



THE EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS

Lesson Number 16



TRANSLATION LEGEND: ASV=American Standard Version (1901), BBE=Bible in Basic English (1949), DRA=Douay-Rheims (1899), ESV=English Standard Version (2001), KJV=King James Version (1611), NKJV=New King James Version (1982), NAB=New American Bible, NASB=New American Standard Bible (1977), NAU=New American Standard Bible (1995), NIB=New International Bible, NIV=New International Version (1984), NJB=New Jerusalem Bible, NLT=New Living Translation, NRSV=New Revised Standard Version (1989), RSV=Revised Standard Version (1952), TNK=JPS Tanakj (1985), YLT=Young's Literal Translation (1862).

----- Bible Translation Codes with Identification -----

THINGS THAT ARE TO BE PUT ON

“ 3:12 Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; 13 Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. 14 And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.” ^{KJV} (Col 3:12-14)

INTRODUCTION

Throughout Scripture, and especially under the New Covenant, Divine prohibitions are not an end of themselves. That is, our Lord's fundamental objective is not merely to keep us from doing wrong. **The primary aim is to bring us to the place of abundant Divine provision.**

FLESH CANNOT SEE IT

From the beginning of God's dealings with men, this has proved to be very difficult for some to perceive. This is particularly true since the fall in Eden. **Men have had a hard time comprehending the Lord's intention to bless them.** There is an inveterate tendency among them to see the Lord as restraining what they prefer to do, rather

than giving them glorious benefits and advantages. This tendency was birthed when Eve succumbed to the temptation of the devil. Rather than beholding the rich abundance and diversity of the trees of the garden from which she could eat without restraint, she saw the forbidden tree as holding the primary advantage. *“And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat”* (Gen 3:6). From that day until now, humanity naturally desires what is unlawful, while neglecting what is right.

IN ORDER TO APPROPRIATE

In the Divine economy – the Kingdom of God – prohibition is in order to appropriation. That is, the lawful and the unlawful cannot be indulged simultaneously. What is wrong and what is right cannot be enjoyed at the same time. Things that are by nature opposed to each other cannot be joined together. Therefore we read, *“... what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they*

OUTLINE

- ▶ PUT ON THEREFORE (3:12a)
- ▶ THE ELECT OF GOD (3:12b)
- ▶ HOLY AND BELOVED (3:12c)
- ▶ BOWELS OF MERCIES(3:12d)
- ▶ KINDNESS (3:12e)
- ▶ HUMBLENESS OF MIND (3:12f)
- ▶ MEEKNESS (3:12g)
- ▶ LONGSUFFERING (3:12h)
- ▶ FORBEARING ONE ANOTHER (3:13a)
- ▶ FORGIVING ONE ANOTHER (3:13b)
- ▶ AS CHRIST FORGAVE YOU (3:13c)
- ▶ ABOVE ALL THINGS (3:14)

shall be my people” (2 Cor 6:14-16). **The truth of the matter is that God will NOT dwell where Satan and the things of the flesh are welcomed.** For Him to do so would be a contradiction of His own character. This perception is fundamental to sound doctrine.

Once this is seen, the notion of a “carnal Christian” becomes absurd. The postulate that God will forever secure those who revert to the flesh is seen as nothing more than an imagination to be cast down (2 Cor 10:4-5). The “once-saved-always-saved” heresy fails to take this truth into account – even though it is made with unusual clarity.

Even more common than these erroneous perceptions is the notion that a person can continue to abide in Christ without appropriating the benefits that are available in Him. It is evident from the general state of the American church that this is not seen by the masses. One can scarcely find a professing “Christian” who is actually growing in the “*grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ*” (2 Pet 3:18), putting “*off the old man*,” and putting “*on the new man*” (Eph 4:23-24). **Scriptural literacy has been exchanged for brotherhood cliches and religious folklore.** The reason for this condition is that people have not seen the necessity of replacing vice with virtue, evil with good, and bane with blessing.

THE TEACHING OF JESUS

Jesus addressed this matter with some very poignant teaching. He

confirmed that there is a certain godly condition that must replace a defiled one. Jesus had just announced that the generation to whom He had appeared would be judged in the last day by Nineveh and the Queen of the South (Matt 12:41-42). Although they were offered much less than the Jews who were exposed to the Lord’s Christ, they left their former condition in order to take hold of what they perceived to be available to them. Once Nineveh saw their condition, they abandoned it in order to gain Divine favor (Jonah 3:6-9). Once the Queen of the South saw that someone in this world had more wisdom than was available to her in “*the South*,” she quickly left her home, seeking out superior wisdom from the mouth of Solomon (1 Kgs 10:1-13).

Then Jesus spoke of the condition of people who were rescued from Satan’s dominion, yet did not avail themselves of the benefits available to them. “*Now when the unclean spirit goes out of a man, it passes through waterless places, seeking rest, and does not find it. Then it says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came’; and when it comes, it finds it unoccupied, swept, and put in order. Then it goes, and takes along with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first. That is the way it will also be with this evil generation*”^{NASB} (Mat 12:43-45).

I want to underscore the point our Lord is making, for it is obvious that it is not generally known. **The person who has been delivered from sin and Satanic dominion, who does not fill his life with the things of God, will actually become worse than he was before.** This condition is not necessarily made known in depraved outward conduct. However, the control of the devil

over that person becomes more pronounced than before. Unless there is a resolve to come away from that condition, it will result in a falling away from which it will not be possible to repent (Heb 6:4-6). Admittedly, that is a most arresting consideration, but it is the truth, and we do well to seriously ponder it.

If your life is not characterized by a quest for glory, and the appropriation of “all spiritual blessings,” you are in a state from which you may not recover – at least there isn’t a guarantee of it. It is the purpose of this lesson to put pressure upon you to seek the Lord “*while He may be found*,” and call “*upon Him while He is near*” (Isa 55:6). It is imperative that **now**, without delay, you “*make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed*”^{NKJV} (Heb 12:13).

PUTTING OFF TO PUT ON

The only valid reason for Israel to leave Egypt, was in order to enter into Canaan. So it is with us. The reason to put away the works of the flesh, is to appropriate the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:19-23). This principle is frequently stated in “*the Apostle’s doctrine*.”

✦ **PUT OFF THE OLD MAN AND PUT ON THE NEW MAN.** “*That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness*” (Eph 4:24).

✦ **DENYING UNGODLINESS AND LIVING GODLY.** “*For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that,*

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denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world” (Titus 2:11-12).

- ✦ **MORTIFYING THE DEEDS OF THE BODY THAT WE MAY LIVE.** *“For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God”* (Rom 8:14).
- ✦ **PURGING OUT THE OLD THAT WE MIGHT BE NEW.** *“Purge out*

perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world” (Phil 2:14-15).

- ✦ **CASTING OFF THE WORKS OF DARKNESS IN ORDER TO PUT ON THE ARMOR OF LIGHT.** *“The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light”* (Rom 13:12).
- ✦ **COMING AWAY FROM UNCLEANNESS IN ORDER TO BE HOLY.** *“I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of*

order that we might serve God. We have become dead to sin in order that we might live toward God (Rom 6:11).

If there is no corresponding life toward God, there is no Divine recognition for ceasing an outwardly ungodly manner of life. Let it be clear in your mind, sin separates men from God. As it is written, *“But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear”* (Isa 59:2). This statement does not cease to be true after one comes into Christ. **Where men continue to live in sin, they forfeit the good things of God.** Also, if they do not take hold of the benefits that are in Christ Jesus, any imagined departure from iniquity has no real value. If we do not walk in the Spirit, whatever we imagine ourselves to NOT be doing, is wholly without any significance.

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TWO REALMS

There are two spiritual realms, and we must have a proper association to them both. These are represented as *“spirit”* and *“flesh”* (Rom 8:4), *“light”* and *“darkness”* (1 Thess 5:5), and *“righteousness”* and *“unrighteousness”* (2 Cor 6:14). They are the domain of *“Christ”* and the domain of *“Belial”* (2 Cor 6:15), of the *“Living God”* and *“idols”* (2 Cor 6:16), and of *“life”* and *“death”* (Rom 8:2,6). One is *“spiritual”* and the other *“natural”* (1 Cor 2:14). **One must be left, and the other entered. One must be mortified and the other nurtured. One must be denied and the other embraced.** We cannot be neutral toward neither realm.

therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us” (1 Cor 5:7).

- ✦ **REFRAINING FROM MURMURING AND DISPUTING THAT WE MAY BE BLAMELESS AND HARMLESS.** *“Do all things without murmurings and disputings: that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and*

your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness” (Rom 6:19).

This is the principle that is being taught in our text. **We have “put off” fleshly manners in order that we may adopt spiritual ones.** We cease from walking in the darkness that we may walk in the light. We stop serving sin in

PUT ON THEREFORE

“3:12a **Put on therefore. . .**”

Other versions read, *“Therefore,”* ^{NKJV} *“And so,”* ^{NASB} *“As,”* ^{NRSV} *“Put on then,”* ^{RSV} and *“Now therefore.”* ^{GENEVA}

This is a statement of purpose. Having *“put off the old man with his deeds”* (3:9), **this is the only proper thing to do.** It is the only spiritually logical action that is to follow. Any other kind of life is wholly unreasonable – a sort

of spiritual insanity.

Having been delivered *“from this present evil world according to the will of God and our Father”* (Gal 1:4), what possible reason can be adduced for once again majoring on the things that pertain *“to this world?”* If we are not to be conformed to this world (Rom 12:2), then God has called us to embrace things pertaining to another one – *“the world to*

come.” Even now, those who live by faith are tasting of *“the powers of the world to come”* (Heb 6:5). **The realm that has been contaminated by, and cursed because of, sin cannot be the focus of our lives.** God has called us out of the world, to take out of it *“a people for His name”* (Acts 15:14). Jesus told His disciples He had chosen them *“out of the world”* (John 15:19). How, then, can anyone justify remaining a part of the

world, thinking like it, and nurturing the desires that tie us to it?

