



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Colossians 3:12-17

"The Christian en Vogue"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] We are in Colossians chapter 3, and we are reading verse 12 through verse 17 for our Scripture reading today. You may remember, particularly those of you who have been coming regularly to the services that the apostle has been talking about the fact that we are identified with our Lord as our covenantal, and the things that have transpired in his life are things that have transpired for us. We have participated in them, being united with him, our representative head, and now Paul is in that part of the epistle in which the significances of the fact of our union with him are set in the context of the proper ethical response to the ministry of Christ.

He has said for example that we have died with Christ, and therefore we are to mortify our members, which are upon the earth, or put to death, our members which are upon the earth, and now in verse 12 through verse 17m, the apostle speaks positively of the things that should characterize the life of one who claims to be one of our Lord's own,

"Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, (we would translate this old expression, "bowels of mercies" probably as compassion) kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a complaint against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things (Probably this preposition translated above

should be translated something like in addition to.) And in addition to all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfectness. (And again there are differences of opinion of about how one should interpret that expression, "bond of perfectness." Some thinking that it has to do with union, others thinking that it has to do with maturity. Probably the latter interpretation is more harmonious with Paul, and so we would render this,) and in addition to all these things put on love, which is the bond of maturity. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful. (Incidentally you'll notice that the apostle, when he writes verse 15, says "let the peace of God rule in your hearts, and then says that we have been called to this in one body, that makes it I think relatively plain that he's talking about peace in the body collectively rather than in the individual. Although of course the principle would have some application for us or to us.) Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly (I'm going to suggest that we should put a comma after that in our thinking and take the expression in all wisdom" with the participles that follow.) In all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. (Now, I won't say any thing much about that in the message, but the reason that the apostle says, "in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another," may be because he's contrasting the kind of teaching and admonishing that the false teachers are giving, and so the expression "in all wisdom" would be his way of saying that the teaching and the admonishing should be in harmony with the revelation of God, and finally in verse 17,) And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him."

May God bless this reading of his word. Let's bow together in a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Our Heavenly Father, we come to Thee though the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We thank Thee that we have such a representative head, a covenantal

head, who has accomplished the work of redemption in our behalf. We thank Thee that as the Scriptures have said, "While in Adam all die, in Christ shall all be made alive." And we thank Thee for the way in which Thou hast, through the wisdom of the eternal God, accomplished the redemption of the people of God through the saving work of Jesus Christ. What a marvelous thing it is Lord to realize that our destiny hangs upon the work the he has accomplished.

We thank Thee that Thou hast, in love, brought us to the knowledge of him, and set us in him for time and for eternity. And we ask that our position may be a guide for us as we think about the kind of life that we are to live while we're here upon this earth. We give Thee thanks and praise for the privilege of being a representative of the Lord Jesus Christ in our various ways in 1986. We thank Thee for the past. We look forward to the future. We know that the future is bright, as bright as the promises of God, and as bright as the marvelous destiny that he has won for us, who, by Thy grace are in him.

We thank Thee and praise Thee for the privilege of representing the Lord Jesus as a body of believers, and we are grateful for the ministry that Thou hast given to the chapel. We are thankful for its elders, and for its deacons, and for its members, and for the friends, who are with us, and for those who are visiting, we ask Lord, Thy blessing upon each of these groups of people. May we have the sense of Thy presence as we meet, and may as we leave, we leave with the sense of a closer relationship to Thee through Christ.

We thank Thee for the outreach of the Chapel, in its radio ministry, and in it's publication ministries and the Bible classes and the other forms of ministry that are carried on by so many who are associated with this work. We know, Lord, that we could never be successful in the Lord's work, were it not for the divine enablement and divine power and divine support that we receive as the word of God is proclaimed. We give Thee the thanks and we give Thee the glory. We thank Thee to Lord for the body of Christ, not simply that represented here, but all of the body of Christ.

