

Colossians 3:12-17

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You are 14 years old today. Regardless of your life circumstances, this morning you're 14 years old and you're a girl and you're sleeping and dreaming of the coming school year, but the dream has turned into a nightmare because of your threadbare, stained, old clothes. You can hear the comments even while you dream and sleep of some whispered and some spoken right out loud about your threadbare, hand-me-down, worn out outfits. You have old clothes, probably something navy but not Old Navy clothes. You have shirts with holes and gaps in them, but no shirts from The Gap. While envisioning the worst about the first day of school, you wake up and remember, "I've been adopted." Your life is different.

You enjoy a hot shower. The house where you live now doesn't have its gas and water turned off. And still worrying about clothes for school, you come in and see that your room is filled with new clothes. Everything is there. Whole outfits and accessories: sweaters and scarves and belts and purses and cute shoes that match the purses, not to speak of the necklaces and the bracelets. Well, you're absolutely overwhelmed at the sight and just then, your adoptive mother comes in and you ask, "Where did all these come from?" and she says, "Well, dad, your adoptive father paid for a whole new wardrobe for you. He wants you to look like you belong to this family now." And without really thinking, you stutter, "Well, what do I do?" "Well, put them on, dear. Be thankful and put them on." So we too must put on new clothing that is appropriate for our new adopted status as the sons of God. Every piece of clothing that we're commanded to put on has been purchased for us by our Lord Jesus Christ and we must be thankful and put them on.

Last week, we thought together about keeping our minds in heaven; what we are to kill and what we are to cast off. This morning, we'll look at Colossians 3:12-17 where the Apostle Paul builds on the prior section by giving us the positive side, what we are to put on. Since we have put on the new self, there must be new clothes to put on as well. God has called us into a community of faith and there are new behaviors and ways of relating to one another that we must put on, but it's more than skin deep. We must adopt new attitudes and feelings on the inside that work their way out in the context of our interaction with one another. Well, today we'll consider that our Lord Jesus Christ has

clothed us with his righteousness and invites us to put on his godly character, expressing and internalizing the grace that we have received.

Please stand and read along with me as I read to you Colossians 3:12-17.

12 Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, 13 bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. 14 And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. 15 And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. 17 And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Thank you. You may be seated.

So we'll consider first: grace received. Just the very first few words of Colossians 3:12, "Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved." Now, first, we see, "put on." We know that everything God commands us to do, in this case everything God commands us to put on, has been paid for already and there is, again, a purposeful tension in these verses with what we looked at last week. There Paul said that we're not to lie to one another. He said, "Seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its Creator." So you may ask, "Well, if we've already put it on, what else is there to put on?" You have put on the new self, you must now put on godly characteristics. We must become in practice what we are in position before the Lord.

Consider then, next, put on then "as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved." It is not putting on as those who are trying to earn their salvation. It's not as those who are trying to impress God with their conduct as a Christian. It is not as those who are trying to keep their salvation saying, "Well, I was saved by grace but I keep my standing before God based on my own effort." It is not true. The only way that we can put on the righteous clothing that God commands us to put on is to understand that we have been chosen of God, holy and beloved. It is all of grace.

Now, these terms, "chosen, holy and beloved," have been used of Israel in the Old Testament and applying them to us highlights our adopted status. In Romans 11, Paul describes it as being "grafted into the tree of faithful believers." Peter explains, "You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." And speaking particularly of us as Gentiles, he says, "Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people. Once you had not received mercy, now you have received mercy." Praise God for that.

"As God's chosen ones." The word "chosen" means "elect." In the Greek it's eklektos, from which, of course, we get our word "elect." God did the choosing and you must settle in your mind that God chose you solely for his glory and not on the basis of anything about you. Considering Israel, God said, "The Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples that are on the face of the earth. It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the Lord set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all people, but it is because the Lord loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your forefathers." For his own glory, God chose. He told Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy. I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." It's not on the basis of anything about you and I'm sorry that's not a self-esteem friendly message, but God chose you for his own purposes, for his glory.

