

Colossians Chapter 3 v 12 -14

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[0 : 0 0] in chapter 3. It's good to have Brian Maiden with us last week and share from God's Word. But we're back to Colossians and to the series that we've been following the last several months of this letter. Just to remind you as you turn to chapter 3, Paul is writing to Christians he's never met. They are Christians who, under the ministry of Epaphroditus, came to hear the gospel. And wonderfully, the church grew. Not Epaphroditus, beg your pardon, Epaphras.

And the church grew and Paul having a great concern for them because of false teachers that were in the area and affecting the church writes this letter. And of course, the letter is all about Jesus. And the answer to false teaching, the answer to all things, is Jesus.

And so we've had that wonderful description in chapter 1 of Jesus as the image of the invisible God and so on. And then we've had this glorious declaration in verse 9 of chapter 2, Christ in whom all the fullness of the deity lives. And we've been looking at and dealing with in the past weeks some of the problems, some of the false teachings that were being laid upon the believers, mainly legalism and a return to the law. And of course, Paul then in chapter 3, and this is where we have been the last week or two, begins to show that the answer to living the Christian life is not law, but Christ, having our minds set upon him, looking to him. Verse 1 of chapter 3, since then you've been raised with Christ at your hearts and things above. The fullness, the reality of all that the law pointed to, the Old Testament pointed to, was Jesus. And as we look at him then, we find that we are changed and that we are conformed. And we saw that God's great purpose for us here in chapter 3 is, verse 10, that we might be renewed in the image of the creator. In other words, that we might be made more and more like Christ. So let's pick up, we're going to read from verse 1 of chapter 3 through to verse 17, and then we're going to, in a few moments' time, look at verses 12 to 14 in particular. Here is the word of our God.

Verse 1 of chapter 3, verse 1.

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[3 : 2 7] Verse 1 of chapter 3, verse 1. Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all and is in all. Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom. And as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. We thank God that he has given us his word.

Let's come to a time of prayer together. I'd like us to be able to... They say that you can tell a lot by what a person wears. Well, certainly you can tell what activity they're about to be engaged in, because what we choose to wear is directly affected by the activity we're about to engage in. So, if we are planning to go to bed, then we put on our PJs, or night dress, or night cap, or whatever else we may have.

If we're off to school, like Adam and Jono, then we put on our school uniform. If we're off to keep fit class, I know all those ladies in that row number five there know what I'm talking about here.

And then we put on our sportswear and our sports gear and our trainers and so on. Likewise, we can often tell a person's occupation, of course, by the clothing that they wear, particularly in the uniform services, the police, the ambulance, fire brigade.

[5 : 57] But also, if a person's a mechanic, then they'll wear a set of overalls. Fisherman will wear his yellow wellies. Farmer will have his flannel shirt and his tweed cap, and so on.

You can tell a lot about someone by what they wear. What about a Christian? What should he wear or she wear? Can you tell who they are by what they're wearing?

Paul gives us instruction, and to every Christian, that we should be dressed in a particular way. There it is in verses 12 and 13 and 14.

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with. There's a dress code for being a Christian, and clearly it's not about the outward clothing that we wear.

Rather, he's concerned about that spiritual clothing of the heart and the character and the life. The days, really, are largely gone when you could tell a family were on their way to church on a Sunday morning.

[7 : 01] Not only because that unwritten dress code for morning service has become mainly redundant in our generation, but because people nowadays dress smartly on a Sunday, and they're most unlikely to be going to church.

That doesn't mean that the majority of people are careless about what they wear. There's a lot of pressure, especially amongst some people, about wearing the right clothes.

You can be judged by your clothing, by the brand that you're wearing, by the fashion that you're displaying. Well, as Christians, should we be concerned about our appearance?

Are we concerned about our appearance? I hope so. But again, not about the clothes that we wear, but about the attitudes and actions that we display to the world.