We thank Thee for all, who by Thy grace, have come to the knowledge of the Lord Jesus as their own Savior. We pray Thy blessing upon them, wherever they may be over the face of this earth. Bless the various testimonies in which Christ is honored, and may the whole church of Jesus Christ today, experience Thy blessing, numerically and in depth of maturity. We thank Thee too, Lord, for the privilege of prayer, and for the privilege of supporting our brethren and our sisters in Christ.

We pray especially for those who are troubled and disturbed, who are sick and who are ill, who may be perplexed and who also may face difficult decisions. We pray, Lord, that Thou wilt give guidance and direction as Thou hast promised in Thy word, and for those who desire and need healing, we pray Thy blessing upon them, and we ask, Lord, that Thou wilt give healing in accordance with Thy perfect will.

Now, we pray that as we sing together, as we reflect upon the word of God that we may be strengthened in our faith, and on this the first day of the week, may, Lord, the things that we learn from the word of God be things that help us through the remainder of this week as we seek to be ambassadors for the Lord Jesus Christ, whose we are and whom we desire to serve. We pray in his name. Amen.

[Message] Today, we are looking at Colossians chapter 3 in verse 12 through verse 17, and our subject is "The Christian en Vogue." We often say, and we say this with reason, that Christian is not simply theology, nor is it just ethics, but its incorporation into Christ, which means both theology and ethics. Thus, and we often say this, that doctrine and duty go together. P.T. Forsyth, the well-known British theologian of the earlier part of the century, said, "The same act that puts us in Christ puts us in the society of Christ." And by that he meant simply that the man in Christ is a man who must live in the society of Christ. That is he must live among the people of God.

Now, Paul has said a great deal in Colossians up to this point about covenantal union with Christ. He's talked about him as the representative head of the believers of

the whole church. He has spoken about the fact that we have been identified with him in his death, in his burial, in his resurrection. He has said, for example, in chapter 2 in verse 20, "Where for if ye have died with Christ." And then in chapter 3 he has said again in chapter 3 verse 3, "For you have died and your life is hid with Christ in God." And he has said also in the very next verse, "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him, in glory." So we have died with him, and we have been resurrected with him.

Now, of course he is speaking of our spiritual position. That is, the things that have happened to Christ have happened to us, for he represented us, and still represents us at the right hand of the throne of God. The apostle has also gone on to say that we should live in the light of our identification with him. He has said, "You have died with Christ." And then in the 5th verse of the 3rd chapter, trading on that he has said, "Put to death therefore your members, which are upon the earth." And he has named there, specifically five sins that characterize the old life, before our death and resurrection with him. Last week, I mentioned the fact that the figure that seems to lie back of Paul's use of these terms and his ethical teaching here is the figure of taking off clothes and putting on clothes. What we might call divesting and reinvesting.

Now, we live in such an age in which financial things are very prominent in our society, and when we hear the word divestment, we of course think of originally, financial institutions that may get rid of certain things, and reinvestment we tend to think of the taking of monies that have been invested, and then reinvesting them in a financial way, but those terms are also used with reference to clothes, divestment and reinvestment. That is to take off clothes, and to put on clothes, and Paul is using, it seems that figure. I mentioned last week that it quite common in the literature of the time of the New Testament to use that illustration to express transformation in life, not simply in Christianity, but in the non-Christian religions as well, but it was particularly true in Christianity, and it's possible that the apostle has in mind the act of baptism.

Now, we tend today, particularly in evangelical circles, to make a bit to little of water baptism. One of the reasons for this is a natural reason. Many of us grew up in churches in which we were baptized, either as infants or as young people, sometimes without profession of faith personally, and other times upon profession of faith, and we discovered later on in life that those professions were not real professions. That is they were things that we went through because either our friends or our family went through those things and rather expected us to, and then when we reach maturity, and we think about spiritual things a bit, we discover that our baptism was not a genuine biblical baptism. That is in the sense that it represented a true relationship to the Lord.