It's also not on the basis of our future. God did not choose us because he could see that in your future we would choose him, but rather God changed our future by choosing us. This must be a settled conviction in your mind. Romans 8:28 tells us that we were "called according to his purpose." 1 Timothy 1, he tells us that God "saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began." You weren't alive. You didn't do anything; you didn't influence anything. You weren't pretty enough, smart enough, whatever. God chose you on the basis of his own glory for his purposes. You may recall the story that Paul relates of the twins, Isaac and Jacob, and they were in the womb and it says before they were born and before they had done anything good or bad, God made a choice. It's not on the basis of who you are. It's not on the basis of who you would become. It is solely for his glory.

So, put on then, as God's chosen ones, "holy." This means "set apart." Someone said to me this week, "I don't feel holy," and the truth is God has declared you holy. He has set you apart for his purposes. We have been declared righteous and we are becoming righteous. In this letter, Paul addressed it, "To the saints and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae." "The saints" simply means "the holy ones." We are holy ones by God's decree, not by human effort.

Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy "and beloved." "In this is love not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." The love was initiated by the Lord. Beloved because he first loved us and has shown us what true love is. All three of these qualities, chosen, holy, beloved, tie together in Ephesians 1. Paul says there, "he chose us in him," in the Lord Jesus, "before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace." And amen. That is to the praise of his glorious grace.

So I must ask you: are you in this group? Do you know for certain that you have been chosen of God? Designated as holy? That the Lord has set his love upon you? Are you

trying to earn God's favor? Or are you simply basking in the glory of God's choosing you? Your salvation must be based on God's choosing and not your trying.

Well, then we're ready with that foundation of putting on as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, we're ready then for grace expressed, our second section. Colossians 3, the rest of verse 12 through 14. What are we putting on? He says here putting on "compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony." We'll see a pattern in this list, particularly at the beginning, of an inner attitude that is expressed outwardly. If you look, you'll notice that compassionate hearts show kindness. Humble people are meek, deferring to one another. Patient people bear with one another's quirks and forgive one another's sins.

So let's take a little deeper look at each of these. First, compassionate hearts and, quite literally, intestines of mercy. Now, maybe the 14 year old boys will like that part. Alright, there was an ancient worldview that considered emotions as being sort of seated in the gut and they felt that way because, of course, sometimes you experience emotions physiologically. So what God is saying here is that we must intensely, genuinely feel compassion for one another. Since we don't typically talk about our intestines in this way, the ESV has rendered it "compassionate hearts." So you understand this is a heartfelt, deep feeling of compassion.

Normally as we study the Scriptures, we'll talk through the text of the Scripture, the theology behind the Scripture, and then spend some time making application to one another and sometimes for the preacher, that's the most difficult part of the job, is taking the time to carefully think through what are the applications. Well, in the text before us, it's almost like cheating. The application is the text and so we're going to just turn it a little bit on its head. Since the application is on the surface, we'll also consider how each of these qualities in the list that begins in verse 12, how each of those qualities is a reflection of our God himself and of our Lord Jesus Christ.

So considering compassionate hearts, Matthew tells us of Jesus that when he saw the crowds, he felt compassion for them, and you know that sometimes he directed even his disciples to help people because of the compassion that he felt. God himself, Luke tells us from Jesus, is kind to ungrateful and evil men. You remember that he sends rain on the just and the unjust. God himself is kind to the ungrateful and evil. Jesus said, "Be merciful even as your Father is merciful." So you need to understand in considering putting on a heart of compassion that this is something that is reflective of God the Father himself and the Lord Jesus Christ. The good Samaritan, as you recall, saw the man who had been robbed and was hurt, was bleeding, and it says he had compassion on him. But it doesn't say he had compassion on him, felt deep sympathy for him and then went on his way, but rather his compassion led to action. He cared for him: he took him to the inn; provided for him.

So compassion leads to the next item in our list: kindness. And of God, we're reminded in Romans 2, God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance. Isn't that great? It's not that God the Father is carrying a big stick and hovering it over your head, but rather his kindness, his heart of kindness is leading you to repentance. That's what it should be doing. Don't spurn his kindness. Paul reminds us in Titus 3 that when the goodness and lovingkindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us not because of works done by us in righteousness but according to his own mercy.