Here's Peter as he writes to Christian wives about the clothing that they should wear. In 1 Peter and chapter 3, he says this, Here's Paul in Galatians 3, verse 27, saying to the believers there,

[8 : 55] For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

Again, Paul, Romans in chapter 13 and verse 14. Clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ. Do not think how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.

Now, I made mention in our introduction to this passage, and you see it there in verse 10, That we have been saved, that we might put on the new self, Which is being renewed in the knowledge of the image of its creator.

Jesus, of course, is none other than the image of the invisible God. He is our creator. Back in Colossians chapter 1, verse 15.

He, speaking of Jesus, is the image of the invisible God. The firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created. Things in heaven and on earth.

[9 : 58] And so on. The person of the Lord Jesus reveals the true and real revelation of God. God was not hidden in the person of Jesus Christ when he walked on the earth.

Rather, God was revealed, displayed, made manifest, demonstrated, When our Lord Jesus Christ took on human form and lived amongst men.

Here's John as he opens his first letter. That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, Which we have looked at and our hands have touched, This we proclaim concerning the word of life.

The life appeared. We've seen it and testified to it. And we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us.

So our Lord Jesus is the revelation of God. He is the image of God. And it's into his image and likeness as our creator that we are to be clothed.

[11 : 03] And we are to show forth his glory. Christ has been restored to his rightful place in heaven. He has ascended to the Father's right hand, working and waiting until that day when he comes again.

And every eye will see him and behold him. But in the meantime, in between the time of his ascension and the time of his return, The image of God is to be revealed to the world by us.

By the church. We have received that glorious commission from Christ as he said to his disciples, As the Father sent me, so now I send you.

Our lives are to bear that image of the Lord Jesus Christ to the world around about us. We are to display something of the glory of God.

God is Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount. We know it only so well. You are the light of the world. But who is Jesus? He said, I am the light of the world. But you are the light of the world.

[12 : 07] City on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand. Gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, Let your light shine before men, That they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

What a high calling it is to live as a Christian in this world. To be those who bear the image of Christ, the light of the world. And to make that light so shine by our actions and our lives.

That glory and praise is given to God as it was in and through the person of Christ. And so when we come to Colossians 3, We come to verses 12 and following.

We see, we thought about this last week. The reasons why we are to clothe ourselves is in this way. Because of who we are. God's chosen people, holy, dearly loved. We thought about those things.

But then we come on to this clothing itself. This adornment itself. The garments that we wear that show ourselves to be the people of Christ. First, if we want to wear them well.

[13 : 18] If we want to wear them in such a way as to reveal him. Then we need to look first of all at how he wore them himself. Because each one of these characteristics.

Each one of these garments. Compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. All of these, of course, are seen perfectly in the Lord Jesus Christ first. He is the one who wore them.

And we are the ones who now bear them before others. And so, first of all, Paul says, Clothe yourselves with compassion. Compassion.

To be moved with pity for those who are in need. That's compassion. Compassion. The Lord Jesus Christ himself was one who was moved with compassion.

In fact, the phrase that's translated in the NLV. If you have it in the authorized. If you're still in old money, as it were. Then it's, he literally was moved in his bowels.

[14 : 22] It's that inner sense of feeling for the sufferings and the sorrowings of others. Matthew 14 and verse 14.

Just one of many places that speak of Jesus being moved with compassion. When Jesus saw the crowd.

He had compassion on them. Other places, too. Other places, too. Speak of Jesus being moved. Being troubled. When he looked upon those who were in distress and sorrow and heartache.

Probably the most powerful of those was when he was at the graveside of Lazarus. Where we're told that as he looked upon Martha and the crowds. We're told that he was deeply troubled in spirit.

He was moved within his inner being with compassion. And he wept. Jesus wept. Is compassion my inner clothing?

[15 : 27] When I meet with people. When I see their sorrow. When I see the consequences of their sin. When I see the, not just the physical trouble they're in. But the spiritual needs.

Is there something within me that groans? With a sense of compassion. A sense of deep concern. And pity for them.

