

## “Priorities of the New Man”

August 6, 2017

Colossians 3:15-19

### I. Introduction

Ralph Waldo Emerson once said, “*What you are shouts so loudly in my ears I cannot hear what you say.*” This thought is especially true for the Christian life. Being a Christian is more than knowing—even quoting—Scripture verse after Scripture verse. As so many people are trying to do today, a person cannot say, “*I am a dedicated Christian,*” and then live his or her life as he or she pleases. Being a Christian must have a definite effect on how one behaves—on character as well as conduct. It does no good if a person can declare and even defend the truth if he fails to demonstrate it in his own life. Writing of such people, **Titus 1:16** says, “**They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good.**”

Faith in Christ i.e. being a Christian, means being united with Christ and as we share His life, we must follow His example. Our actions must harmonize with our words which must harmonize with God’s Word. **2 Corinthians 5:17** says, “**Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!**” From the beginning of chapter 3, Paul has been emphasizing the changes that must occur in the life of a Christian. He wrote in **Colossians 3:2**, “**Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.**” He went on to write in **verse 5** that Christians are to “**put to death whatever belongs to your earthly nature.**” The old self, the earthly nature, the old man—is to be removed and discarded like an old smelly worn-out garment and replaced with the new self—the qualities that are the mark of a Christian: i.e. compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, bearing with each other and forgiving one another and, most importantly of all, a life directed and guided by sacrificial love—agape love.

Paul concluded his look at the qualities that should mark the lifestyle of a Christian by giving three priorities of the new man. These are the outer-most garments of the new man, those which cover all the

others. The priorities of the new man—the Christian—all have to do with Christ; beginning with the peace of Christ.

## II. Priorities of the New Man

**A. The Peace of Christ.** Paul wrote, “Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts.” The peace of Christ has two facets. Believers are at peace with God. Romans 5:1 says, “Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” The war between the believer and God is over; peace has been attained by the blood shed by Jesus Christ on the cross. Because of Jesus’ death and resurrection, believers are at rest and are secure. Paul wrote in Philippians 4:7, “And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

Secondly, if Christians have the peace of Christ in their hearts, they will also be at peace with other Christians. Paul wrote that we are called to live in peace “in one body.” Colossians 3:11 says, “Christ is all and is in all.” Christians who have peace with Christ and in their own hearts will live in unity and harmony with each other.

The word translated “rule” back in verse 15 is an athletic term. It was used to describe the activity of an umpire in directing the performance of an athletic contest. In the Greek games, there were judges, we would call them umpires, who rejected contestants who were not qualified, and who disqualified those who broke the rules. The peace of Christ is to be the “umpire” in the hearts of individual Christians as well as the church. 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. Sin offends Christ, with whom we are at peace, and thereby shatters the rest and security and peace of our hearts.

But we need to be careful of a false peace in our hearts. Jonah, who was swallowed by the big fish, deliberately disobeyed God, yet he was able to go to sleep in the hold of a ship in the middle of a storm. “*I have peace about it!*” is not sufficient evidence that we are in the will of God. We must pray,

surrender to His will, and seek God's guidance in Scripture. The peace of the heart alone is not always the peace of God.

When there is peace of Christ in the heart, there will be praise on the lips; Paul wrote, “**And be thankful.**” The Christian out of God's will is never found giving sincere praise to God. **Turn to Psalm 32:1-5.** When David covered up his sins, he lost his peace and his praise. When he confessed his sins, then his song returned.

**B. The Word of Christ** The 2<sup>nd</sup> priority for a Christian is the Word of Christ; “**Let the word of Christ dwell in your richly.**” This obviously means the Word of God. Peace and thankfulness as well as unity, love, and all the virtues Paul listed earlier come from a mind controlled by Scripture. It is the Word of Christ which gives us life and sustains and strengthens us—**turn to 1 Peter 1:22-2:3.**

“*To dwell*” means “*to live in*” or “*to be at home in.*” Paul calls upon believers to let the Word take up residence and be at home in their lives. The word *richly* could be translated as “*abundantly or extravagantly rich.*” The truths of the Scripture should permeate every aspect of the believer's life and govern every thought, word, and deed. For this to happen, every Christian must read, study and live the Word. To have the Word dwelling richly is to be controlled by the Holy Spirit. Since the Holy Spirit is the author and the power of the Word, being filled with the Spirit is synonymous with being filled with the Word of Christ.