Now, I don't want to get involved in the discussion of some of the finer points of this, because there are certain ways in which an individual might want to say, "That's not really what baptism is, necessarily a profession of faith." But at any rate the point that I'm trying to make is simply this, baptism has tended to be de-emphasized because so many people have trusted in their baptism rather than in their faith in Christ, just as Judaism all Jewish males were required to be circumcised. Well, circumcision ultimately came to represent unfortunately the right relationship to the Lord. Whereas it was intended in the case of Abraham, and his seed to be a testimony to the fact that they belong to the Abrahamic covenant, so just as happened in Judaism, the circumcision was not real, so in Christianity the baptism is often not real, but ideally it should be. In other words when a person was circumcised, it should have been done ideally and represent an identification with Abraham and his seed. In Christianity, water baptism ideally should represent the fact that we have truly believed in the Lord Jesus Christ and are identified with him.

Now, baptism very often was carried out by the church or individuals by the side of a stream, usually living water. Living water being flowing water, and the individuals who are being baptized would go down into the water, and they would be baptized. I would not tell you whether they poured water on them or sprinkled water on them, down

in the water, or whether they are immersed. That's for you to study the New Testament and decide for yourself, but at any rate, they went down in the water, and came out of the water, and in so doing, they took off their clothes, that is not everything, but almost everything, and went down into the water, and then when they came out having been baptized they put back on their clothes, so the taking off of clothes and the putting on of clothes represented, figuratively, water baptism.

Now, it's likely that that is what Paul has in mind, it seems to me when he says, "You have believed in Christ, and just as you took off your clothes and were baptized in testimony to the reality of your faith in Christ, and came out of the water, and put on your clothes that act representing your departure from the old life and your entrance in to a new life, in Christ." So as believers we should put off the characteristics of the old life, and put on characteristics that are conformable to the new life, so in a dramatic way, water baptism symbolized the unclenching and clothing again of an individual's spiritual life.

People should of course dress according to their calling, in many of their callings. Soldiers have uniforms that represent their calling. Pilots have uniforms that represent their calling. Football players have uniforms that represent their calling. Even bankers have uniforms that represent their calling. In fact, if you'll look in catalogues, and you see clothes that are described, the materials that are described, one of the colors that you will see for men is baker's gray. You rather expect a banker to wear something like that.

Now, if you went down to one of your banks, in order to make a loan, and a fellow came up to you in jeans, you might wonder about the solvency of the bank, but if he came up in proper clothes, the changes are you would have a bit more confidence in what he might be talking about.

Now, some of the bankers around Texas may be reduced to jeans in these days, but nevertheless ideally, I'm sure that particularly now, they are probably paying a great deal of attention to the way that they dress. They may be wearing jeans in Texas, but if

you went to JP Morgan in New York City, you would find that that bank is one of the solid banks in the country, and the chances are those men there are wearing banker's gray. Well, in the Christian life, Paul is saying, we should wear the kind of clothes that represents what we are, and the kind of clothes has to do with the virtues that characterize the Christian life, so Paul is going to talk about the Christian's vestments, in verse 12 through verse 14. He'll talk about the Christians comportment, in verse 15 and 16, and then in verse 17, he will talk about the universal style. We might even say the universal garment that ought to characterize the believer in Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, notice verse 12 begins with "put on therefore." Now, that therefore makes the connection with the preceding context. He has said in verse 10, well in verse 9 he said, "You have put off the old man with it's deeds and you have put on the new man, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him," So because we have put off the old man and because we have put on the new man, well, the new character requires new characteristics, so here are the new characteristics that are to characterize a Christian. Listen to them. They are very instructive. Paul says, "Colossians, put on therefore as the elect of God holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, compassion." If anything should characterize Christians, it should be compassion. Bowels of mercies, that's a very descriptive way of saying compassion. We don't use that term any longer, but for those of us who grew up reading the Authorized Version, it's a very meaningful expression, bowels of mercies. The reason the bowels were selected for this kind of virtue is because the bowels were characterized by the soft elements of the body and all of the parts of the body are soft. That is in that part of the body.

Now, I'm not a physiologist, so I don't know anything other than that's generally true, and so in the New Testament we read bowels of mercy, softness, the gentleness that should characterize the Christian, or as we say compassion. That's number one, Paul says, and then he says kindness or goodness, humbleness of mind, meekness.