So we see there goodness, kindness, mercy, all qualities of God and we're to put them on. Put on compassionate hearts leading to kindness. That's compassion expressed in kindness. Next is: humility, a right view of ourselves. Remember that the Apostle Paul said in Romans 12, "I urge everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think but to think with sober judgment." When we're humble, we have a right view of ourselves before God.

Humility was not a valued quality in the ancient world, in fact, even finding vocabulary words to describe this biblical concept was difficult for the New Testament authors because humility in the ancient world was totally devalued. Nobody wanted to be humble. What's the point in that? But God calls us to be humble and consider how our Lord Jesus himself has modeled this. He calls us to be like himself. Philippians 2, "in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus," then it begins to describe what I've sometimes called the great stair step down. He was in heaven enjoying glory and honor as being part of the eternal Godhead, the Trinity, and yet he set that aside in order to come down to earth and down as a man. And finally it says, "he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." That's the example of our Lord Jesus and he calls us to be like him. 1 Peter 5 says, "Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another," continuing our clothing analogy. "Clothe yourselves, with humility toward one another, for 'God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.' Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you."

Perhaps you noticed that in the last couple of Scripture readings it mentioned that Jesus humbled himself. Peter in 1 Peter 5 commands us to humble ourselves. You may typically think, "Well, if I'm to be humble, God will send some adverse circumstance into my life and that will humiliate me, causing me to be humble." And yet the Scriptures direct us to humble ourselves. In fact, Peter says, "Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God," so what does that look like? You humble yourself under the mighty hand of God by acknowledging that you are under his mighty hand and God's mighty hand is big enough to encompass all of us and everyone in the whole world. We humble ourselves by acknowledging before God who we really are. You may be tempted to believe that God is honored to have you on his team but, quite frankly, God is able to run the universe quite nicely without you. We are a tiny speck and yet, remember, by grace he has called us to himself. He has chosen us to be holy and beloved. He set his love upon us but we should have a right view of who we are in his kingdom.

Humility will express itself in meekness. Obviously, humility doesn't speak very much for himself. You can't ever hear someone say, "I'm just really pleased with how humble I have become." That just doesn't work, right? Humility expresses itself the way you would know that your wife, your husband, your pal at work, whatever, how you would know that that person is humble is expressed in meekness or sometimes translated gentleness. This is a fruit of the Spirit. It's not weakness. Perhaps you've heard before, "Meekness is power under control." A willingness to suffer pain rather than cause pain. That attitude is the sign of someone who is humble.

It's not correlated to your earthly circumstances. We sometimes say someone came from a humble background, meaning they grew up in a shack or something, but that's not biblical humility. Biblical humility is having a low view of ourselves, an exalted view of God, and a willingness to serve and be kind and gentle with one another. The Lord Jesus was this way. Matthew 11:29, he said, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." The Lord Jesus was meek, certainly power under control, a willingness to suffer pain. He took our sins in his body on the cross that he might bring us to God.

Jesus also told us in the Sermon on the Mount, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." Well, have you wondered, "Why do the meek inherit the earth?" Is that because they were meek and so they earned the earth by being meek? Or is it rather that those who are meek show evidence of their humility? Their proper understanding of themselves before a holy God and so that's evidence that they're saved? The meek will inherit the earth.

So Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, "and patience." Phew, finally we made it to "patience." You know, I'd like to be more patient, as long as it doesn't require waiting, and perhaps you've dared to pray a prayer, "God, make me more patient," without realizing what you were really asking for. We all like the fruit of patience but we don't want to wait around for it. God himself is patient. It seems like, "Well, wait a minute, God is all powerful, he is holy, he does his will in the whole universe, why would God ever have to wait? Why doesn't he just do what he wants instantly all the time?" Yet the Scriptures tell us that God himself is patient.