Jesus said His kingdom, like Himself, *“is not of this world”* (John 8:23; 18:36). It is an absurdity of the greatest magnitude, therefore, to represent Him as majoring on this world. **Whatever we may think of life in the flesh, and its**



varied and complex relationships, it is not where the burden or our attention is to be placed. This does not mean we are to live foolishly, abandoning good sense and forgetting that we are stewards of all that we possess. It DOES mean that we are to conduct our lives in anticipation of leaving this world – using it, but *“not abusing it”* (1 Cor 7:31).

We are to *“put off”* everything pertaining to *“the old man”* in anticipation of the passing away of this world. We are to put on things pertaining to *“the new man”* in anticipation of the new heavens and the new earth *“wherein dwelleth righteousness”* (2 Pet 3:13). We *“deny ungodliness and worldly lusts”* because they will disqualify us from the *“eternal inheritance.”* We live *“soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world,”* because we are looking for *“the blessed hope and glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ”* (Tit 2:12-13).

PUT ON

“ . . . Put on . . . ” Here is an action to be taken on our part. There is spiritual clothing that is to be put on by the saints – certain things that are to characterize our lives. These are not

things that automatically display themselves when we are born again. They come from God, and proceed forth from a new heart and spirit. **However, their manifestation requires the sanctified effort of those who are saved.**

Several times believers are exhorted to put something on.

- ✚ *“Put on the armor of light”* (Rom 13:12).
- ✚ *“Put on the new man”* (Eph 4:24).
- ✚ *“Put on the whole armor of God”* (Eph 6:11).
- ✚ *“Put on . . . bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering . . . ”* (Col 3:12).
- ✚ *“Put on charity”* (Col 3:14).

There is an aspect of salvation that requires our effort. This type of arrangement was portrayed in several of Christ’s miracles.

- ✚ When turning water into wine, Jesus commanded the servants, *“Fill the waterpots with water,”* and *“Draw not, now, and bear to the governor of the feast”* (John 2:7-8).
- ✚ Prior to miraculous catch of fish, Jesus told Simon, *“Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught”* (Luke 5:4).
- ✚ Before feeding the five thousand men, besides women and children, with five loaves and two fishes, Jesus said of the small lunch, *“Bring them hither to me”* (Matt 14:18).
- ✚ When providing tax money for Himself and Peter, Jesus first told Peter, *“go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for me and thee”* (Mat 17:27).
- ✚ After anointing a blind man’s eyes

with clay, Jesus told him, *“Go, wash in the pool of Siloam”* (John 9:7).

- ✚ A man with a withered hand was told, *“stretch forth thy hand”* (Matt 12:13).
- ✚ An impotent man was commanded, *“Arise, take up thy bed, and go to thine house”* (Matt 9:6).
- ✚ Another impotent man laying at the pool of Bethesda was told, *“Rise, take up thy bed, and walk”* (John 5:8).
- ✚ When lying dead in a sepulcher, Lazarus was commanded, *“Come forth!”* (John 11:43).

There is a sense in which Divine power and graces must be employed before becoming effective. This is the principle that is involved in this text. Further, it is the peculiar prerogative of faith to move those possessing it into such action. Those who are inclined to remain in a state of inactivity until they are impacted by unexpected Divine intervention are not conducting themselves in a wise manner. While they are not to launch out in their own strength, they are to engage themselves in doing the things that are admonished in this passage.

This is simply the manner of spiritual life. **Every other kind of spiritual life, regardless of how it is represented by men, is vain and pointless.** It makes no difference how men may justify a worldly religion and an earthly emphasis, neither is right, and both are soundly condemned by God. **The only acceptable response of a person who has been delivered from sin is to consistently seek to appropriate what God has provided in Christ Jesus.**

After over fifty years in the body of Christ, I can easily count the number of personal religious acquaintances I have had who were actually doing what our text admonishes. The reason for their failure to *“put off”* the old man and *“put on”* the new man was largely owing to the religious emphasis they had embraced. Because of what they had been taught, they concluded it was not necessary to be vigilant, resisting the devil. Nor, indeed,

did they feel as though they should press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God which is in Christ Jesus. **Let me be clear, that any religion that allows a person to come to such conclusions is potentially damning.**

In faith, it must be energetically shunned.

THEREFORE

“ . . . therefore . . . ”The word “therefore” is a particular word in the Greek text: οὖν (oon). The word means

“accordingly,” ^{STRONG’S} or “something that follows from another necessarily.” ^{THAYER} That is, having “put off the old man with his deeds,” the only proper thing to do is fulfill the words that follow. This is the only kind of conduct that will be accepted by God.

THE ELECT OF GOD

“ 3:12b . . . as the elect of God.. ”

Other versions read, “as those who have been chosen of God,” ^{NASB} “as God’s chosen people,” ^{NIV} “As God’s chosen ones,” ^{NRSV} “Since God chose you,” ^{NLT} and “as choice ones of God.” ^{YLT}

There is a certain mind-set that must accompany profitable spiritual activity. It cannot be accomplished by rote, or empty religious routine. What God requires of us cannot be achieved by habit, or thoughtless ritual. People are not “trained” to be godly through various external disciplines. That was the manner under the Law, necessitated because the people did not have new hearts and spirits. They were fundamentally unlike God in their thoughts and ways. The Lord said to the covenanted people of Israel, “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts” (Isa 55:8-9). **However, this is NOT the manner of the New Covenant.** It is, in every sense of the word, “a better covenant, which was established upon better promises” (Heb 8:6). It is NOT the same kind of covenant as that which was established with Israel – a covenant comprised of rules, routines, and ceremonies: “Which stood **only** in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances” (Heb 9:10). That is why, when speaking of the New Covenant, the Lord promised, “a new covenant . . . **not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt**” (Jer 31:32).

The New Covenant is of a new and better order, or kind. **The manner in**

which God speaks to those who participate in this covenant differs significantly from the way in which He spoke to those under the Old Covenant. He does not tell those in Christ that their thoughts and ways are not His. **He does not address them as “rebellious against the Lord” (Deut 9:7), “a disobedient and gainsaying people” (Isa 65:2-3; Rom 10:21), and “a stiffnecked people” (Ex 32:9).** These are a people who have been “joined to the Lord” (1 Cor 6:17), “delivered from the power of darkness,” and “translated into the kingdom” of God’s “dear Son” (Col 1:13). They are addressed as those who have new capacities, access to God, and are indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God.

The Spirit, therefore, speaks to those in Christ in strict accord with who they are in Christ Jesus. While they do possess an “old man,” that is not their fundamental part. The “new man” is the object of Divine attention. That is the part that has been called into the fellowship of God’s Son (1 Cor 1:9). It is the ONLY part that God accepts in the Beloved (Eph 1:6). That is the part of us that has been given an “ear” to “hear what the Spirit saith to the churches” (Rev 2:7,11,17,29; 3:6,13, 22).

The words that follow will sound strange to those who are not acquainted with this manner of the kingdom. The effects of spiritual Babylon have nearly excluded this type of speaking within the professed “Christian” community. However, these are the words of the Holy Spirit – words “taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words” ^{NASB} (1 Cor 2:13).

AS

The word “as” is translated from a single Greek word: ὡς (ose).

Linguistically, or according to language structure, this is a verbal particle of comparison: “as, like as, in the same manner as.” ^{THAYER} **Doctrinally**, this word speaks of comporting ourselves in keeping with the “new man,” as distinguished from the “old man.” **Because we actually do possess two natures, we can shape our lives in accord with either one – but not both.** What we are now exhorted to do can only be done by the “new man.” Therefore, the Spirit will now emphasize some of the glorious aspects of that which is “born of God.”



There are some religious environments in which these words are never favorably spoken. Some are so spiritually obtuse that they suppose them to be “Calvinistic,” or the expression of some form of determinism. But these are the words of God, and they are precise, powerful, and conducive to life.

When the word “election” is used in church circles, it often causes a division among the people. However, God employs this term, and it is on the part of wisdom for us to receive what the Spirit says.

✠ God’s purpose is said to be “according to election.” To deliver us from the notion that this in any way refers to human choice, the Spirit speaks expressly. “For the children [Jacob and Esau] being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth” (Rom 9:11).

✚ The “*remnant*” of people among the Israelites are referred to as “*the election*” (Rom 11:5,7,28).

✚ In providing an explanation for his great delight in the spiritual status of the Thessalonians, Paul said: “*Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of [by ^{NKJV}] God*” (1 Thess 1:4).

✚ Peter admonishes us to “*Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall*” (2 Pet 1:10).

We are not, then, speaking of a

days shall be shortened.” – Matt 24:22; Mark 13:20

✚ “*For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive **the very elect.***” – Matt 24:24; Mark 13:22

✚ “*And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together **His elect** from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.*” – Matt 24:31; Mark 13:27

✚ “*And shall not God avenge His own*

✚ “*Therefore I endure all things for **the elect’s** sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.*” – 2 Tim 2:10

✚ “*Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God’s **elect**, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness.*” – Tit 1:1

✚ “***Elect** according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.*” – 1 Pet 1:2

✚ “*To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but **chosen** of God, and precious.*” – 1 Pet 2:4

✚ “*Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, **elect**, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.*” – 1 Pet 2:6

✚ “*But ye are a **chosen** generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.*” – 1 Pet 2:9

✚ “*The elder unto **the elect** lady and her children, whom I love in the truth; and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth.*” – 2 John 1:1

✚ “*The children of thy **elect** sister greet thee. Amen.*” – 2 John 1:13

✚ “*These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for He is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with Him are called, and **chosen**, and faithful.*” – Rev 17:14

Here is a noun term used twenty-three times in the Apostolic writings. By way of comparison, the noun “*baptism*” is mentioned twenty-two times. “*Family*” is mentioned one time, “*husbands*” thirteen times, “*wives*” fourteen times, “*household*” thirteen times, “*marriage*”

We are not, then, speaking of a traditional teaching, spawned in the hearts of men. However, because so very little is being said on this subject in church circles it is imperative that we establish the propriety and profitability of such language.

traditional teaching, spawned in the hearts of men. However, because so very little is being said on this subject in church circles it is imperative that we establish the propriety and profitability of such language.