Jesus was moved, remember. Not just for the physical. But the very spiritual needs of the people he met. Here's John. Sorry, Matthew 9.36. Which tells us again.

When he saw the crowds. He had compassion on them. He was moved inwardly. Because they were harassed and helpless. Like sheep without a shepherd. They were lost. Without God.

Without faith. Without hope. Jesus felt compassion. But of course the reality is this. That compassion by itself.

[16 : 24] Cannot remain by itself. Compassion is not enough. Just to exist as a feeling. Because it must bear the fruit of kindness.

As here. Clothe yourselves with compassion and kindness. Kindness is the outward action of compassion. Kindness is that which is moved by a sense of concern.

It's a word. It's a deed. It's a display. And so we find that whenever we read of Jesus being moved with compassion for the crowds. There immediately follows from him an act of kindness as well.

So that passage in Matthew 14 that we read there. When we're told he saw the crowds and was moved with compassion for them. We're then told that he healed their sick. When Jesus was moved with compassion in Matthew 9 and verse 36.

Immediately following again. We're told that Jesus gave them food to eat. Whenever Jesus was moved with compassion there flowed an act of kindness.

[17 : 32] Is there kindness in our actions towards one another and to those around about us? Are we so moved with compassion that we act? To say I have compassion and yet not to show kindness is not to have compassion at all.

We may say it to impress others. We may say it perhaps to quiet our own conviction or conscience. But compassion always flows with kindness.

Clothe yourself with these things says Paul. Let them be the outer garment of your life. Let them be seen. But then he goes on and speaks of humility. In one sense compassion and kindness are the evidence of an inward heart of humility.

What is humility? Someone described it in this way. It's not thinking of others as better than yourself. No it's not thinking of yourself at all. Not thinking of others as better than yourself.

But not thinking of yourself at all. Surely this is the very essence of the life of Jesus. That we read about in Philippians chapter 2. That's why we started our service with those very words.

[18 : 48] What does it tell us? It tells us that though Jesus was in very nature God. He did not consider equality with God something to be grasped. Made himself nothing.

Later on he humbled himself. Jesus never thought that those he came to save were better than him. That's not why he humbled himself.

Because he thought we were better than him. But rather he humbled himself rightly because he saw us for who we were. Sinners before a holy God. He acted with no thought for himself.

But all his thoughts were for the Father's will and for our salvation. Humility was at the very base of why Jesus acted in kindness and was moved with compassion.

And because he had a humble heart. We find that the Lord Jesus therefore dealt with us in gentleness. So clothe yourselves with compassion.

[19 : 51] With kindness. With humility. Not thinking of ourselves. What's in it for me? What can I get from this? Thinking not of ourselves at all.

And therefore we shall find that gentleness is what comes from that. You see gentleness is the very opposite of pride. Pride. Humility makes us gentle.

But pride makes us harsh. Pride makes us feel as if we do not need to act gently towards others. Well they've got what their sins deserve, haven't they?

They've made their bed so they can lie in it. We do not act gently because we are robbed of compassion by pride.

When Jesus knew full well the sins of the hearts of the lives of those that he drew near to. When the Pharisees scoffed and mocked and said he's a friend of sinners.

[20 : 57] Jesus was glad to be with the publicans, the tax collectors, the prostitutes. Because he was gentle towards them. Yes, they were suffering the consequences of their actions.

But he never ever was anything but gentle. Think of those incredible words of Jesus in Matthew in chapter 11. We're standing before the disciples and the people.

He cries out and calls out. Come to me. Come to me. All you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me.

Why? For I am gentle and humble in heart. And you will find rest for your souls. We know what he's talking about. He's not talking about people who've been carrying a great load.

Who've been carrying bricks or sand. He's talking about those who are weary with their sins. Those who are broken by their failures. Those who are contrite. Those who feel as if everything is against them.

[22 : 05] And they have no hope. To them he calls. Come to me. I'm gentle and humble. How often, dear friends. Or do we act with genuine gentleness to others.