Now, I must say a word about meekness because I don't think that we really understand meekness. That is the sense of it in the Bible in our day. Teddy Roosevelt, one of the more dramatic presidents of the United States, once said, "I hate a meek man." I think a lot of people feel somewhat similar to president Roosevelt, but meekness in the Bible is extolled by the Lord God. Think of the men who are meek. Well, let me read to you what the Scriptures say about Moses, one of the greatest of the characters of the Old Testament, next to Abraham. Listen to what is said with reference to him. "Now, the man Moses was very meek upon all of the men which were upon the face of the earth." The meekest man Scripture says in Moses day was Moses.

Now, of course we're all familiar with our Lord's statement with regard to himself. In Matthew chapter 11 in verse 28 he says, "Come unto me all of ye that labor in a heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take my yolk upon you and learn of me for I am meek and lowly in heart." So far as I know Paul does not say he's meek, he simply says he's lest than the least of all the saints, which it seems to me qualifies him for meekness.

Now, what does it mean to be meek? Well, I suggest to you that it means to be submissive to God. That's essentially what meekness means. One of the nicest illustrations of this is from the racetrack. Now, I know you wonder I make my weekly trips over to Louisiana or to Arkansas in order to lay a two-dollar bet or so on some horse. I don't do it. I've never done that. I imagine it might be a lot of fun for some people, but nevertheless I don't do it, and I certainly don't want to see it come to Texas, because of the influence that that kind of thing has, but one of the things that is said around the track, so I am told [Laughter] is this, that when a horse particularly runs a race that's a winning race, often it is said, that the horse is meek, and what is meant by a meek horse is that horse is submissive. That is the rider is able to direct the horse without difficulty, and so frequently the horses that win races are the horses that are characterized by meekness, submissiveness, so Christians, Christians are to be submissive to the Lord God. That's meekness. That's biblical meekness, and I can understand exactly why the

apostle says, that meekness should characterize believers. They are to be submissive to the word and to the will of God.

Paul goes on to say that they should be long suffering, and then using a slightly different form of expression, he says, "Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another." That is, "Forbearing one another, suspending rightful demands out of consideration of the weakness of the brethren." Forbearing one another. That's very appropriate for a happy congregational life, forbearing one another. We are, all in some measure, weak. We have our weaknesses, and it's there that the fellow believers should forebear us. Forbearing one another, and furthermore Paul says, forgiving one another. This is even more for reaching than forbearing one another, forgiving one another, canceling the wrong or obligation so far as we are concerned. Forgiving one another, magnificent virtue for Christians to have as part of their wardrobe, forbearing one another, forgiving one another, and finally Paul says in the 14th verse, "And in addition to all these things, put on love, which is the bond of maturity." This is the bond either that unites the virtues and makes for a lovely appearance in the right sense, or the bond that leads to maturity. The bond that unites the whole body, and so produces perfection or maturity in the body, this may be the topcoat. It's the thing that should characterize a Christian congregation, love.

Now, of course we are not talking about the kind of sentimental love that people today think of as love. We are talking about the self-sacrificing kind of love that the Bible speaks about, and that is the bond that leads to maturity for the whole of the body. The ancient clothes usually were kept in place by a girdle, and some have suggested that perhaps this bond here is representative of the girdle, the thing that gives style to any kind of garment, and thus the girdle is love in spiritual things, but unfortunately for that illustration this word, so far as I know is never has never been found in Greek literature as used of the girdle. The idea is a biblical idea.

If you look over these things that Paul is talking about here, it comes to your mind sooner or later that what Paul is talking about is the facets of the character of the Lord Jesus himself, and that leads to this observation, that to clothe ourselves with Christ is the best way to deal with sin, so the individual who clothes himself with Christ, well, Paul in another place says, "Put on the Lord Jesus Christ." In Romans chapter 13 in verse 11, a text used in the conversion of Saint Augustine, "Put on the Lord Jesus Christ." That is if we really give ourselves to putting on Christ we will be able to deal with these specific problems of life that come to us.