As Used in Our Text

The word used in our text is an adjective pronoun, from the Greek word ἐκλεκτοι. The emphasis is placed upon God – “*elect OF GOD.*” “*The elect*” are those whom God Himself has chosen.

This noun/pronoun form of the word – “*the elect*” – is used twenty times in the New Testament Scriptures. It is translated in different ways, each in the same sense as our text.

✚ “*So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few **chosen.***” – Matt 20:16

✚ “*For many are called, but few are **chosen.***” – Matt 22:14

✚ “*And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for **the elect’s** sake those*

elect, which cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them?” – Luke 18:7

✚ “*And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them derided him, saying, He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ, **the chosen** of God.*” – Luke 23:35

✚ “*Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s **elect**? It is God that justifieth.*” – Rom 8:33

✚ “*Salute Rufus **chosen** in the Lord, and his mother and mine.*” – Rom 16:13

✚ “*Put on therefore, as **the elect** of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering.*” – Col 3:12

✚ “*I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and **the elect** angels, that thou observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality.*” – 1 Tim 5:21

seventeen times, and “*money*” twenty-three times. **One would think that the mere frequency of its use in Scripture would compel preachers and teachers to speak about it.**

There are several observations concerning the used of “*elect*” and “*chosen*” in Scripture.

- ✚ They are **always** attached to something of eternal significance.
- ✚ They are **always** associated with God Himself.
- ✚ They **never** relate to the choice of men.
- ✚ **Jesus Himself** is described as “*elect*” and “*chosen*.”
- ✚ The **holy angels** are called “*elect*.”
- ✚ Nineteen times, the children of God are referred to as “*elect*” or “*chosen*.” By way of comparison, they are referred to as “*Christians*” or “*Christian*” three times (Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Pet 4:16).

Make no mistake about this, the people of God have been elected, or chosen, by God. Men may wrap all manner of strange doctrines around that fact, but their teachings cannot destroy the fact itself. **Ultimately, salvation is traced back to God’s choice.**

CHOOSING

Very rarely does the Spirit mention the choosing of humanity. Jesus said of Mary, “*Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken from her*” (Lk 10:12). The Apostles and elders sent “*chosen men*” with Paul and Barnabas (Acts 15:22,25). Titus was “*chosen of the churches*” to travel with Paul (2 Cor 8:19). Paul said he found it difficult whether to “*choose*” to remain in the flesh to minister, or depart to be with the Lord (Phil 1:22-23). All other Apostolic references to “*choice*” refer to something God has done.

- ✚ Jesus was God’s **chosen** (Matt 12:18; 23:35)
- ✚ The saints are said to **chosen** by God (Mk 13:20)

- ✚ Jesus **chose** the twelve (John 6:70; 13:18).
- ✚ Jesus told the disciples they did NOT choose Him, but HE **chose** them (John 15:16).
- ✚ Jesus **chose** His disciples out of the world (John 15:19).
- ✚ The Apostles were **chosen** (Acts 1:2).

Tim 2:4).

- ✚ God has “*chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith*” (James 2:5).
- ✚ The body of Christ is said to be a “*chosen generation*” (1 Pet 2:9).

One wonders why so much is said about men choosing, when the Holy Spirit speaks so clearly and frequently about what God chooses!

Make no mistake about this, the people of God have been elected, or chosen, by God. Men may wrap all manner of strange doctrines around that fact, but their teachings cannot destroy the fact itself. Ultimately, salvation is traced back to God’s choice.

- ✚ When filling Judas’ vacated bishopric, the disciples asked God to show them whom, HE had **chosen** (Acts 1:24).
- ✚ Saul of Tarsus was described to Ananas as a “*chosen vessel*” unto God (Acts 9:15).
- ✚ Following His resurrection, Jesus appeared to “*witnesses chosen before of God*” (Acts 10:11).
- ✚ God “*made choice*” who would initially bring the Gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 15:7).
- ✚ God **chose** Saul of Tarsus, that he would “*know His will, and see the Just One*” (Acts 22:14).
- ✚ Those in Christ are described as “*chosen*” in Christ (Eph 1:4).
- ✚ Believers are portrayed as “*beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth*” (2 Thess 2:13).
- ✚ Those laboring for Christ are said to be **chosen** by God to be soldiers (2

Whether men satisfactorily see the significance of “*the elect of God*” or not, they are obliged to acknowledge it is an inspired expression, and enter into the work of believing it (John 6:29).

THE PLACE OF PONDERING

Our text reminds us that we are to fulfill the following exhortation “*as the elect of God*.” If we have no conception of “*the elect of God*,” the words will have no significance to us.

As we set out to do the “*good and acceptable, and perfect will of God*,” we are to remember that He has chosen us. **That choice was made in Christ – but it was God’s choice.** We are His elected ones, preferred above all others because of our identity with His Son. We could not have come to Jesus if God did not draw us (John 6:44,65). We could not have believed if He did not open our hearts (Acts 16:14). If He had not “*given*” us to believe, we could not have done so (Phil 1:29). Our faith was “*obtained*” from Him (2 Pet 1:1). We could not have seen who Jesus really was unless the Father had revealed it to us (Matt 16:17). If the kindness and love of God had not appeared unto us, we would forever have remained as we were – “*foolish,*

disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another” (Titus 3:3-4).

After the heavens and earth have passed away, and the assembled universe stands before the Lord of glory, those who have triumphed over the devil will publically account for their salvation. **There will not be a syllable uttered that speaks of man’s will, ways, choices, or accomplishments.** This is the word that will be shouted when everything is seen with clarity. “*And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such*

as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, ‘Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever’” (Rev 5:13). And again, “Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb” (Rev 7:10). And again, “Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honor, and power, unto the Lord our God” (Rev 19:1).

Lofty spiritual personalities will respond with insight. They have witnessed the working of God among His people, and they know what has really happened. **They will ascribe the**

totality of the cause to God and the Lamb. “*Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen*” (Rev 7:12).

Now, in this world, the people of God begin to lip the “*new song,*” ascribing the glory for their salvation to the Lord. One way they sing the song is by clothing themselves with the blessed provisions found in the heavenly places. This is to be done within the awareness that God has chosen us in Christ. We are His chosen ones, and as such have been given access to the very things to be “*put on.*” That is the point of this text!

HOLY AND BELOVED

“^{3:12c} . . . *holy and beloved. . .*”

The Spirit continues to identify the mind-set that must accompany the putting on of spiritual manners. **There must be an awareness of who we are in Christ Jesus, else the admonition will prove too challenging.** In the

The word “*holy*” is a broad word. On the one hand it means sacred and consecrated. On the other hand it means pure and blameless. This is the same word that is elsewhere translated “*saints,*” or holy ones.

It is most remarkable that the

environment that is holy – separated unto God and pure. The necessity of this environment was established in the tabernacle service of old. The tabernacle itself was comprised of two compartments: “*the HOLY Place*” and “*the Most HOLY place*” (Ex 26:33-34). That was the environment in which the Lord was served. It was also the environment in which the Lord was accessed. This environment was dedicated to the Lord. No extracurricular activities took place in these surroundings.

Those who served in these holy places had to be holy themselves: “. . . *whatsoever toucheth the altar shall be holy*” (Ex 29:37); “. . . *he shall be holy unto thee: for I the LORD, which sanctify you, am holy*” (Lev 21:8). “. . . *and it shall be that the man whom the LORD doth choose, he shall be holy: ye take too much upon you, ye sons of Levi*” (Num 16:7).

The person serving the Lord had to be “*holy*” – separated to the Lord. It is written of the Levitical order, “*Thus shalt thou separate the Levites from among the children of Israel: and the Levites shall be mine*” (Num 8:14). Again it is written, “*Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing; go ye out of the midst of her; be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the LORD*” (Isa 52:11).

The Spirit continues to identify the mind-set that must accompany the putting on of spiritual manners. There must be an awareness of who we are in Christ Jesus, else the admonition will prove too challenging.

previous expression, the choice of God was emphasized. Now the personal aspects of that choice are accented. Divine determination is not without heart, as some have suggested. The election of God has an impact upon the human spirit, resulting in a change of character, and a felial identity with the God who made the choice.

HOLY

“. . . *holy . . .*” Every version reads the same: “*holy.*”

people of God are referred to as “*holy.*” Think of the associations made with that term: “*HOLY Spirit*” (Eph 1:13), the “*HOLY One*” who gave us the Spirit (1 John 2:20), Jesus “*is HOLY*” (Heb 7:26), “*HOLY Scriptures*” (Rom 1:2), “*the Law is HOLY*” (Rom 7:12), the church is growing into a “*HOLY temple in the Lord*” (Eph 2:21), “*HOLY Apostles*” (Eph 3:5), and called with a “*HOLY calling*” (2 Tim 1:9).

In Christ, we are placed in an

The Objective in Salvation

Salvation includes the objective of producing a people who, at the appearing of the Lord, will be holy – separated and pure. **There is no such thing as a saved person who is unholy.** Such a condition contradicts both the concept and the reality of the salvation that is in Christ Jesus.

- ✦ “According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, **that we should be HOLY**...” (Eph 1:4).
- ✦ “That He might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but **that it should be HOLY** and without blemish” (Eph 5:27).
- ✦ “In the body of His flesh through death, **to present you HOLY** and unblameable and unreprouvable in His sight” (Col 1:22).

There can, therefore, be no question about the necessity of being holy. That is the affirmed intention of God’s “great salvation” – a purpose that is realized in Christ Jesus.