To one another. You see, the way we can do that. And the proof of that, again, is seeing all these things come together. All these articles of clothing are bound together.

Because we find that it comes with patience. Patience is the very opposite of a quick temper. Patience is the opposite of being irritable. With the failures and faults of others.

Patience is not easily offended. When somebody stands on our toes. It doesn't jump to a hasty judgment of another. But it is long-suffering with the weaknesses of broken lives and hearts.

Paul himself testifies to how Jesus was wonderfully patient with him. In saving him. In 1 Timothy, we have one of his trustworthy sayings.

[23 : 11] And here it is. Here's a trustworthy saying. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Of whom I'm the worst. But for that very reason I was shown mercy. So that in me the worst of sinners.

Listen, Christ might display his unlimited patience. How would we have dealt with a man like Saul? Persecutor of the church.

A Pharisee. A hard-necked, hard-hearted, legalistic persecutor. How did Jesus deal with him?

With unlimited patience. As you read the gospel accounts of the Lord Jesus. As he deals with his disciples.

They're often foolish, aren't they? They're often stupid and ignorant. And say things they shouldn't say. Here's just an example of the patience of Jesus with them.

[24 : 09] And those around about him in Luke 9. Listen to this. An argument started among the disciples. As to which of them would be the greatest. Jesus, knowing their thoughts, took a little child and made him stand beside him.

He said to them, Whoever welcomes this little child in my name welcomes me. Whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. For he is least among you all. He is the greatest. Master, said John.

We saw a man driving out demons in your name. We tried to stop him because he's not one of us. Do not stop him, Jesus said. Whoever is not against you is for you. Do you get the sense?

Here's the disciples. Jesus has revealed himself. In all his glory to Peter, James and John on the Mount of Transfiguration. He's on the way to the cross.

He's been telling them all about it. And what are they doing? They're bickering and arguing about who's the greatest disciple. How does Jesus deal with it? How would we have dealt with them?

[25 : 09] Shut up. Or chastised them. Or corrected them. He knew what was in their thoughts. He knew what was in their hearts. But patiently he brings a child.

Gives them an object lesson. In not seeking to be the greatest. Jesus. And even when John shouts up. We try to stop somebody. We used our authority to overcome people who are driving out demons again.

Jesus isn't angry. Don't stop him. He who is not against us is for us. Do you see the patience and the long suffering of Jesus? How we need that patience and long suffering ourselves.

Don't we? In dealing with one another. In dealing with those around about us. Isn't it true that when we see men and women caught up in evil and iniquity and sin.

Something within us wells up. Well I've never done that. I'm not as bad as them. Is there a moving of our hearts to gentleness and kindness?

[26 : 15] Is there compassion? When we see people falling around in drunkenness. People broken marriages and broken hearts and broken lives.

Is there judgment? Criticism? Harshness? Pride? It wasn't with Jesus. Paul says clothe yourself with the same clothing as Jesus.

And then as it were to cap it all. To really put the cat amongst the pigeons. To really nail it home. To really make us feel bad about ourselves.

He closes with verse 13. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Seems to me that bear with is very much the same as patience isn't it?

But Paul is putting as it were a definition for bearing with. When he says bear with. He doesn't want us necessarily to conjure up in our own minds what that really means.

[27 : 26] He says practically. Practically. In evidence. In your life. To bear with one another means this. That you forgive whatever grievance anyone has committed against you.

Forgive one another everything. Everything. Yes. Yes. Yes. Everything. But. No buts. Yet.

No. Even those justifiable grievances that we carry around with us. I've got a right to be grieved because the way they acted or spoke.

There's. Sorry. There's no. Loopholes. There's no exceptions. Whatever grievance. You're to forgive it. Why?

Why should I forgive it? They haven't even said sorry. They haven't even shown remorse. They probably haven't even realized what they've done. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another.

[28 : 35] Forgive as the Lord forgave you. You have begun. You have been forgiven much more than any grievance another can do to you.

