

## Section 8: Higher Things 2: Becoming like Christ

### Colossians 3:12-17

*3:12. Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.*

*13: Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.*

*14: And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.*

*15: Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.*

*16: 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.*

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

There is a model for aspiring to higher things. Not only are we to aim high but we have Christ as the example which we are to follow.

We now go on to look at that, focusing on:

1. Being like Christ in character
2. Being like Christ in practice
3. Being ministers to one another
4. Being motivated.

Let's look at each of these.

#### **1. Being like Christ in character.**

We need to look and see why it is that we need to be like Christ in character and in our dealing with those around us in the fellowship of believers. The reason is that:

We are special - special because we are chosen by God, that He should show His love and give His love to us. It is not by our own merit or goodness, or wit or wisdom. It is the sovereign will and purpose of God that we belong to Him.

We are Holy - this is the notion that we are set apart and dedicated to God. We are consecrated; we belong to Him in a particular way. God has made us such in Christ and it should be that we become that in reality.

We are beloved - This is one of the greatest truths for you to lay

hold of in your life. Allow it to sink in, and settle: that you are beloved of God. Clothe yourselves in God's love which binds all the virtues and all the people together in perfect unity.

Specifically, that means having:

A heart of compassion - looking and realising what the needs of others are. Knowing people in a world in which so much is impersonal and reduced to statistics and economics.

Kindness - showing the goodness of God to others. For example, the changing of the water into wine was goodness for the sake of the hosts.

Humility - something that is often missing in our world today and sometimes in the church also. It perhaps is the outworking of the grace of God in our lives.

Gentleness - We have the example of Christ riding into Jerusalem on a donkey.

Patience - not being angry or vengeful but rather being more willing to be gentle, kind and forgiving.

A tolerant attitude - bearing with one another. (I often find it quite trying that more people aren't like me!) It is a fact that we are all different and precious to God. That means that we should bear with one another, not just put up with one another but love one another.

A forgiving spirit - not being blind to sin but dealing honestly and lovingly; being prepared to forgive when the need is there.

Love - the most important of all.

## 2. **Being like Christ in practice**

The nature and the source of our peace is Christ. We need to emulate Him in our behaviour.

There are some people who always appear to be at the centre of trouble; and sometimes they can't understand why. Often, it is because they are contentious in disposition. As my mother would say, "*they could cause a riot in a mortuary!*" The peace that we are talking about is not just the absence of conflict but is the positive application of peace in any situation. It is like the peace that Christ brought between God and man through reconciliation: it is active and deliberate.

In encouraging them to practise that peace and enjoy its benefits,

Paul enjoins the Colossians to:

*Let it rule in your hearts.* Like a referee who is in a good position to see the play: (perspective), good vision (sees the truth), keeps the game under control (sees the bigger picture).

*Remember that "as members of one body, you were called to peace"* thus appreciating the unifying purpose of peace; and to be

*Thankful* - in all things we should be thankful for the love and grace of God.

### 3. Being ministers to one another

It is not just a matter of emulating Christ in character but also encouraging one another by contributing to that development. The key resource for that is: *the Word of Christ*.

We do not know about this new life or how it works. The 'intelligence' which informs that new life is found in the Word of God. That is the resource.

To be effective, it needs to:

*Dwell richly in you.* It applies to every aspect of our life, not just to attending church or doing a devotional. It should '*permeate all my being through.*' Just as wealth is apparent in all aspects of a rich person's life so there should be abundant and qualitative evidence of the word of Christ in dynamic presence in every aspect of our behaviour as Christians. There is plenty in Christ: avail yourselves of it; share it with one another.

In practical terms, that is done by '*teaching and admonishing one another*' (wisely) - not seeking to find fault, or to prove ourselves better than anyone else but to encourage one another to grow by the friendly advice and loving correction we give and receive from each other. Informed by the 'word of Christ' we can, indeed, help to guide each other in the right path drawing on the wisdom that God gives.

In effect, that is what we do when we "*sing psalms, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God*". Expressing our experience in this way as we worship together is an important means of ministering to each other; from pulpit to pew and from person to person.

### 4. Being motivated

All action is motivated but the motives are not always good. The

motivation for aspiring to higher things is to be like Christ. It is all for His sake. It is not about an imposed set of rules but about all behaviour. '*Whatever you do, whether in word or deed*' is to be done in His name and for His glory out of gratitude for the love that has transformed our lives.

Aspiring to be like Christ is possible because of the abundant wealth that is in Him, which he offers to us; and all that it brings - benefit to us and praise to Him.

As He was the 'incarnation' on this earth of all that God is, so we are to be the 'incarnation' of that life in the day-to-day practical situations we encounter at home and in work.

We now move on to look at the practical outworking.