Separated

The separation depicted in “holy” is declared several places. This is a separation accomplished by God through Jesus Christ. While we are admonished to “be separate,” refusing to mingle with the cursed order (2 Cor 6:17), our own activity in this separation is not the emphasis of this particular text.

- ✦ **TAKEN OUT.** “Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to **take out of them a people for His name**” (Acts 15:14).
- ✦ **PURIFIED UNTO HIMSELF.** “Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and **purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works**” (Titus 2:14).
- ✦ **CHOSEN TO BE PECULIARLY HIS.** “But ye are a **chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people**; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of

darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Pet 2:9).

This separation was provisionally accomplished through the death of the Lord Jesus. As it is written, “Wherefore Jesus also, that He might **sanctify the people** with His own blood, suffered without the gate” (Heb 13:12). And again, “Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be

There can, therefore, be no question about the necessity of being holy. That is the affirmed intention of God’s “great salvation” – a purpose that is realized in Christ Jesus.

*thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith **he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?**” (Heb 10:29).*

Experientially, this separation took place when we were translated into Christ’s Kingdom. As it is written, “But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and **sanctification, and redemption**” (1 Cor 1:30). And again, “And such were some of you: **but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God**” (1 Cor 6:11).

Inherent in the word “holy” is the idea that **we are not our own.** We have been purchased with a price, and belong to God. Thus, it is written, “Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and **you are not your own? For you were bought at a price**” (1 Cor 6:19-20). In keeping with the thrust of our text, we are therefore to conduct ourselves in keeping with this Divine purchase: “*therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.*”

Pure

The word “holy” also includes the

idea of purity – the absence of moral and spiritual defilement. This perspective is found in the words, “*But as he which hath called you is holy, so **be ye holy in all manner of conversation**; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy*” (1 Pet 1:15-16).

The exhortation that follows is to be fulfilled in a keen awareness that God has separated us to Himself, and that we

have been called “*unto holiness*” (1 Thess 4:17). If we will consider these things, the exhortation will make perfect sense to us, and we will enter heartily into its fulfillment.

BELOVED

“... and beloved...” Other versions read, “*dearly beloved*,”^{NIV} “*dearly loved*,”^{BBE} and “*the holy people whom He loves*,”^{NJB/NLT}

The word “*beloved*” indicates one that is **especially loved**, or very dear and close to the heart of the One who loves them. Grammatically, the word literally means “to place first in ones affection,”^{BARCLAY-NEWMAN} and “regard highly.”^{THAYER} As used in this text, “*beloved*” focuses on the **intent** for which we were elected by God, and separated for Himself. **It was in order that we might be the objects of His love – a love that would lavish good things upon the chosen ones, and find delight in their fellowship and closeness to Himself.**

This is the language of Divine purpose, and it is glorious! This type of love was introduced in the Lord’s choice of Israel above all peoples. As it is written, “*For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto Himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth*” (Deut 7:6).

Much of the contemporary teaching concerning God's love greatly neutralizes this truth. The "God-loves-everyone-the-same" nonsense, together with the "conditional love" myth, obscure the Divine FOCUS of love.

The choice of the people was in order to something, and was not an end of itself. The favored status of Israel was in order that God might "instruct" them (Deut 4:36), "bring them into" the land of promise (Deut 6:23), and "preserve them alive" (Deut 6:24). It was in order that He might "make His mighty power" known through them (Psa 106:8), and be "glorified" in them (Isa 61:3). **There was a Divine purpose that dictated their choice by God.**

The same sort of reasoning is found in Christ's choice of the twelve disciples, whom He called "Apostles" (Luke 6:13). There was a purpose for that choice, as declared in Mark 3:14: "And He ordained twelve, **that they should be with Him, and that He might send**

them forth to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils" (Mark 3:14-15). There was a Divine purpose that dictated their choice by Christ.

So it is with "the elect of God." They have been chosen for Divine involvements, including participating in the Divine nature (2 Pet 1:14), being made partakers of Christ (Heb 3:14), and having fellowship with Christ (1 Cor 1:9). These are the people in whom God will work, "both to will and to do of His own good pleasure" (Phil 2:13). They are the chosen exhibits of "the exceeding riches of His grace" (Eph 2:7), and are the appointed means of tutoring heavenly principalities and powers in the "manifold wisdom of God" (Eph 3:10).

Much of the contemporary teaching concerning God's love greatly neutralizes this truth. The "God-loves-everyone-the-same" nonsense, together with the "conditional love" myth, obscure the Divine FOCUS of love. If God does, in fact, "set His love" upon someone (Deut 7:7; Psa 91:14), then it cannot be unconditional. If there is a special people who are appropriately described as ones "the Lord loveth" (Psa 146:8; Prov 3:12; Heb 12:6), then Divine love is specifically directed. That, of course, is the point of our text. There is a people who are "the elect of God" – uniquely chosen by Him. There are people who are uniquely "holy" – set apart for the Lord, and the Lord alone. There are a people who are, in a unique way, objects of Divine love – "beloved." If this is not the case, then our text has no effective meaning. **There could not be, in such a case, powerful personal reasoning that would compel one to fulfil the admonition.**

Our lives are to be conducted as people who are the special objects of Divine love – "dear children" (Eph 5:1). Those in Christ are precious in God's sight, and a source of delight to Him. As we ponder this status, the Spirit will assist us in fulfilling the following.

BOWELS OF MERCIES

^{3:12d} . . . **bowels of mercies** . . .
 . "Other versions read, "tender mercies," NKJV "a heart of compassion," NASB "clothe yourselves with compassion," NIV "compassion," RSV "let your behavior be marked by pity," BBE "bowels of compassion," DARBY "heartfelt compassion," NAB and "tenderhearted mercy." NLT

The tendency for translators to interpret a phrase rather than translate a word is evident in the varied translations of this expression. Often this kind of approach takes the edge off of the text, much like dulling the edge of a sharp knife. In my judgment, this is seen in the way various versions handle this text.

The word "bowels" is used in the

Greek text: σπλάγχνα (splag-kne). The word means "bowels, intestines (the heart, lungs, liver)." THAYER Here the word is used to parallel man's spiritual condition with his physical one. **Just as there are vital inward parts to our bodies, so there are deep inward parts in our spiritual constitution.** That is, there is a part of the "spiritual man" that is not on the surface, but deep within. It is a part that is not merely reactionary or impulsive, but driven by purpose and insight. The various uses of this word will illustrate its profound meaning.

✦ "Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own **BOWELS**" (2 Cor 6:12).

✦ "For God is my record, how greatly I

long after you all in the **BOWELS** of Jesus Christ" (Phil 1:8).

✦ "If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any **BOWELS** and mercies" (Phil 2:1).

✦ "For we have great joy and consolation in thy love, because the **BOWELS** of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother" (Phile 1:7)

✦ "Whom I have sent again: thou therefore receive him, that is, mine own **BOWELS**" (Phile 1:12).

✦ "Yea, brother, let me have joy of thee in the Lord: refresh my **BOWELS** in the Lord" (Phile 1:20).

✚ “But whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his **BOWELS** of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?” (1 John 3:17).

The root Greek word σπλάγγνον, employed in the above texts, is translated differently in other texts: “tender mercy” (Luke 1:78), and “inward affection” (2 Cor 7:15).

“Bowels of mercies” are a deep and intense capacity to show mercy – to be profoundly touched with the need of another, and be able to meet it – like the good Samaritan of whom Jesus spoke in Luke 10:33-34. Seeing a poor man stripped of his clothing, wounded, and lying half dead he was so moved that he “had compassion on him.” The word “compassion” is translated from the same Greek word used in our text. This was not a mere feeling. Rather, it proceeded from deep within the Samaritan, moving him to bind up the wounds of the victim, pouring oil and wine upon them. He placed the man on his own beast, brought him to an inn, and “took care of him.” The next day, before leaving, the Samaritan gave a sufficient amount of money to the host of the inn, saying, “Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.” That was an exhibit of “bowels of mercies.”

This capacity is resident in the new nature, or “new man.” That is why we are told to “put on” “bowels of mercies.” It is part of the “Divine nature,” of which we are made partakers. **This is not a moral quality to be developed in the wisdom of men. It is not something that is taught by**

men, or appropriated by routine. It is not a disciplined habit, like brushing your teeth or combing your hair. Rather, it is the peculiar prerogative of faith to enable us to put

said, *I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with Me now three days, and have nothing to eat: and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way*” (Matt

One of the great deficiencies of institutionalized religion is that it does not go deep enough. It does not touch the “bowels,” or inward parts, of the “new man.” It is shallow, too frothy, and too much on the surface of life. It is too easy to do, and too easy to forget.

this quality into action – to translate it into life.

One of the great deficiencies of institutionalized religion is that it does not go deep enough. It does not touch the “bowels,” or inward parts, of the “new man.” It is shallow, too frothy, and too much on the surface of life. It is too easy to do, and too easy to forget. It allows for too much variance, division, and all manner of fleshly manners. It does not curb selfishness.

“Bowels of mercies” is the kind of quality that enables us to view people with compassion because of their condition. It is said of Jesus, “But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd” (Matt 9:36). On another occasion Jesus “went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and He healed their sick” (Matt 14:14). It is written of yet another occasion, “Then Jesus called His disciples unto him, and

15:32). This was the time when our Lord fed “four thousand men beside women and children” (15:38).

This virtue involves pity, consideration, and a mind to supply the need of the helpless and suffering. It is a Divine trait, for God’s “compassions fail not” (Lam 3:22). Let a considerable measure of this Divine quality be found in you: “In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them: in His love and in His pity He redeemed them; and He bare them, and carried them all the days of old” (Isa 63:9). This is a trait for which God looks. He is represented as saying, “Reproach hath broken my heart; and I am full of heaviness: and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none” (Psa 69:20).