Whatever anybody has done to us. It is nothing. In comparison. To what we have done to Christ.

Think of Jesus. The greatest example of forgiveness. That could ever be manifest in the whole world.

Is of a battered. Beaten. Crown. With thorns. Man. Lifted up on a cross.

Who looks. To his father. And speaks on behalf of the men. Who nailed. And beat. And mocked. And crowned him in that way.

[29 : 32] And says. Father. Forgive them. They don't know what they've done. Forgive one another. As the Lord.

Forgave. You. No forgiveness. Doesn't remove the pain. Of the hurt. That was caused. But it does heal the bitterness. Of the sting.

And no forgiveness. Does not condone. The sin. Or the wrong attitude. Or act. But it does prevent that sin. From spreading further.

And no forgiveness. Will not make you forget. What happened. To you. And was done. But it will stop you. From constantly. Thinking about it.

You see. Even in his resurrection body. The Lord Jesus Christ. Bore the scars. Of the wounds. He suffered for us. When he stands. Before Thomas.

[30 : 33] On that resurrection day. The week after the resurrection. What does he say? Look at my hands. Put your fingers here. Why? Because there are the marks. The scars.

The holes. Put your hand into my side. Why? Because that's where the spear went. Pierced my very heart. So that blood and water gushed out.

He bears the marks. And you and I will bear the marks. Of the grievances. Others have done to us. And the sorrows. And the sadnesses. That we have received.

But forgiveness. For forgiveness. Is possible. And necessary. And good. And is the evidence.

Of compassion. And kindness. And humility. And gentleness. And patience. Clothe yourselves.

[31 : 31] With these things. How. How. How on earth. Am I. Going to be able. To begin. To be like Jesus. In this way.

How on earth. I hope you're asking the same question. I'm sure you are. How on earth. Can I be. Forgiving like this. And compassionate like this. And kind like this. And humble like this. How can I be.

Any of these things. Where do I get the material. As it were. To make these. Sort of garments. That show forth.

The beauty. And the radiance. Of Christ. Well here's the answer. Isn't it. It's verse 14. And over all these. Virtues put on love. Which binds them all together.

In perfect unity. Love is the key. To dress like this. To try and garment ourselves. Like this. Without love. Is possible. But all that we do.

[32 : 30] Are where. Are filthy. Rags. Of self-righteousness. Yes. Loveless compassion. Is only a pretended duty.

To those less swell off. Than ourselves. Loveless kindness. Is no more. Than cold pity. And loveless patience.

Is just gritting your teeth. And putting up with them. Until they go away. There's no such thing. As loveless forgiveness. It's an impossibility.

All forgiveness. Flows. From the one source of love. And the love we need. Is not love. That we can generate. Or fashion. Or make.

It's the love. Of Christ. That has been poured. Into our hearts. And lives. That we already possess. But need more. And more of.

[33 : 26] Romans 5. And verse 5. Paul. And he's speaking about. Sufferings. And persecutions. And trials. And difficulties. Speaks about. How God works in. And through them. And he speaks at the end.

And says. God has poured out. His love. Into our hearts. By the Holy Spirit. He's given us. Christ. Christ. Never. Calls us.

To live. And to do. And to be. Anything. Except which he equips us. And enables us. To do. And to be. Yes.

He sets us an example. Yes. He holds up for us. A goal. And a mark. And a benchmark. That we are to seek after. And to seek for. And we are to do so.

But we are not to do so. In our own power. Strength. Or ability. We are to do so. With the love. That he has provided. And given. The love.

[34 : 21] That compels us. To live. A life of love. As he lived. A life of love. 2 Corinthians 5.14. The love of Christ. Compels us. To live.

Not for ourselves. But to live for him. To live for others. Let's just take a few moments. In the quietness of our own hearts.

Before the Lord. Asking that he might clothe us. With such love. And that these garments. Of beauty. May be our adornment. To his praise.

Let's respond to God's word. In prayer. Together. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.