Paul then mentioned two results of the Word of Christ dwelling in the believer: “**teach and admonish one another.**” The whole church, not just the leaders of the church, is to teach and admonish or encourage one another. In the body of Christ, every person is ministered to and is a minister of the gifts of the Spirit when they are used by each individual. One of the ways that this is done is through the singing of the Word of God.

Psalms were songs taken from the Old Testament, especially from the Book of Psalms. Hymns were songs of praise to God written by believers but not taken from the Psalms. Like the Old Testament

psalms, hymns praise God for all that He is and does in the present as well as in the past. That's what you find in our hymnal; hymns like we sang this morning: "Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty" and "Near to the Heart of God." Spiritual songs emphasized testimony; they express what God has done for us—songs like "Thank You, Lord" and "I Will Sing the Wondrous Story."

Our singing must be with gratitude—thankfulness for God's grace. Our singing isn't to be a display of earthly talent; it must be a demonstration of the grace of God in our hearts. When Paul wrote to "sing ... in your hearts to God," he didn't mean *not* to sing with the voice. He was saying that our singing must be from our hearts as well as from our lips. But if the Word of God is not in our hearts, we cannot sing from our hearts. Knowing the Word of God is necessary for our public and private worship of God. Singing is to be primarily directed to God as praise and worship offered to Him for His pleasure and glory. At the same time believers will learn of God's love, faithfulness, grace, and mercy.

**C. The Name of Christ** The simplest, most basic rule of thumb for living the Christian life is to do everything, "whether word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus." This is the 3<sup>rd</sup> priority: the name of Christ. The word *Christian* is found only three times in the entire New Testament: Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16. Originally, it was a term of contempt, but gradually it became a name of honor. As Christians we bear the name of Christ, i.e. we are identified with Him; we belong to Jesus Christ.

Jesus' name also means authority. It is in the name of Jesus Christ that we have authority to pray; in John 14:13-14 Jesus said, "And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it." Because Jesus Christ is God, and He has died for us, we have authority in His name.

To do everything in the name of Jesus is to act consistently with whom He is and what He wants. By our words and our actions, we should glorify His name. 1 Corinthians 10:31 puts it this way, "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God." If we allow something into

our lives that cannot be associated with the name of Jesus, cannot bring glory to God, then we are sinning. We must do everything on the authority of His name and for the honor of His name.

Paul finished by reminding his reader that this is always to be done without reluctance or despair or legalistic duty, but with “giving thanks to God the Father.” Whatever we do in the name of Christ—as a Christian—ought to be combined with thanksgiving. If we cannot give thanks, then we had better not do it or say it.

### III. Conclusion

Romans 13:14 says, “Clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.” It is easy for a person to say that he or she is a Christian—until recently, being a Christian and being an American meant the same thing to many people. But there is more to being a Christian than just words or the place where one is born. A Christian is one who has put off the old, sinful nature and put on the new, Christlike nature.

The goal of every Christian should be Christlikeness. Since we are united with Christ through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, we have all the resources we need for holy living, for being transformed into the image of Jesus Christ. But we must be spiritually motivated. Because we have experienced the grace of Christ, we should want to live for Him. Because we have enjoyed the peace of Christ, we should want to obey Him. We have been enriched by the Word of God and have been adopted into the family of Jesus Christ, therefore we should want to honor and glorify Him. Does this describe you?

James 2:26 says, “As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.” Jesus said in Matthew 7:16, “By their fruit you will recognize them.” A Christian should be recognized by what he or she does and doesn’t do and not just his or her words. Earlier in Colossians 3 Paul listed some of the actions of the old self and some of the qualities of the new self. Today he wrote of the priorities of a Christian. So what are the priorities in your life? Who or what is number One—this, by the way, is your god! Does the peace of Christ really rule in your heart? Do you have peace even when things seem

to be falling apart all around you? Does the Word of Christ dwell in your heart? Do you even know what is in God's Book? Are you reading and studying it? Is the Holy Spirit, who lives in every Christian, comfortable going where you go and doing what you do? Is the name of Christ your identification and authority in life? Or is the name "*Christian*" a deep dark secret kept from those around you? If you were taken to a court of law, would your actions, your priorities prove that you are a Christian?