This characteristic is also resident in the “new man,” and thus we are told to put it on. It will not be found on the surface of life, but must come from deep within the inner man. Those who are shallow will not be able to do this.

KINDNESS

“ 3:12e . . . kindness . . . ” Other versions read, “kind feeling,”^{BBE} “benignity,”^{DOUAY} and “generosity.”^{NJB}

The word “kindness” encompasses the idea of moral goodness, integrity,

benignity (graciousness), and gentleness. It involves doing what is right toward others, and doing so in a gentle and considerate manner.

The premier example of “kindness” is found in God Himself,

whose nature we are given in salvation. It is said of His eternal purpose, “That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus” (Eph 2:7). Again it is written, “But when **the kindness and**

the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy

“new man,” which is “being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator”^{NIV} (Col 3:10). It is an expression of love, which “is kind” (1 Cor 13:4), and is one of the qualities by which the ministers of

spiritual affection, or preference, for the saints – a spiritual posture that is resident in the “new man.” Therefore we read of being “kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love” (Rom 12:10). Also, one of the characteristics of true love is that it “is kind” (1 Cor 13:4).

Kindness, then, is more than a mere attitude or feeling. It is something that is expressed in beneficial ways.

Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life” (Titus 3:5-7).

Kindness, then, is more than a mere attitude or feeling. It is something that is expressed in beneficial ways. The Scriptures especially speak of kindness toward the brethren: “And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith . . . **brotherly kindness**” (2 Pet 1:5-7). And again, “**And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you**” (Eph 4:32).

Again, this quality is found in the

God are “approved” (2 Cor 6:6). **This is a quality that makes brotherly involvements pleasant and profitable. When exhibited toward those of the world, it also makes life more tolerable.**

The English word “kindness” is derived from the root word “kin,” denoting the considerate attitude that is expected among kinfolk. When used in reference to the saints of God, “kindness” speaks of a demeanor that springs from recognizing saints as part of the glorious family to which we belong. Because we are “members one of another,” kindness moves us to have “the same care one for another” (Rom 12:5; 1 Cor 12:25).

Being “kind” involves a

When used toward the world, it depicts an attitude that comes from an awareness that we ourselves were once in that worldly state. It is something like the attitude God expected from the Israelites. “*Thou shalt not abhor an Edomite; for he is thy brother: thou shalt not abhor an Egyptian; because thou wast a stranger in his land*” (Deut 23:7). And again, “*Love ye therefore the stranger: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt*” (Deut 10:19). And again, “*Thou shalt neither vex a stranger, nor oppress him: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt*” (Ex 22:21).

KINDNESS VS MERCIES

There is a difference between “kindness” and “bowels of mercies” – although they both spring from the same spiritual well. “Bowels of mercies” emphasize the **inward constraint**. “Kindness” underscores the **outward expression**. In Christ there is a glorious harmony in these two virtues. They are like twins in the womb of grace.

HUMBLeness OF MIND

“^{3:12f} . . . **humbleness of mind**. . . ” Other versions read, “**humility**,”^{NKJV} “**lowliness**,”^{RSV} “**a low opinion of yourselves**,”^{BBE} and “**humble-mindedness**.”^{YLT}

The expression “**humbleness of mind**” is translated from a single Greek word: ταπεινοφροσύνην (ta-pai-nof-ros-un-an). **Grammatically** this word means “a quality of voluntary submission and unselfishness – humility, or self effacement.”^{ROBERTSON} **Lexically** is means “having a humble opinion of oneself, a deep sense of one’s moral littleness; modesty, humility, lowliness of mind.”^{THAYER} **Doctrinally**, Philippians 2:3 states the case well: “*Let nothing be done through strife or*

vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.”

“**Humbleness of mind**,” involves more than simply having a lowly view of oneself. The idea is that this quality enables us to think **MORE** of others than of ourselves. This is not a description of a person who drags through life thinking he is nothing, but having no compensating regard for others.

This attitude is contrasted with the self-abasement mentioned in the second chapter: “*Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility...*”

(Col 2:18). “**Voluntary humility**” has nothing to do with spiritual insight, and does not seek to advantage others. It is rather a fleshly means of seeking to obtain Divine approval, or of gaining the confidence of others for purposes of exploitation.

By way of contrast, “**humbleness of mind**” proceeds from an awareness of our natural worthlessness before God, and the absolute need of a Savior and Intercessor. **It is the prelude to being used by God for the purpose of edifying the saints and properly representing the Gospel to those who are alienated from God.**

There are Divine provisions to be acquired – things that belong to all who are in Christ Jesus.” Put them on! – by Given O. Blakely

“Humbleness of mind” erupts in a certain manner of conduct that is described several places in Scripture.

- ✦ “For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, **but by love serve one another**” (Gal 5:13).
- ✦ “**Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ**” (Gal 6:2).
- ✦ “Let every one of us **please his neighbor for his good to edification**” (Rom 15:2).
- ✦ “For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and **ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake**” (2 Cor 4:5).

✦ “Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each **esteem other better than themselves**” (Phil 2:3).

✦ “Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; **in honor preferring one another**” (Rom 12:10).

This is a spiritual quality that results from knowing we are not worthy of the least of God’s mercies (Gen 32:10). It springs from an awareness that we are what we are by the grace of God (1 Cor 15:10). When this virtue is “put on,” it is accompanied with a lively awareness that “if God be for us, who can be against us” (Rom 8:31). The all-sufficiency Christ is sensed, accenting

the poverty of nature (Col 2:10).

This grace does not move a person to have, what the world calls, “low self esteem.” That is a purely psychological term that has no place in the body of Christ. **The ones who have put on “humbleness of mind” have proper self esteem. Such know that without Christ they can do nothing (John 15:5), and with Him, they can do all things required of them (Phil 4:13).** They are thus separated from those of whom it is said, “For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with **some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise**” (2 Cor 10:12).

MEEKNESS

“3:12g . . . **meekness** . . .” Other versions read, “gentleness,”^{NASB} “gentle ways,”^{BBE} and “modesty.”^{DOUAY}

The word “meekness” means “gentleness or mildness.”^{STRONG’S} More technically it means “strength that accommodates itself to another’s weakness.”^{ROBERTSON} Some have likened meekness to the strength of a horse being made submissive to the will of its master.

The supreme example of meekness is our blessed Lord. When urging those who were weary and heavy laden to come to Him, He said, “for I am meek and lowly in heart” (Mat 11:29). That is, His strength will be an advantage for us, and not the occasion of our destruction. “**By grace through faith**” makes Divine power an asset to the believer. Things that are otherwise impossible become possible. Thus Paul, “by the meekness and gentleness of Christ” pled with believers to think properly (2 Cor 10:1).

However, this Divine quality is to be “put on” by those who are in Christ Jesus – **this quality of being strong, yet able to tenderly deal with the young and immature.** We should not

think it impossible to acquire such a grace, for “meekness” is part of “the fruit of the Spirit” (Gal 5:23).

An example of the profitable use of meekness is found in the sixth chapter of Galatians. There the stronger are admonished concerning restoring a brother who had been “overtaken in a fault.” Those who were “spiritual,” or

all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will” (2 Tim 2:24-26).

“Meekness” enables us to be

However, this Divine quality is to be “put on” by those who are in Christ Jesus – this quality of being strong, yet able to tenderly deal with the young and immature.

more stable in the faith, were to “restore such an one in the spirit of meekness” (Gal 6:1). **That is, they were to be gentle, so as not to destroy the person, for sin makes a person spiritually fragile.** Speaking of this employment of meekness, Paul admonished Timothy concerning the recovery of those who “opposed themselves.” “And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be **gentle unto**

“longsuffering, forbearing one another in love” (Eph 4:2). It does not condone sin, or treat lightly defections from the faith. However, “meekness” does handle with gentle care those who are making an effort to recover themselves from the devil. Like the Lord Jesus Himself, “meekness” will not “break” a bruised reed, or “quench” a smoking flax (Matt 12:20). It enables the individual to place a priority on the will of the Lord.

“Meekness” also has to do with the manner in which we receive the Word of God. It is written, *“Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls”* (James 1:21). The meek person humbly bows to the Word of

God, receiving both commendation and chastening in a submissive spirit. Such an one is submissive to the word of the king, hungering and thirsting for it.

Meekness can easily mingle with other virtues, bringing a certain completeness to the child of

God. There is *“lowliness and meekness”* (Eph 4:2), the *“meekness of wisdom”* (James 3:13), a *“meek and a quiet spirit”* (1 Pet 3:4), and *“meekness and fear”* (1 Pet 3:15). Put it on, child of God, put it on! Attain to the trait of being easily directed by God, and being gentle with the weak.

LONGSUFFERING

“^{3:12h} . . . longsuffering . . . ” Other versions read, *“patience,”*^{NASB} and *“the power of undergoing all things.”*^{BBE}

The word *“longsuffering”* involves *“forbearance and fortitude, patience, endurance, constancy, steadfastness, perseverance, and slowness in avenging wrongs.”*^{STRONG’S} Grammatically, it refers to *“A state of emotional quietness in the face of unfavorable circumstances, as patience under trial – endurance, steadfastness – as well as constraint exercised toward others.”*^{ROBERTSON} Lexically, longsuffering is *“patience, endurance, constancy, steadfastness, perseverance, especially in bearing troubles and ills.”*^{THAYER}

Doctrinally, *“longsuffering”* is

Doctrinally, “longsuffering” is being able to bear up under the pangs of suffering – to stand under assault, forge through stormy waves, and carry heavy burdens without falling. The duration [“long”] is as real as the hardship [“suffering”].

being able to bear up under the pangs of suffering – to stand under assault, forge through stormy waves, and carry heavy burdens without falling. The duration (*“long”*) is as real as the hardship (*“suffering”*).

Suffering involves **feeling** something that is either painful or in some way offensive, or causes distress. Suffering is to the spirit what pain is to the body. Longsuffering is being able to

endure such pain, offense, or distress, over an extended period: **LONG**suffering.

