

## 9. The rules of engagement of godly living – Part 2

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When our daughter Michelle was born, I had no idea how to hold an infant, let alone how to raise a daughter. She didn't come with a manual. Only by the grace of God, she turned out good.

When we came to know Christ as our Savior and Lord, we were spiritual infants. Our heavenly Daddy knew how to raise us and expects us to learn how to grow up right in His way. He provided the eternal living manual, the Word of God for every one of us.

In this portion of the Book of Colossians, the apostle Paul exhorts us to live a holy life. He exhorted his readers to put off the grave-clothes of sin and the old life and to put on the "grace-clothes" of holiness and the new life in Christ.

The emphasis in this section is on motives. Why should we put off the old deeds and put on the qualities of the new life? Paul explained 4 motives that ought to encourage us to walk in newness of life.

### A. THE GRACE OF CHRIST

*Colossians 3:12-14 Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on (1) tender mercies, (2) kindness, (3) humility, (4) meekness, (5) longsuffering; 13 (6) bearing with one another, and (7) forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. 14 But above all these things put on (8) love, which is the bond of perfection.*

Grace is God's favor to undeserving sinners. Paul reminded the Colossians of what God's grace had done for them and us – choosing us, setting us apart, loving us, and forgiving us. We now need to imitate His examples to others.

Let's not kid ourselves that our salvation has anything to do with who we are or what we have done because we were chosen before the foundation of the world. If the Lord had to save a sinner on the basis of merit or works, none of us would be saved. It is done only by His grace for His glory.

Being holy means setting ourselves apart from the world, not in the way isolated monks would live, but insulated from the worldly influences unto the Lord. We are not our own, rather we belong completely to Him. Just as the marriage ceremony sets apart a man and a woman for each other exclusively, so salvation sets the believer apart exclusively for Jesus Christ. Would it not be a horrible thing, at the end of a wedding, to see the groom run off with the maid of honor? It is just as horrible to contemplate the Christian living for the world and the flesh.

When an unbeliever sins, he is a sinful creature breaking the laws of the holy Creator and Judge. But when a born-again believer sins, he is a child of God breaking the heart of his loving Father. Love is the strongest motivating power in the world. As the believer grows in his love for God, he will grow in his desire to obey Him and walk in the newness of life that he has in Christ.

Chosen by God, set apart for God, loved by God, and forgiven by God. They all add up to GRACE. Now, because of these gracious blessings, the Christian has

some solemn responsibilities before our Lord. We must put on the beautiful graces of the Christian life. Paul named 8 things we must put on:

**1) Put on tender mercies:** Generally, the Americans describe their emotions as coming from their hearts, not necessarily the physical hearts but the Greeks use the term bowels of compassion because the Greek people located the deeper emotions in the intestinal area, while we locate them in the heart. So, when a Greek woman has a change of her emotion, I guess it is like having a bowel movement. Ah, too much information!

As believers, we need to display tender feelings of compassion toward one another. This is not something that we turn on and off, like the room light. It is a constant attitude of heart that makes us easy to live with.

**2) Put on kindness:** We have been saved because of God's kindness toward us through Jesus Christ. We, in turn, ought to show kindness toward others because it is a command of God.

*Ephesians 4:32a And be kind to one another*

One of the most beautiful pictures of kindness in the Bible is king David's treatment of the crippled former prince, Mephibosheth in 2 Samuel 9. David's desire was to show "the kindness of God" to king Saul's family because of his own love and friendship for Saul's son Jonathan. Mephibosheth, Jonathan's son was a poor cripple living out of nowhere. If David had acted according to the worldly justice, he would have killed Mephibosheth because the man belonged to a condemned family. But David acted on the basis of love and grace. David sought Mephibosheth and assured him not to be afraid. He invited Mephibosheth to live in the palace as a member of his family and to eat at the king's table. This is the kindness of God. You and I have experienced an even greater kindness as Christians, we are God's children and shall live with Him in heaven forever.

**3) Put on humility:** The pagan world of Paul's day did not admire humility much like the 21st century. Instead, they admired pride and domination. Jesus Christ is the greatest example of humbleness of mind. Humility is not thinking poorly of one self. Rather, it is having the proper estimate of oneself in the will of God. The person with a humble heart thinks of others first and not of himself.

**4) Put on meekness:** Meekness is not weakness unlike some people would think. Rather it is power under control. This word was used to describe a stallion that had been broken – but still has the power and the speed, yet he is under control. The meek person does not have to fly off the handle because he has everything under control.

**5) Put on longsuffering:** This word is literally "long-temper." The short-tempered person speaks and acts impulsively and lacks self-control and throws a temper tantrum. When a person is a longsuffering, he can put up with provoking people or circumstances without retaliating. It is good to be able to get angry against bad things because this is a sign of holy character. But it is not good to get angry quickly at the wrong things and for the wrong reasons.

**6) Put on forbearance:** This word literally means "to hold up" or "to hold back." God is forbearing toward sinners in that He holds back His judgment. Meekness, longsuffering, and forbearance go together.