That reminds me of Thomas Chalmers great sermon. He preached a great sermon on the expulsive power of a new affection, and he said that the way he came to that title was through and experience. He was traveling in the Highlands of Scotland, and he was on a coach that was being carried by horses. He said, "We reached a certain point in one of the mountains in which we were going along a road that was by the side of a steep precipice on one side, and a deep chasm on the other."

And as said, "We were going along the road narrowed down, and finally it became extremely narrow, and it was obvious that the animals were beginning to get upset over what was happening, and finally one of the horses began to shy, and if the coachman, who was sitting in the box seat, had not done what he had done," He said, "We would have been plunged into that chasm, but he took out his whip and he began to beat the animal unmercifully." And they managed to get by in safety, and when Mr. Chalmers said, "When I was able to say anything afterwards, I asked him, why did you begin to beat that animal so unmercifully as he began to shy and pull at his traces?" He said, "Well, he was so filled with fear that I had to give him something else to think about." [Laughter] And so the phrase formed itself in Mr. Chalmers mind the expulsive power of a new affection, and the individual who is truly consumed with a desire to please and glorify the Lord Jesus Christ will discover that that is one of the great ways to deal with sin.

It's very much like the things that happen to us here in the fall and winter and spring, with our red oak trees. If you have a red oak in your yard, you may notice the characteristic of the red oak are for in the fall, a number of the leaves fall, but not all of the leaves fall. In fact, in the middle of January and February, the red oak trees still have their brown leaves. Many of them have many leaves. Some of them still have a few. Almost all of them have some, but in the spring, when the sap begins to flow up through the trunk and into the limbs of the tree, then the leaves fall off. The new life is responsible for the dead leaves falling. That illustrates what Paul speaks about, when he talks about the things of which he is talking here. And I think that's a good illustration of the fact that if we clothe ourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ that's the best way to deal with sin, and these are the particulars, the particulars of bowels, of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, submission, long suffering, forbearing one another, forgiving one another.

One might ask, "Well, why should we do this?" Well, for those of us who've read the Bible much the reasons are obvious, but Paul keeps repeating them, and the first reason that he suggests for doing this of the two that he seems to give here is, are you ready for this? Divine election, did you notice that verse 12? "Put on therefore as the elect of God, holy and beloved." What a magnificent thing that is. You see the apostle says if you are one of his elect ones, this is the kind of life that should characterize the elect. People who say, I am one of the elect, but who live in a way contrary to the apostle's instructions and imperatives here, created a problem of creditability. So "Put on therefore as the elect of God, holy and beloved."

And incidentally, the word holy means simply set apart for God as the elect are, but the word beloved is one of Paul's, he does this more than one, and do you know where he got it? He got it from Moses. He got it from Moses in passages like Deuteronomy chapter 7 in which Moses says, "The reason God choose Israel was because he loved them." And the reason God has chosen believers in the Lord Jesus Christ is the

same reason. He has loved them, lying back of divine election is divine love. There is no reason within us for God's love for us. The Bible teaches very plainly there is not one thing in us, which we could say, is the reason that God loved us in sovereign unconditional love. He has set his love upon us, and he has chosen us, and set us apart for him, and in the light of that Paul says, in the light of that gracious, divine initiative in our salvation, we should live accordingly.

Now, I think that that's a marvelous reason for pleasing the Lord. If we really have been loved and set apart in divine election, then characteristic of the individual who belongs to the Lord God and who has been chosen in sovereign grace is this kind of life. Bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness, meekness, long suffering, forbearing one another, forgiving one another. But Paul says there is one other reason. You might expect it. It's the mighty work of reconciliation and redemption, as in the earliest chapter of the book chapter 1 he had written in verse 21, "An you that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled, and then in chapter 2 in verse 13 through 15, he says, "And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;" And so divine forgiveness, his mighty work of divine reconciliation of bringing us into the relationship of peace with God and the forgiveness of sins, that too is another reason for divesting ourselves of the characteristics of the old man and reinvesting in the sense that we have been speaking about with these virtues that characterize the new man.