THE ULTIMATE DEMONSTRATION

As with all true virtues, the ultimate example of longsuffering is the Lord Himself. As used in Genesis through Malachi, *“longsuffering”* emphasizes God being *“slow to anger.”*^{STRONG’S} It is used fifteen times in Moses and the Prophets. The Lord declared Himself to be *“longsuffering”* (Ex 34:6). Moses confessed that he perceived this to be a Divine trait (Num 14:18). The spiritual leaders of Nehemiah’s day also confessed this to be a quality found in the Lord (Neh 9:17). David also acknowledged this

to be true (Psa 86:15; 103:8; ; 145:8). Jeremiah, Joel, Jonah, and Nahum confessed God was *“longsuffering,”* or *“slow to anger”* (Jer 15:15; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2; Nah 1:3). Solomon spoke of this trait as found in godly men (Prov 14:29; 15:18; 16:32).

Romans 9:22 affirms that God has *“much longsuffering.”* Paul said Christ Jesus displayed *“all longsuffering”* in him, as a *“pattern to them who would believe”* (1 Tim 1:16). Peter said the

“longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah while the ark was a preparing” (1 Pet 3:20). He also said the Lord was *“longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all be brought to repentance”* (1 Pet 3:9). The *“longsuffering of our Lord”* is even said to be *“salvation”* (2 Pet 3:15).

In all of these texts, God endured a certain abrasiveness – people and circumstances that were contrary to His nature. His wrath was not easily stirred up against wayward Israel, even though they eventually provoked His anger. Holy men consistently acknowledged that if God’s wrath easily broke forth, we all would have been consumed long ago. They did not speculate about God’s *“longsuffering,”* but concluded that the very fact they were not consumed confirmed this Divine trait was active.

God’s *“longsuffering”* does not constitute an approval of the condition He is forbearing. It by no means suggests that the circumstances that move Him to be *“longsuffering”* are inconsequential. Rather, the very fact that He is *“longsuffering”* confirms the seriousness of the person or condition He appears to be tolerating.

Putting on *“longsuffering”* does not suggest that we will become indifferent toward the wicked, or those who persecute us. **The emphasis in “longsuffering” is not what we think of the source of trouble. Rather, it accents our response to that trouble.** The person who is *“longsuffering”* has more of a regard for the outcome of the experience than of the experience itself. Such an one lives in the persuasion that

all accounts will be finally settled by the Lord of glory. The anticipation of that settlement enables the person with faith to endure unjust treatment and very difficult circumstances.

PUT IT ON!

We are being admonished to “*put on*” part of the Divine nature! **That means in Christ this attribute is accessible to us, and well within the reach of faith.** While there is a sense in which it is resident in the new creation, the experience of it must be preceded by a conscious effort to appropriate it. This is

done by faith. Putting on “*longsuffering*” is similar to Naaman being asked to wash in the Jordan River in the expectation of being healed of his leprosy (2 Kgs 5:10).

This is not an exhortation to try our best to endure hardship more gracefully. It is not an admonition to set a goal for ourselves to be more forbearing of those who tend to irritate us. All of that may be fine in its place, but that is not what this text is all about. **This is, in fact, a call to BE longsuffering – for**

this quality to be found in, and expressed by, us.

A person cannot “*put on longsuffering*” without actually being longsuffering. In fact, the putting on is verified by one’s conduct. This is not a garment that is too large for us. Like Jesus’ “*yoke*,” it is custom fitted to us, and is consequently easy to be borne. **Believers have every reason to believe they can, in fact, “put on longsuffering,” effectively and to God’s glory.**

FORBEARING ONE ANOTHER

^{13a} **Forbearing one another.** . . . “Other versions read, “*bearing with one another*,” ^{NKJV} “*being gentle to one another*,” ^{BBE} and “*make allowance for each other’s faults*.” ^{NLT}

The word “*forbear*” is powerful, exhibiting a spiritual quality unknown to the world. The word itself means, “to hold oneself up against, put up with, bear with, endure, forbear, or suffer; to hold one’s self erect and firm, to sustain.” ^{STRONG’S/THAYER} Grammatically, it means to “exercise self restraint and tolerance, while accepting as valid; holding yourselves back from one another.” ^{ROBERTSON} Lexically it includes the idea of “being patient with, and giving patient attention to.” ^{UBS LEXICON} It is the opposite of lashing out at the slightest provocation, or aggressively seeking for faults.

The Spirit now provides us with an example of the expression of “*bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, and longsuffering*.” This is an instance in which these marvelous qualities are exhibited. **The virtues that have been mentioned thus far are not mere mental attitudes.** As is the case with all true spiritual qualities these things work themselves out in human expression.

A REASON FOR FORBEARANCE

In a similar admonition, the Ephesians were told, “*forbearing one another IN LOVE*” (Eph 4:2). In that passage, forbearance is associated with “*walking worthy of the calling with which you were called*,” and “*endeavoring to*

keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph 4:3).

Our Calling

First, we have been called with a holy (2 Tim 1:9) and heavenly (Heb 3:1) calling. The calling has come from God, and is in order to the fulfillment of His purpose. **Primarily, this call does not have to do with the satisfaction of**



our own personal desires, or the resolution of our spiritual, moral, and circumstantial difficulties. Within the context of contemporary religion, this is a revolutionary idea. Nevertheless, it is the truth, and we must adapt our thinking and our attitudes to this perspective.

Our lives are to be conducted in strict harmony with our calling. We are to walk, or live, “*worthy of the vocation wherewith*” we have been called.

One of the ways this worthiness is expressed is in “*forbearing one another in love*.” **We cannot be less forbearing with the people of God than He Himself is.** Our attitude and conduct must be in harmony with the Lord’s purpose and view of His people. When their manners are not altogether acceptable, we cannot respond as though the kingdom of God revolved around us. It does not. If Jesus is ever living to intercede for His people, we must not allow personal interests and feelings to rise up between ourselves and others for whom He is interceding.

The Unity of the Spirit

There is also the matter of “*the unity of the Spirit*.” When we come into Christ, we become a part of this unity. **Our responsibility is not to make the unity, but to keep it in “the bond of peace.”** This “*bond*” is the “*joints and bands*” of Colossians 2:19. It is the means by which we are connected with one another, and the appointed means of receiving spiritual nourishment from one another (Eph 4:15-16).

A lack of forbearance will rupture the vital connection of believers to one another. It will interfere with the good work of ministering to one another. Such a lack promotes despising the brethren rather than loving them, and will become the occasion for the rise of offenses and roots of bitterness. There is enough weakness in all of us to require forbearance.

Putting on “*forbearance*” involves the ability to hold up when wrongs are committed against you, and to do so without a “*root of bitterness*” springing up within, and defiling many (Heb 12:15).

Forbearing involves bearing “*the infirmities of the weak*,” and not pleasing ourselves. As it is written, “*Now we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength and not just please ourselves*”^{NASB} (Rom 15:1). By so doing, “*the unity of the Spirit*” will be maintained. **Furthermore, within the framework of that “unity” the deficiencies of the brethren will be addressed, and a means provided from heaven for them to be eliminated.**

The weaknesses of brethren – and all of us have some – are not resolved on a one-to-one basis. That may be conducive to the development of a career, but it is not the manner of the Kingdom. The Lord has placed us in Christ’s “*body*” (1 Cor 12:18). **When that body is brought to maturity, there is an intra-ministry within it that WILL address all genuine needs.** As it is written, “*But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love*” (Eph 4:15-16). Forbearing one another allows that marvelous process to continue.

REAPING WHAT WE SOW

Being forbearing with one another also involves the law of sowing and reaping. Those who are **not** forbearing will reap the results of others **not** being forbearing with them. Those who **are** forbearing will reap the results of others **being** forbearing with them. This is an aspect of sowing to the Spirit: “*For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting*” (Gal 6:8). James spoke of this principle in these words, “*For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath showed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment*” (James 2:13). We certainly have every reason to extend

ourselves to be longsuffering!

CHRIST’S EXAMPLE

As is true with all genuine virtues, our ultimate example is the Lord Jesus Himself. Although His disciples often taxed His patience, yet He was forbearing with them.

✦ On one occasion, Jesus warned His disciples, “*Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the*

Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?” (Mark 4:40). That was Divine forbearance!

✦ Following His transfiguration, Jesus returned with Peter James, and John to the arena of trouble. He found frustrated father who had asked the other nine disciples to cast a demon out of his son. He told Jesus, “*I brought him to Thy disciples, and they could not cure him.*” Jesus

By so doing, “the unity of the Spirit” will be maintained. Furthermore, within the framework of that “unity” the deficiencies of the brethren will be addressed, and a means provided from heaven for them to be eliminated.

Sadducees.”The disciples completely misunderstood what He meant, supposing that He was rebuking them for not bringing bread. After some questioning, Jesus said to them, “*O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread? Do ye not yet understand, neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? Neither the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? How is it that ye do not understand that I spake it not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees? Then understood they how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees*” (Mat 16:8-12). That was Divine forbearance!

✦ On another occasion, Jesus was with His disciples in a ship, during a great storm. The disciples wakened Him from a sound sleep, asking, “*Master carest thou not that we perish.*” Jesus promptly arose, commanded the sea saying, “*Peace, be still,*” and then said to them, “*And he said unto them,*

responded to His disciples, “O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how **long shall I suffer you?** bring him hither to me” (Mat 17:17). After healing the boy, the disciples asked Jesus why they could not do it – after all, they had healed people before. Jesus answered, “*And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you. Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting*” (Mat 17:20-21). That was Divine forbearance!

There are also the examples of God’s forbearance with Israel, and Jesus’ forbearance with five of the seven churches in Asia (Rev 2-3). You yourself should be able to see how the Lord has been forbearing with all of us.