**7) Put on forgiveness:** This is the logical result of all that Paul has written so far in this section. It is not enough that the Christian must endure grief and provocation, and refuse to retaliate. He must also forgive the troublemaker. If he does not, then feelings of malice will develop in the heart and these can lead to greater sins. It is Christlike to forgive, and forgiveness opens the heart to the fullness of the love of God.

William Arthur Ward wrote in his fine book "Thoughts of A Christian Optimist": "We are most like beasts when we kill. We are most like men when we judge. We are most like God when we forgive."

In case you are wondering how much we should forgive the other person, only forgive that person as much as you want to be forgiven by the Lord. In my case, lots and lots and lots.

**8) Put on love:** This is the most important of the Christian virtues, and it ties all the other virtues together. All of the spiritual qualities Paul has named are aspects of true Christian love, as a reading of 1 Corinthians 13 shows us clearly. Love is the fruit of the Spirit and the inside of that love, we see the other virtues – joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

This is NOT the idea of Hollywood. Their idea of love is pretty much lust. But when the true love rules in our lives, it unites all these spiritual virtues so that there are beauty and harmony, indicating spiritual maturity. This harmony and maturity keep life balanced and growing. There is no other religion that brings this kind of love from God and His people.

## **B. THE PEACE OF CHRIST**

*Colossians 3:15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.*

The word translated "rule" is an athletic term. It means "to preside at the games and distribute the prizes." In the Greek games, there were judges who rejected the contestants who were not qualified, and who disqualified those who broke the rules.

The peace of God is the "judge" in our believing hearts and our churches. When we obey the will of God, we have His peace within, but when we step out of His will, even unintentionally, we lose His peace.

We must beware, however, of false peace in the heart. I've met some Christians who told me, "I have peace about it," though they were flat out wrong theologically. Having peace in our heart is not sufficient evidence that we are in the will of God. We must pray, surrender to His will, and seek His guidance in the Scriptures. The peace of heart alone is not always the peace of God.

When a Christian loses the peace of God, he begins to go off in directions that are out of the will of God. He turns to the things of the world and the flesh to compensate for his lack of peace within. He tries to escape, but he cannot escape himself. It is only when he confesses his sin, claims God's forgiveness, and does God's will that he experiences God's peace within.

When there is peace in the heart through the Scripture, there will be praise on the lips. The Christian out of God's will is never found giving sincere praise to God.

When David covered up his sins of adultery and murder, he lost his peace and his praise. When he confessed his sins, then his song of praise and worship returned.

### **C. THE WORD OF CHRIST**

*Colossians 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.*

This means, of course, the Word of God. The false teachers came to Colosse with man-made traditions, religious rules, and human philosophies. They tried to include God's Word in their teachings, but they could not succeed. God's Word always magnifies Jesus Christ.

It was not the word of false teachers that brought salvation to the Colossians, rather it was the Word of the truth of the Gospel. This same Word gives us life and sustains and strengthens us.

The word dwell means "to feel at home." If we have experienced the grace and the peace of Christ, then the Word of Christ will feel at home in our hearts. We will discover how rich the Word is with spiritual treasures that give value to our lives.

Let me ask you a question: When you read the Word of God in your daily devotion or your reading, are you comfortable with what it says or do you squirm? If you do squirm or try to make excuses, it only means one thing, you are not comfortable with the Word because you are being convicted by the Holy Spirit. You know what to do – REPENT!

Paul described a local church worship service. Our singing must be from our hearts and not just our lips. But if the Word of God is not in our hearts, we cannot sing from our hearts. This shows how important it is to know the Word of God because it enriches our public and private worship of God.

### **D. THE NAME OF CHRIST**

*Colossians 3:17 And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.*

In modern society, we pay little attention to names. People's favorite excuse is "I am not good at remembering names." There is an Italian word for that – "Bologna." If someone told you that he is going to give you 2 million dollars, would you remember his name? Oh, yes, you not only remember his name but also all of his family member's names, including his dog's name. Why? Because it is important to you.

Is the name of Jesus important to you? It should be because you bear His name – Christian which means Christlike. The word Christian is found only three times in the entire NT. The name was given originally as a term of contempt, but gradually it became a name of honor. The name of Christ, then, means identification: we belong to Jesus Christ. Bearing the name of Jesus is a great privilege, but it is also a tremendous responsibility. We can suffer persecution because we bear His name.

In other words, all that we say and do should be associated with the name of Jesus Christ. By our words and our works, we should glorify His name. If we permit anything into our lives that cannot be associated with the name of Jesus, then we are sinning. We must do and say everything on the authority of His name and for the honor of His name.

As we review these 4 spiritual motivations for godly living, we are impressed with the centrality of Jesus Christ. We forgive because Christ forgave us. It is the peace of Christ that should rule in our hearts. The Word of Christ should dwell in us richly. The name of Christ should be our identification and authority. Christ is all, and in all, amen?

***E. APPLICATION***

**Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.**