, and I just don't have it, so I'm going to— or whatever. Or they'll say, I just have a peace. God's given me a peace about this thing, and I'm going to let that be the referee about this situation. And that's really what Paul is talking about here. We should be looking for the peace of Christ to be that referee.

Second exhortation, verse 16: ¹⁶*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs* (and being thankful in our hearts). I love the words. I love the words, *let the word of Christ dwell in you richly*. Isn't that good? It's just great language. To dwell means to inhabit. Let the Word of Christ inhabit your heart, and the word “richly” means abundantly. So let the Word of Christ inhabit your heart abundantly.

And I probably don't need to comment a whole lot further about that except to say I don't believe it is possible to go too far bathing your heart in the Word of God. Several people have written during this pandemic time and just been absolutely all aflutter with fear and concern, and so forth. And my response is,

you need to hang out in the Word. You just need to—and most of them I'll even send to the Psalms.

Because David had a lot that could cause his heart to flutter, he wrote some of the most incredible prayers of leaving things at God's feet. So, if you've been—if you know that your heart, your spirit, has just been agitated by everything going on, or maybe it's nothing going on in the world, it's going on in your family, or whatever. If you're just feeling that sense of agitation, guys, let the Word of Christ inhabit you abundantly. Hang out in the Word.

It's kind of like when we roll through this world, we pick up all these dirt and grime and prickly things like—okay, here's something you guys can relate to—puncture seed. Can you imagine getting those babies on your heart? And that's kind of, like, what happens. Your heart is just full of puncture seed from the world and you have to just, you have to just get that stuff out of there. You got to bathe your heart in the Word of God. Let it dwell in you richly.

And it really does make a difference. I believe that if Christians really, truly, if we would just immerse ourselves in the Word of God, not only would we grow more in our faith and the application of God's Word, but we would find that many of our problems would evaporate. Can I just tell you that without trying to oversimplify too much? I think a lot of our problems would evaporate if we hung out in the Word of God, at least as much as we hung out thinking about the world.

I want you to listen very closely to Jesus' words in Matthew chapter 7, on the screen.

Matthew 7: 24-25

“Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock.

Everyone who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain fell, the floods came (even for that man), the winds (even) blew, and (they) beat (they beat hard) on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. Okay? Because the Word of Christ dwelt richly in that heart, okay?

Third and final exhortation is in verse 17: *17And whatever you do, in word or deed* (and Paul likes to do this sometimes; he likes to just kind of—he's been talking about various things, and then he takes a big lasso, and he ropes up all the other possibilities and drags them in, and says, by the way, if I've left anything out anything you do, word or deed), *do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father, through Him.*

By the way, do you know what it means to do something in the name of Jesus? People get this messed up all the time, particularly as it relates to water baptism. There are people who believe that if you are not baptized, and in these words, “in the name of Jesus,” your baptism was not real. It wasn't effective.

People, the words, “in the name of Jesus” means in the authority of. In the authority of. If you go do something in my name, you go do it in my authority. Okay? If I give you authority to go do something, you could literally say, I'm doing this in the name of Paul. It's not going to get you much, but my point is, that's what it means.

And so, whatever you do, word or deed, do it in the authority of Jesus, giving thanks. But see, when you do things in the authority of someone, you got to understand. And that's why I probably wouldn't send very many people to do something in my name, because they're going to represent me, and I'm not always sure how they're going to represent me. Sometimes I get concerned about that, and I bet you do too.

Have you ever had employees? Maybe some of you who are business owners who didn't represent your business very well. Maybe they bit at somebody on over the phone, or something, and they just didn't represent you very well. So, when we are doing everything in word or in deed in the name of the Lord, it is incumbent upon us to do things in such a way as to accurately represent the Lord in what we're doing, because we're doing it in His authority, right? So, I always got to be thinking what impression do people have of Jesus when they get done talking to me.

You ever thought about that for yourself? When you're talking to somebody at work, you don't even have to be talking about anything spiritual, anything about the Bible or anything, just talking. What is their impression of Jesus after talking to you, after spending time with you? We're to do it all in His authority. It's kind of sobering, isn't it? Because, you know, my words and my actions are either going to reflect well and bring Him glory, or they're not going to reflect very well. And they're going to do the opposite of that.

And then, finally, he says, *and be thankful*. We've talked about this in the past. We're to be a thankful people. Thankful. Thankful. Thankful. Thankful. When people are talking about bummers and downers and difficulties, you and I are to be thankful. We're to come back and say, well, you know what though? I'm thankful that I'm just thankful. I'm thankful that we're here to even have this conversation. You can really turn the tide of a conversation when you do that.

A thankful attitude communicates that we serve a good God. You know that? If you're a complainer, that kind of communicates to people that you don't serve a good God; it kind of communicates to other people that you serve a rather difficult God who's not terribly trustworthy and you're not really happy with Him. We got to be careful the way we communicate who God is and what He is like with other people. One of the best ways we can do it is very simply be thankful. Think of something to be thankful for. Amen.