No child of God will ever be put to a disadvantage by being forbearing. As we will see in the following verses, forbearance is not an end of itself. Rather, it is a virtue that God

uses to allow for His own effectual working. **While we are forbearing, God Himself is working, the Holy**

Spirit is working, and Jesus is interceding. Forbearance brings a spiritual environment in which the Lord

effectively works, both to will and to do of His own good pleasure. This opens the door to edification and maturity.

FORGIVING ONE ANOTHER

“^{13b} . . . and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any . . . ”

The Spirit continues to elaborate on the evidence of putting on “*bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering*” (Col 3:12). This is also what will result from “*forbearing one another,*” not expecting more from one another than we want the Lord to expect from us.

FORGIVING ONE ANOTHER

“*. . . and forgiving one another. . .*” Other versions read, “*forgive,*”^{NIV} “*forgive*

said, “*Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him*” (Luke 17:3-4). This should not confound us, for God forgives in precisely that way. **Forgiveness is of such a nature that it cannot be extended unless there is contrition of heart in the one that is being forgiven.**

Notwithstanding, the heart of the Lord’s people, like the heart of God

to find a place in our hearts or minds. No person is justified in letting the sun go down on their wrath (Eph 4:26).

A QUARREL AGAINST ANY

“*. . . if any man have a quarrel against any . . .*” Other versions read, “*whatever grievances you may have against one another,*”^{NIV} “*if anyone has a complaint against another,*”^{NRSV} “*if anyone has done wrong to his brother.*”^{BBE}

It would be good if there were never any offenses within the church – but that situation will not exist as long as we are in this world. The Scriptures record some instances of this kind of forgiveness.

✚ When Job’s “*friends*” spoke against him, false charging that he must have committed some grievous sin. The Word tells us, “*And the LORD turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before*” (Job 42:10).

✚ On one occasion, Aaron and Miriam, Moses’ brother and sister, spoke against him saying, “*Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses?*” The Lord heard their words, and Moses, being exceedingly meek, did not respond to them in a defense of himself. Instead, the Lord spoke to them, and His anger was kindled against them. Miriam became “*leprous.*” Immediately, Aaron spoke with contrition of heart. “*And Aaron said unto Moses, Alas, my lord, I beseech thee, lay not the sin upon us, wherein we have done foolishly, and wherein we have sinned. Let her not be as one dead, of whom the flesh is half consumed when he cometh out of his mother’s womb*” (Num 12:11-12). Confirming he was “*ready to forgive,*” Moses prayed, “*Heal her now, O God, I beseech thee*” (Num 12:13).

The opposite of forgiveness is “anger, wrath,” and “malice,” which are to be “put off.” These expressions are not to find a place in our hearts or minds. No person is justified in letting the sun go down on their wrath

each other,”^{NRSV} and “*having forgiveness for one another.*”^{BBE}

The word “*forgiving*” is pregnant with meaning. It carries the idea of doing something that is pleasant or agreeable – both to the one that is forgiving, and to the one that is being forgiven. **It is something that is gracious and kind – something that is done freely and without having to be coerced to do so.** In this case it means to pardon. If it is a debt, it is cancelled. If it is a trespass, it is no longer remembered or held against the individual.

Forgiveness presumes repentance and remorse in the one that is being forgiven. When questioned about how often men are obliged to forgive, Jesus

Himself, must be “*ready to forgive*” (Psa 86:5). **If there is no forgiveness, it must not be because the offended party refuses to do so.** At some point, “*bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering*” will display themselves in a **readiness to forgive** – however grievous the sin. This readiness is revealed in the words of Jesus concerning those who crucified Him: “*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do*” (Luke 23:34). It is also exhibited in the response of Stephen, while he was being stoned to death by His own people: “*Lord, lay not this sin to their charge*” (Acts 7:60).

The opposite of forgiveness is “*anger, wrath,*” and “*malice,*” which are to be “*put off.*” These expressions are not

✚ Joseph's brothers sinned against him, throwing him into a pit, selling him to a band of Ishmaelites, and lying to his father about his disappearance. Over thirteen years later, when confronting Joseph after he had been made the second ruler over all Egypt, Joseph exhibited the forgiveness of our text. *"Fear not: for am I in the place of God? But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive. Now therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them"* (Gen 50:19-21).

Those in Christ Jesus should rise to even greater heights than Job, Moses, and Joseph. This is because they have received more in Christ Jesus, and thus are capable of more.

This is not something that is optional. Jesus said, *"For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses"* (Matt 6:14-15). He taught us to pray, *"And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors"* (Matt 6:12). He also said, *"And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses"* (Mark 11:25).

There is telling example of

the nature of forgiveness in the books of First and Second Corinthians. We have a grievous wrong committed, a judgment that was taken, accompanied by a readiness to forgive,

attainment that can compensate for not forgiving.

There are several things that accompany the forgiveness taught in this passage. They are all expressions of the

Those in Christ Jesus should rise to even greater heights than Job, Moses, and Joseph. This is because they have received more in Christ Jesus, and thus are capable of more.

and a call to aggressively receive the forgiven one. The offender was a fornicator, who was living with his father's wife (1 Cor 5:1). At first, the Corinthians were indifferent about the matter. Paul commanded them to put the person out of their fellowship, delivering such an one *"to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus"* (1 Cor 5:4-5). That judgment did take place (2 Cor 2:6). The man did repent, and thus the church was admonished to *"forgive him"* and *"comfort him,"* lest he be *"swallowed up with overmuch sorrow."* They were then asked to *"confirm"* their love toward him (2 Cor 2:7-8).

THE MANNER OF THE KINGDOM

This is the manner of the kingdom. **No other kind of conduct is acceptable or appropriate. There is no other virtue, ability, or**

"new creation" (2 Cor 5:17), and Divine power is available for their expression.

- ✚ When a genuine wrong has been committed against us, we are not to harbor hatred, or be moved to despise the individual.
- ✚ We are to be ready to forgive – willing to show graciousness.
- ✚ There is to be a declaration that forgiveness when it is requested.
- ✚ The kind treatment of the offender must follow forgiveness, just as though the offense had not taken place.

Spiritual life has certain characteristics. Where these are not found, there is a lack of faith. Where they are found, there is fellowship with Jesus.

AS CHRIST FORGAVE YOU

^{13c} **... even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.** Other versions read, *"just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you"*^{NASB} (Col 3:13), *"Forgive as the Lord forgave you,"*^{NIV} *"even as the Lord had forgiveness for you,"*^{BBE} and *"The Lord has forgiven you; now you must do the same,"*^{NJB}

Christ's forgiveness is both the example and the motive for our forgiveness of others. Notice, the

appeal is not to law, but to grace. We are not told that we are obligated to forgive those against whom we have a *"quarrel"* – although, if we want to the Lord to forgive us, we **must** forgive others. However, because we *"not under the Law, but under grace"* (Rom 6:14), **we have a higher motive to forgive one another.** It is that we ourselves have been forgiven by Christ Jesus. This can refer to our initial forgiveness (Col 3:13), or to times when we ourselves sinned

against weaker brethren: *"But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ"* (1 Cor 8:12).

CHRIST FORGAVE

Several versions read *"the Lord,"* rather than *"Christ"* (NASB/NIV/NRSV). These variant readings are based upon the different words used in various Greek texts. One set of texts uses ὁ Χριστός (the Christ), and the others use ὁ κύριος (the

Lord). There is no doctrinal conflict in these expressions. It is proper to say Christ forgave us, because it is He that “put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself” (Heb 9:26). If we prefer to view this as God forgiving us, it is declared that He did so “for Christ’s sake” (Eph 4:32).

In the book of Colossians, Jesus

not be sufficient to cause it to be fulfilled in us.

Because of grossly deficient teaching, there are many within the church who entertain doubts about their own forgiveness. The entrance of such doubts **unnecessarily** followed their new birth, for the knowledge of salvation

blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God” (Rom 3:25).

✚ “Therefore **being justified** by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom 5:1).

✚ “Much more then, **being now justified** by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him” (Rom 5:9).

✚ “And such were some of you: but **ye are washed**, but ye are sanctified, but **ye are justified** in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor 6:11).

✚ “And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake **hath forgiven you**” (Eph 4:32).

✚ “And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, **hath He quickened together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses**” (Col 2:13).

✚ “That **being justified** by His grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life” (Titus 3:7).

✚ “I write unto you, little children, because **your sins are forgiven you for His name’s sake**” (1 John 2:12).

Our present reconciliation is proclaimed (Col 1:21), together our acceptance (Eph 1:6), access into grace (Rom 5:2), and present status as the sons of God (1 John 3:1-2). **As our forgiveness, justification, and acceptance by God is grasped by faith, forgiving one another makes perfect sense to us.** We will therefore find it gratifying and enjoyable to heartily enter into the fulfillment of this text. It will **not** be a heavy burden.

The Apostles frequently confirmed the fact that those in Christ have been forgiven of all their trespasses.

Christ is consistently referred to as “the Lord” (1:2,3; 2:6; 3:16,24). Here, forgiveness is viewed as having been accomplished in Christ Jesus, who is the Head of the body – the appointed means through which it is nourished and sustained (2:19).

In our salvation, the association between the Father and the Son is so close, that frequently what One is said to have done, is also attributed to the other One. Thus God “forgave us all trespasses” (Col 1:20), yet Christ did so as well (Col 3:13). God, in Christ, reconciled us unto Himself (2 Cor 5:19), yet Christ is said to have reconciled us “in the body of His flesh” (Col 1:21). We have been “sanctified by God” (Jude 1:1), yet Jesus is described as “He who sanctified” (Heb 2:11). We are “taught by God” (John 6:45), yet are said to have been “taught by” Christ as well (Eph 4:21). This text, therefore, should present no problems to us. It’s view of God and Christ are in perfect harmony with the rest of Scripture

THE KNOWLEDGE OF FORGIVENESS

This admonition assumes we know Christ has forgiven us. **Where this is not known, the motive to forgive will**

accompanies the initial forgiveness of sin. This aspect of salvation was affirmed by Zacharias, father of John the Baptist. He prophesied the role of John the Baptist in this knowledge: “To give **knowledge of salvation unto His people by the remission of their sins**, through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the Dayspring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace” (Luke 1:77-79).

