

"Living out the Virtues of the Christian Life"

Part 2

Colossians 3:12-17

Introduction: Last week in our study of Colossians we were in verse 12 of chapter 3 and in this section, Paul is explaining to his readers what it looks like in a believer's life when they have put off the old man and have put on the new man. Paul starts in verse 12 with three titles for the believer.

Notice Colossians 3:12

We are:

1. The Elect
2. Holy
3. Beloved

These titles are given as a motivation to live the virtues that follow. We looked at two of the virtues last week.

- **Bowels of mercies** – This is having compassion for people when they do not deserve it and when they do not appreciate it. The example we looked at last week was Jesus at the cross.

Luke 23:33-38

³³ *And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.*

³⁴ *Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.* And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.

- **Kindness**

This virtue was seen in the life of David when he brought Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, into his family. He did it because of a covenant that he and Jonathan had made. In the same way we have been shown kindness from God when we did not deserve it. It is all because of a Covenant that was made between the Father and the Son and the Covenant was ratified with the blood of Jesus Christ.

This now brings us to where we are this evening.

- **The Virtues**

➤ Part 2

Notice Colossians 3:12 again.

The next virtue that Paul mentions is:

➤ Humbleness of mind.

The Greek word used here is **tapeinophrosynē** and it means "to have a humble opinion of oneself." To boil it down it means to be HUMBLE. It would be the opposite of pride. When we look at some history, we can understand why Paul calls on believers to be humble. Keep in mind that one of our titles is "HOLY": which means to be set apart. This virtue would certainly set apart the believer in Paul's day and in our day. Notice the words of Barclay on the word:

"Basil was to describe it as 'the gem casket of all the virtues;' but before Christianity humility was not counted as a virtue at all. The ancient world looked on humility as a thing to be despised... In classical Greek there is no word for humility which has not some tinge of servility; but Christian humility is not a cringing thing. It is based on two things. First, on the divine side, it is based on the awareness of the creatureliness of humanity. God is the Creator, man the creature, and in the presence of the Creator the creature cannot feel anything else but humility. Second, on the human side, it is based on the belief that all men are the sons of God; and there is no room for arrogance when we are living among men and women who are all of royal lineage."

Notice the words of John Wesley as he adds to the thought.

*"Neither the Romans nor the Greeks had a word for humility. The very concept was so foreign and abhorrent to their way of thinking that they had no term to describe it. When, during the first several centuries of Christianity, pagan writers borrowed the term **tapeinophrosynē**, they always used it derogatorily—frequently of Christians—because to them humility was a pitiable weakness."*

The same word is used by Paul in the letter to the Philippians.

Philippians 2:3-8

³ Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.

⁴ Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

⁵ Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

⁶ *Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:*

⁷ *But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:*

⁸ *And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.*

We are to think humbly of ourselves. We are not to consider ourselves in any way superior to others. A modern proverb puts it well, we are to remember that "all of us are made in the same mold, only some are moldier than others!" Paul calls for genuine humility, in contrast to the false humility of the false teachers.

Colossians 2:18

¹⁸ *Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind,*

Humility characterized Jesus.

Matthew 11:28-30

²⁸ *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*

²⁹ *Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.*

³⁰ *For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.*

The Roman culture of Paul's day despised humility. Instead, they admired pride and domination. This is much like our world today. But let us be reminded that pride is destructive. Notice the verses that address pride.

Proverbs 8:13

¹³ *The fear of the LORD is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate.*

Proverbs 11:2

² *When pride cometh, then cometh shame: but with the lowly is wisdom.*

Proverbs 16:18-19

¹⁸ *Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.*

¹⁹ Better it is to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud.

Proverbs 29:23

²³ A man's pride shall bring him low: but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit.

Notice Colossians 3:12 again.

➤ **Meekness**

The simple definition of this word is "power under control." It was used to describe a wild horse being tamed. In this verse it describes a believer who is tamed by the grace of God. Notice how the New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament.. describes the word.

"Meekness "denotes the humble and gentle attitude which expresses itself, in particular, in a patient submissiveness to offense, free from malice and desire for revenge... controlled strength, the ability to bear reproaches and slights without bitterness and resentment; the ability to provide a soothing influence on someone who is in a state of anger, bitterness and resentment against life... the word indicates an obedient submissiveness to God and His will, with unwavering faith and enduring patience displaying itself in a gentle attitude and kind acts toward others, and this often in the face of opposition. It is the restrained and obedient powers of the personality brought into subjection and submission to God's will by the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:23)... the opposite of arrogance... the word stands in contrast to the terms, wrath and anger as a state of mind)... It denotes the humble and gentle attitude which expresses itself, in particular, in a patient submissiveness to offense, a freedom from malice and desire for revenge... mildness, patient trust in the midst of difficult circumstances."

To live out this virtue we must have self-control and the self-control that we need only comes from the Holy Spirit.

Romans 7:18-20

¹⁸ For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.

¹⁹ For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.

²⁰ Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

This then raises a question for us, "How do we respond when we are offended?" The sin nature which we all have wants to strike back like a rattle snake. But that is not the way Jesus lived His life and the Spirit desires to manifest the life of Jesus through us. Therefore, if we are controlled by the Spirit we will exercise meekness. If we are controlled by the flesh we will exercise anger, malice, and revenge. Paul sets this virtue over against wrath in 1 Corinthians.

1 Corinthians 4:

²¹ *What will ye? shall I come unto you with a rod, or in love, and in the spirit of meekness?*

Notice Colossians 3:12 again.

➤ Longsuffering

If we notice as we move through these virtues that they are all dealing with how we relate to other people. Longsuffering could also be translated "patience." There are several ways to look at longsuffering/patience but we need to stay in context so we shall consider it as we relate to others.

None of us have reached perfection and we all make mistakes and sometimes we make foolish choices that offend others. As believers we are called to be longsuffering with others. God sets the example of longsuffering that we are to follow.

Romans 2:1-4

Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things.

² *But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things.*

³ *And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?*

⁴ *Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?*

2 Peter 3:9-10

⁹ *The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*

¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

How much longsuffering did God show toward us before we were saved and how much does he show toward us now even as we make foolish decisions in our lives?

There is another way in which we can see this word exercised in our lives. It pertains to endurance in the midst of the spiritual battles of life. It is a spirit that endures whatever comes and never gives up or never gives in. Notice the words of Barclay concerning this thought.

"It describes the spirit which will never give in and which, because it endures to the end, will reap the reward. Its meaning can best be seen from the fact that a Jewish writer used it to describe what he called "the Roman persistency which would never make peace under defeat." In their great days the Romans were unconquerable; they might lose a battle, they might even lose a campaign, but they could not conceive of losing a war. In the greatest disaster it never occurred to them to admit defeat. Christian patience is the spirit which never admits defeat, which will not be broken by any misfortune or suffering, by any disappointment or discouragement, but which persists to the end."

Conclusion:

This longsuffering is so very important in the midst of the spiritual battle that we are in. There should never be a tendency to compromise and there should never be the tendency to quit. We endure some very difficult times and we go through some very difficult seasons but we stay the course.

Hebrews 10:35-39

³⁵ Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward.

³⁶ For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.

³⁷ For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.

³⁸ Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.

³⁹ But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.