Paul says, "What if God desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power," all holy and righteous things for God to do, "what if God who wanted to show his wrath and make known his power has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction in order to make know the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy which he has prepared beforehand for glory?" Now, let's start at the end of that, "prepared beforehand for glory," who is that talking about? Those vessels of mercy? That's you. That's those who have trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ. And so God exercises patience because he has a bigger goal in mind. His ultimate goal is to demonstrate in you as a vessel of mercy, his infinite patience and so he's willing to endure sinners and their wrath against him.

Paul in his own testimony, 1 Timothy, said, "I received mercy for this reason, that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who are to believe in him for eternal life." Paul said, "I am the poster child, as it were, for God's patience." God waited while Paul grew. While Paul became proud, while Paul persecuted the church, God was patient in order to make him an example. You perhaps have heard that expression, "We're going to make an example out of you," and that's what God did with Paul. He made him an example but not of shame, but of his own patience.

Well, patience, again, is an inner attitude. It's hard to look at someone unless they have a funny look on their face and know whether they're patient or not. Patience expresses itself in two different ways. If you'll look at the text, you'll notice "bear with one another and forgiving one another." So when do you do which one? There are certain occasions when you need to bear with one another and other occasions when you must forgive one another. Sometimes we don't even agree. "Bearing with" calls us to "be patient with other's quirks," sometimes called silliness. Idiosyncrasies or what I prefer to call idiot-synocracies. So every once in a while I will simply mention to my family that I have a particular idiot-synocracy and I think that's a good way to think of it. But those funny little things. They're not really sin and yet they might really bug you, and what's your response? You're to patiently bear with one another when that comes up. There is an old, a little bit sarcastic poem you may have heard,

"To live above with the saints we love,
Ah, that would be glory.
But to live below with the saints we know,
That's quite a different story."

You know, I was thinking this week that none of the believers in Montana bug me at all and the entire country of New Zealand, there's nobody there that irritates me. It's amazing. I mean, that must be quite a place. We should go visit. There is nobody in the entire country that is irritating to me. Well, obviously, we're only irritated by the people we are close to and so in our calling as saints and particularly as we are gathered in local assemblies, it's not the people that you see once a year at the conference that you need to bear with, it's the people you live with. It's the people you see every week as we work together, pray together for God's glory and God's kingdom.

Now, it mentions here we are bearing with one another and if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other. Now, this idea of a complaint is not just whining, no, this is a legitimate case of sin. Hopefully, you don't have any recent experience with this but if you remember seeing a traffic ticket, it will say somewhere on the form "Official Complaint." That's legal language, a complaint of the officer against you. Now, he's not saying he doesn't like your hair today, he's saying, "I have an official, genuine, legal case against you. You ran that red light. You went too fast, whatever." So if one has a complaint and you might think of it, if anyone has a legitimate case, then we move into forgiving and the way we are to forgive is as the Lord has forgiven us. "As the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive."

I thought a little bit about this and three things came to mind. How the Lord forgave us: the Lord forgave us freely. He was under no obligation to forgive us at all. It wasn't that we were somehow deserving of forgiveness, God forgave us freely. He forgave us fully. Earlier in this letter, chapter 2, it says that Jesus Christ has forgiven us all our trespasses. He has forgiven us fully, all of our sins. And he has forgiven us greatly, more than we will ever need to forgive one another.

You may recall the story of the king who settled accounts with his servants and one of the servants was brought to the king and he owed this huge sum of money that could not possibly be repaid ever in his whole lifetime, and the king, as you recall, forgave him the debt. Wow. Forgiven much. And yet, that same servant went out and found someone who owed him a very small debt and he was impatient and unwilling to forgive and the other servants, it says, found out about this situation and they brought it back to the king and the king said, "You wicked servant. I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me and should you not have had mercy on your fellow servant as I had mercy on you?"

So we are to forgive as the Lord has forgiven us: freely, fully, greatly. Unforgiveness, if I may echo a little bit from last week, is another anti-Gospel. Unforgiveness, in some sense, is a rejection of the possibility of being forgiven. It's as though you were saying if you were an unforgiving person, "I don't think anybody can ever be forgiven. I can't be forgiven so I'm not going to forgive anybody else either." Forgiveness, on the other hand, is a picture of the Gospel and I think this explains the conditional language from Jesus about forgiveness.