The Apostles frequently confirmed the fact that those in Christ have been forgiven of all their trespasses. This was necessary because of the competing influences that tend to erode this knowledge. No man of God assumed that those in Christ Jesus were living in a lively awareness of the remission of their sins. Therefore, this truth was declared again and again, providing a Divine emphasis, as well as a human incentive. These words are delivered to those who are in Christ Jesus.

✚ “**Being justified** freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Rom 3:24).

✚ “Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His

ABOVE ALL THINGS

“¹⁴ And above all these things **perfectness.**”
put on charity, which is the bond of

As is the manner of the Spirit, we will not be asked to do the bare minimum.

Nor, indeed, will we be left with things conceived to require no sustained effort. **The greatness of God’s salvation (Heb 2:3) requires extensive and consistent effort from those participating in it.**

ABOVE ALL THESE THINGS

“And above all these things . . . ” Other versions read, “beyond all these things,”^{NASB} “over all these virtues,”^{NIV} “more than all,”^{BBE} “to all of these,”^{DARBY} “Over all these clothes,”^{NJB} and “the most important piece of clothing.”^{NLT}

The word translated “above all” relates to being clothed, thereby continuing the thought of putting on. **The idea is that of a final garment that is put on over all of the other apparel – like a coat or outer garment.** The words of “beyond all these things,” as used in the New American Standard Bible project the sense of the text, but is not a strict translation. That concept might lead someone to believe that charity could be put on without first putting on “*bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering.*” Or, that charity could be put on without forbearing one another and forgiving one another. In this case “above all,” or “going beyond” would be considered the ultimate thing to be required, whether the other mentioned virtues were present or not. Therefore, one would reason, even if you cannot fulfill all of the other requirements, putting on charity will compensate for any other deficiency. **Such a thought is wholly erroneous.**

This verse assumes all of the other virtues have been put on, and that the individuals are being forbearing of one another, and forgiving. **This final admonition is the means of maintaining all of the other graces.**

PUT ON CHARITY

“ . . . put on charity . . . ” Other versions read, “put on love,”^{NKJV} “clothe yourselves with love,”^{NRSV} “have love,”^{BBE} “add love,”^{DARBY} and “you must wear love.”^{NLT}

This is the “charity,” or love, of the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians. There is no question about what it does. “*Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not*

parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails.”^{NKJV} (1 Cor 13:4-8). **These are not the requirements of love, but the evidence of it.** These are not goals to be

way, “*I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God*” (Jer 31:33). Micah also said, “*He will teach us of His ways*” (Mic 4:2).

Why, then, are we told to “*put on charity,*” if it is something that God Himself teaches us? This is an activity into which we must enter by faith.

The fact that we “put on” charity confirms that its source is outside of ourselves. It is not something that is resident in “the natural man” (1 Cor 2:14). This text is not speaking about the awakening of some virtue that naturally resides in us. Rather, it has to do with availing ourselves of a resource that accessible to us in Christ Jesus.

attained, but expressions of a love that has been “*shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit*” (Rom 5:5).

The “charity,” or love, of reference has to do with the interrelationships of the body of Christ – our love for one another. The fact that we “put on” charity confirms that its source is outside of ourselves. It is not something that is resident in “the natural man” (1 Cor 2:14). This text is not speaking about the awakening of some virtue that naturally resides in us. Rather, it has to do with availing ourselves of a resource that accessible to us in Christ Jesus.

Technically, love – particularly “brotherly love” – is taught to us by God. This teaching is personal. It is not teaching through the Word, as ordinarily perceived. The Scriptures speak of the effective acquisition of this love in these words: “*But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another*” (1 Thess 4:9).

This is involved in the larger promise, “*And they shall all be taught by God*” (John 6:45). Isaiah prophesied, “*He will teach us of His ways*” (Isa 2:3), and “*All your children shall be taught by the Lord*” (Isa 54:13). Jeremiah put it this

Putting on charity is primarily expressing it thoughtfully and intentionally. **It is part of working out our own salvation with fear and trembling.** In that “*working out,*” we will discover a reality expounded to the Philippians. “*So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure*” (Phil 2:12-13).

To “put on charity” involves ridding ourselves of everything that inhibits and competes with it. It involves allowing the Word of Christ to dwell in us richly (Col 3:16), not quenching or grieving the Spirit. This is all done with resolve and spiritual aggression.

THE BOND OF PERFECTNESS

“ . . . which is the bond of perfectness.” Other versions read, “*which is the perfect bond of unity,*”^{NASB} “*which binds them all together in perfect unity,*”^{NIV} “*which binds everything together in perfect harmony,*”^{NRSV} “*the only way in which you may be completely joined together,*”^{BBE} and “*Love is what binds us all together in perfect harmony.*”^{NLT}

There are two ways in which this text can be taken. **First,** that love binds all of the previously mentioned virtues

together. **Second**, love binds the brethren themselves together. The latter is the meaning of this text. **“Charity” is the appointed means of binding the saints together in order that they**

Presented in Ephesians

The picture presented in this text is also given in the book of Ephesians. *“... Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by*

causes the various members of the body of Christ to exude life – to express it by edifying the members with whom they are connected. This is the *“edifying of itself in love,”* mentioned in Ephesians 4:16. This edification is produced by the flow of spiritual life from one member to another – and *“charity”* is what enables that flow.

Where “charity” is not “put on,” edification is not possible. Unity also becomes impossible, for those who do not love each other cannot be united. Further, where there is no unity, God will not work. That is one of the primary reasons for “the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

Where *“charity”* is not *“put on,”* edification is not possible. Unity also becomes impossible, for those who do not love each other cannot be united. Further, where there is no unity, God will not work. That is one of the primary reasons for *“the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”* That unity produces an environment in which Divine workings are realized. That is why it is appropriately called *“the bond of perfectness.”*

might be brought to their appointed maturity. The following is given in confirmation of this.

The word *“bond”* means “that which binds together – of ligaments by which members of the body are bound together.” ^{STRONG’S} This is not the idea of cement or glue, but of ligaments, which speak of something living. It refers to an aspect of life. The word *“perfectness”* means “completeness, wholeness, or maturity, full growth.” ^{STRONG’S/THAYER}

that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love” (Eph 4:15-16).

“Charity,” or spiritual love, brings the people of God closer together – like a healthy ligament pulls the ball more perfectly into the joint. It makes the connection more secure, healthy, and stable. **Because of this, “charity” also**

Giving due attention to this admonition would resolve all church squabbles and dissensions. It would dissipate division, and bring an accord that would scatter forces of darkness. It would produce an environment in which Divine workings would be evident – a domain in which edification, exhortation, and comfort would be administered and spiritual; maturity would result.

CONCLUSION

It should be apparent that salvation involves significant participation on our part. What God supplies – and He has provided everything pertaining to life and godliness (2 Pet 1:3) – must be appropriated and expressed. **No spiritual virtue functions independently of our involvement.** If God teaches, we must listen., If God provides, we must put it on. If God sends, we must go. If God empowers, we must work.

The whole idea of a religion that leaves the adherent inactive is nothing more than a delusion from the wicked one. Although all manner of theology has been developed to justify inactive and transgressing people within the body of Christ, no such justification is possible. If a professing Christian says

they cannot really do anything for the Lord, the Spirit affirms, *“But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased Him”* (1 Cor 12:18). **There is no such thing as a useless member of Christ’s body!**

In order to encourage our participation in the good work of the Lord, the Spirit has provided most excellent incentives.

✚ **First, we have been chosen, or elected by God:** *“as the elect of God.”* There is no such thing as a Divine choice without a purpose or attending power.

✚ **Second, we have been separated from the world by God** – made a

people who are peculiarly His: *“holy.”* Because of this situation, special resources have been provided for us.

✚ **Third, God has a special regard for us,** having set His love upon us. We are near and dear to Him: *“beloved.”* His eye is upon us, and His ear is open to our cry.

As long as you keep these things in mind, pondering them and seeking to know them more fully, what the Lord requires of you will be seen as doable. If, however, the fact that you are *“the elect of God, holy and beloved,”* ever gets away from you, the exhortations to which we have been submitted will appear to be more than you are able to do.

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 3/5/2004. In this session, we will be covering verses 15-17 of the third chapter. The title of our lesson is, "LET IT HAPPEN." These are wonderful aspects of newness of life that come to us when all hindering influences are removed. They come through the channel of faith, which is the only thing that will allow them to pass from the Lord to us. Our meeting will begin at 7:00 P.M. You are invited to bring your family and friends for fellowship around the Word of God. Refreshments are served afterward, with a time of extended fellowship for everyone.

*The Blakely Family: Given, June, Benjamin, Jonathan, and Eva
406 South Sergeant Street, Joplin, MO 64801*

A place where believers can meet, fellowship, be edified, and express themselves.

Telephone: (417) 782-3063, Email: Given (GivenB@aol.com) June: (JuneE01@aol.com)

ADAH's Webpage: <http://wotruth.com/adah.htm> -- EVA's Webpage: <http://wotruth.com/Eva.htm>

Benjamin (Bensvison@aol.com), Jonathan (Jonstalk@aol.com), Eva (Evablakely@aol.com)
Adah Hutchcraft (ALHutchcraft@milligan.edu), Jason Hutchcraft (hcchurch@interlink-cafe.com)

WORD OF TRUTH Website: <http://wotruth.com>

WORD OF TRUTH FELLOWSHIP Website: <http://wotruth.com/wotf/wotindex.htm>

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