When you look at these two reasons, election and divine forgiveness, you immediately see that there should be a different spirit in Christians you know you can see in the work of the Lord characteristics that belong to the kind of family by which they came into the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. I've noticed this through the years. Converts of certain individuals bear family resemblance. If you see individuals who've been converted through the ministry of a man who believed in sovereign grace, well, they

have certain family characteristics, even within the whole family of God, just as in our natural life. Family characteristics, we say with reference to certain families. "I am not surprised that that young man in so and so. If you will look at his background, you will see why. His great grandfather, his grandfather, his father had certain characteristics, and they are being manifested in this young man today." There is such a thing as the importance of family backgrounds, providing that those backgrounds are the kinds that we can say the Scriptures would approve.

Now, in the case of new birth, you will find that individuals converted through certain individuals, have family characteristics. The man who led me to the Lord used to say, "My converts are born talking." And what he meant by that is many of them became preachers. It was remarkable. Many of them did become preachers. I am one of them, and all over this country, fifteen or twenty people that I know of and many others were converted through Dr. Barnhouse and became preachers, family characteristics I guess. I don't know whether people think that's good or bad. I think it's good, not for this except for my joy in preaching, but I think the idea of preaching the word of God is the greatest calling that a person could ever have.

Luther, when he had some of his conflicts with the other side of the reformations, the Calvinistic side, he had some conflicts with the Zwingilians and the Calvinists, of John Calvin's persuasion, and one of the most famous of the conflicts concerned the Lord's Supper and after the colloquy, at which Zwingli and Luther met and discussed the Lord's Supper, and could not agree over its significance, Luther made the comment, "Their people" I think he was speaking directly to them. He said, "Your people are of a different spirit."

Now, he was not suggesting they were not Christians, but he was just saying that there was a certain viewpoint, that the Lutherans had, the followers of Luther, that the followers of Zwingli did not have. In other words, they had certain characteristics that effectively made a difference between them right or wrong. We'll not talk about whether

right or wrong, but I think this is true, that there is a different spirit between individuals who believe in sovereign grace and who understand what is meant by sovereign grace, and those within the family of God who don't really understand sovereign grace. Let me describe them as the free willers. That is the free willers, and those who believe in sovereign grace are different in their spirit. I'm not suggesting that an individual who believes in free will is not a Christian. I don't think he understands grace as he should understand it, but often they will say, "I believe I am saved by sovereign grace, but I believe in free will." He doesn't understand that those two things are self-contradictory. He doesn't understand it yet.

Now, well all know that there will come a time when he will understand it, but he doesn't understand it yet, so there are the free willers over here within the family of God. Armenianism as way of looking at Christianity within the family of God, over here are those who believe in sovereign grace. That's a way of looking at salvation within the family of God. Those two groups have a different spirit, and you can sense it. Now, it's not, I say, doesn't mean they are not within the family of God, but just like in the human family there are family characteristics so there are family characteristics here.

Now, let me get to the point. The point is this. Those of us who are believers should have the spirit the Paul is talking about here when he sets the grounds for what we should wear as Christians, the spirit of gratitude because we have been divinely and sovereignly loved, elected and set apart, and forgiven of our trespasses. And when a person has come to understand that, and truly understands it, I will set before you a man who is characterized by diving thankfulness and gratitude. His life will be characterized by the gratefulness that one feels because God has set his hand upon us when there was nothing in us that could please him and has made us by his grace, pleasing to him.

When I went to Scotland, the first man I ever went to hear was John Bailey. I arrived in Edinburgh. I looked at the newspapers, and Dr. Bailey was speaking on Sunday. He was a great well-known theologian, so I got my family together, and we

went over to Morningside church where James Stewart had been the pastor for some years, to hear this great theologian. What kind of message did we hear that morning? The theme of his message was you ought to go to church. What let down, great theologian speaking to people who were in church telling them they ought to go to church, but Professor Bailey was a well-known and truly great 20th Century theologian. He once said, this on another occasion in his book *The Sense of the Presence of God*. He said, "A true Christian is a man who never for a moment forgets what God has done for him in Christ and whose whole comportment and whole activity have their root in the sentiment of gratitude. If he had said that in 1959 on that morning, he would have said, a great deal more than he said in the other twenty minutes of the message that morning, but that is true, the whole comportment of a Christian is characterized by gratitude for what Christ has done for him.

Well, now Paul talks specifically further in verse 15 and 16 about comportment, and he sets forth some commands, I will just mention two of them, "And let the peace of God rule in your hearts to the which also you are called in one body and be ye thankful." Avoiding the sins mentioned in verses 8 and 9 leads to peace in one body.

This text has often been used of divine guidance for an individual. I don't think that's really what Paul is talking about because he says, "Let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which you are called in one body." He is talking about the kind of peace that should characterize a congregation that to which we are called, and then in verse 16, he says, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." And again he's talking about the meetings of the local church. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs."

He's talking about the meetings of the early church. In the meetings of the early church there was freedom for the gifted men to exercise their gifts, and there was also

freedom for the priest of to exercise their office. He was talking about the things that Paul refers to in chapter 14 in the 26th verse of his first letter to the Corinthians. "How is then brethren when you come together everyone of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation, that all things be done unto edification." So he is saying in the midst of the meetings of the church there should be the abiding word.

Now, I think that's important. And further he says in the next phrase and clause, "In all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns." In other words, instructive singing and in singing that admonishes us should characterize the meetings of the church. Singing that is good singing, is not singing that is loud, not singing that is melodious, not singing that is pleasant to the ear, but good singing is the singing that is done with grace not style, that word doesn't mean that, but it's the kind of singing in which doctrine is set forth, and in which and through which we are admonished.

Now, I'm so thankful today. I was afraid that we'd have one of those hymns to sing this morning that doesn't teach us much of anything, but what Paul is talking about is avoiding the shallow, trivial, vapid, frivolling choruses and hymns that we often sing in evangelicalism, the kinds of things that don't teach us anything. Some of our hymns and some of our choruses, say the same thing over, and over and over again, as if it takes twenty five times for us to hear a line and understand it. Really we, I'm sorry, Mr. Prier and any other elders who may be present, but our hymn book is not the finest hymn book that we could have. There are some hymns within our book that are of the character that I'm talking about. In fact there are quite a few, and some of the great old hymns of the faith which really teach us the sound doctrine that we ought to be singing, and through which we should be instructing and admonishing one another, are not found in our book, and our singing should be as I say, doctrinal singing, teaching and admonishing on another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.

I don't know whether you have noticed this or not, but the Holy Spirit is mentioned I think one time in the epistle to the Colossians. That's striking, but this is one of the times in which he is referred to, spiritual songs, songs that the Spirit has given to us. As you well, know in Ephesians, in a similar context, the apostle says the same thing. We need to hear it twice, but in the other context he does it in the context of being filled with the Spirit. Today we tend to think that the spirit filled man is likely to be the fellow who speaks in tongues, believes in healing and carries on with gyrations in the meetings of the church. Well, the apostle, I think, gives us some instruction here that's important. In the same context he says, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly." To sum it up without belaboring the spirit filled Christian is the word filled Christian, and in everything that we do in our meetings, that it should be done with a view to instruction and admonishing and in the building up of the whole of the body in the peace that has been made for us the reconciling work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Why should we do this? Well, the apostle says, in verse 15 that we've been called to it in one body, and further he says, be thankful. Be thankful. So difficult to be thankful, isn't it? Well, thankful if that security in which you've invested has doubled in price over the past six or eight month, but can you be thankful if it has reduced in values, one hundred or fifty percent? That's difficult.

Matthew Henry was one of the great commentators, and two hundred years ago he was robbed. He was mugged and this is what he wrote in his diary. I like this. He says, "First of all," And by the way I should remind you that Paul in 1 Thessalonians says, "In every thing be thankful." Here he says, "Be thankful." There he says, "In everything." So I think it's fair to say Paul tells us we ought to be thankful about everything. That means, Martha, even if your car doesn't run, you should be thankful. It's my car. It's not hers that's not running. [Laughter]

But at any rate, I was admonishing myself then in the midst of my own sermon. "First of all," Mr. Henry said, "because I was never robbed before." Well, that's nice. I've

been mugged, but I've never been mugged before, so I am thankful. Second he says, "Because although he took my purse, he didn't take my life. I wasn't killed." And third, "Because although he took everything that I had, well, I didn't have much." [Laughter] And forth, "Because it was I who was robbed, and not I who robbed." Well, that's the way in which we should be thankful. Well, Paul of course is speaking about the fact that we should be thankful for the redemption that we have in Christ, but that extends to everything.

And finally, in the last verse, the apostle moves from these specifics to the general thing. The thing that in a sense in as broad as life as a whole, "And what's so ever ye do in word or deed." You know we can really do things in the word. "In word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus giving thanks to God and the Father by him." There is thanks again. Characteristically then from the specific to the general the apostle moves, and moves out to the whole wide arena of life, the whole of the outward life, is to be done under that authority, and under the approval of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Well, my Christian friends in Believer's Chapel and you who are visiting us, we who say that we are Christians we should dress the part. We should have a wardrobe of these virtues, and if these garments are put on after the others are put off, then the result will be the kind of new man that will bring glory to the Lord Jesus Christ. In fact, it will make a man in the image of him who is the image of the invisible God, and you know we may have the experience of having people say with reference to us, that his life reflects our Lord Jesus Christ.

There's a marvelous little story that Jerome K. Jerome tells in his book, and I think the name of his book is something like The Passing of the Third Floor Back. It's the story of a lodging house or a rooming house, and the people are just the average kinds of people that you might find in a third class rooming house. And in this particular house there was a young girl who was really nothing but a slut, and she was available for all of the men in the rooming house for just some trinket, so Mr. Jerome said, One day there

came man to this particular flat, and he was given the place in the building that was called the third floor back, and he was different from everybody in that building. He was friendly. He was full of compassion. He had all of the virtues that one might think of in thinking of the Lord Jesus Christ.

He treated this girl with kindness and consideration. She had never been treated that way in her whole life, and she began to respond to him, and finally, he was a much older man, she really almost worshipped the man, and others in the building too, noticed how kind a gentle he was in all of his dealings with the people, but there came the day when he was to leave the third floor back. He got his few belongings together. He went down to the front of the building as he was getting ready to leave, and the little girl or the young lady was there, and she was very much upset that he was leaving of course, but at the time for his departure, she went up to him, and she said, in her dialect of a low class English girl. She said, "Please sir, are you em?" And what she meant by that was, is it perchance that you are really the Lord, because everything in his life reminded her of what she thought the Lord Jesus Christ might be. So I say to you put on the clothes that characterize Jesus Christ. May that be your testimony?

If you are here today, and you've never believed in our Lord Jesus Christ, we remind you that you cannot put on these clothes. They belong to the one who is believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. They belong to those who know what it is to have received sovereign grace, to have been called by the Holy Spirit in grace, to have been in God's marvelous sovereign activity forgiven, through the blood of the cross. I remind you of what Christ has done. How he has offered the atoning sacrifice for sinners, and if God in his grace has brought you to the knowledge of himself you may, because he died for sinners, acknowledge your lost condition and receive in grace the forgiveness of sins for which Christ has died. May God in his wonderful grace touch your heart, and may you come to Christ belonging in him and put on the clothes that characterize one who has been beloved, set apart, and divinely chosen. Let's stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful for these words from the apostle for they're very meaningful for us. We desire, Lord, to be submissive. May by Thy grace we be enabled to be so submissive that others may truly see in us something of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ? For those who may be here without him, Lord, we pray that Thy hand may be upon them for their own spiritual good. May they come to Christ and receive forgiveness of sins. For Jesus' sake. Amen.