You may recall reading in the Gospels sometimes these somewhat unsettling, unnerving passages where Jesus says something to the effect, "If you do not forgive others, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you." And sometimes we get a little nervous about those passages and think, "Wow, I'm going to lose my salvation unless I forgive everybody. Did I forgive everybody? Am I in trouble here?" But I think the way we need to understand that is if you have an unforgiving heart, it's evidence that you are not saved, that you don't really understand that you have been fully forgiven, freely forgiven, greatly forgiven. On the other hand, if you have a forgiving spirit, it gives evidence that you understand forgiveness. You understand you have been freely forgiven, fully forgiven, greatly forgiven.

This word for "forgiveness" has a root of the same word, "charis," that we normally translate "grace." So we're showing grace to one another as we forgive one another. And just in the construction of the Greek text, I think this is very helpful, you can think of it as forgiving yourselves because when you think about it, we are us so as we forgive one another, we are really forgiving ourselves. We're all in one body. We're forgiving ourselves when we forgive one another. Tying these together, Ephesians 4 it says, "Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another as God in Christ forgave you."

So those are the things we're to put on and yet the list goes on. It's like, "Well, here's the purse; here's the sweater; here's the belt; here's all the other things coming in. Above all

these put on love." Now, where does that come from? God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 4, "Now concerning brotherly love you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another." God demonstrated love to us. God is teaching us through his Holy Spirit how to love one another.

And it mentions that love binds everything together and the "binding" word there is the exact same word that we saw in chapter 2 when we talked about the whole body nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, the connecting tissues. Same word here for love "binds" everything together. So love is like the tendons and the connecting tissues in the body of Christ. It's both, in one sense, an overcoat and at the same time an inner attitude and that nicely transitions us to our third section: grace internalized.

So we'll look here at Colossians 3:15 through 17. You'll notice that the list changes a little bit here. Starting in verse 15, "And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."

Well, first note the inward focus. The peace of Christ is to rule in your hearts. The word of Christ is to dwell in you richly. We are to be singing with thankfulness in our hearts. And note also there is an emphasis on thanksgiving. Verse 15, "be thankful." Verse 16, "with thankfulness in your hearts." Verse 17, "giving thanks." I'm seeing a theme here. I think there's a pattern. I think thankfulness is pretty important. Thankfulness is a basic response to God. You remember in Romans 1 that part of the problem with fallen humanity is they did not honor him as God or give thanks. The opposite is a righteous response to God's grace. 2 Corinthians 4 says, "as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God." We should become more and more thankful people.

So in this section we see, first of all, "let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts," and we have this word "rule," very similar to the word we looked at a couple of times ago, with the idea of "umpiring." So there in chapter 2, the idea was an umpire calling you out, saying, "You're out of bounds. You don't qualify." Here, it's used in a positive sense, "Let the peace of Christ be the ruling umpire in your hearts."

Jesus himself is the originator of peace. "Peace I give to you. My peace I leave with you," he said, and in our letter to Colossians in chapter 1, verse 20, it says of Jesus the he "reconciled to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross." And we are called to this. "Let us pursue what makes for peace and mutual up-building," Paul tells us in Romans 14.

"And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called," God has called us to this, "in one body." Both the universal body of Christ and in this one local body. Peace and I'm so glad that we enjoy a very high measure of peace in our lives together.

"And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly," let it be at home in you richly, abundantly. Well, what does that look like? Just a couple of verses from Psalm 119, as you recall, extolling the value of the word of God. Psalm 119:11, "I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you." It's a treasure. Let it dwell in you, at home in you richly. Psalm 119:97, "Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day." So as the word of Christ dwells in you richly, it's on your mind. It's not in a forgotten corner, "Oh, that's that guest room where we never go." No, it's front and center. It's like it's in the kitchen because it's used all the time. The word of God is in you and blessing you. Let it dwell in you richly.

Then he says, "teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom," and it's interesting that the Apostle Paul earlier in this letter described himself the exact same way that he's commanding us to be. Paul said that he "proclaimed Christ," warning, that's the same word as admonishing here, "warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom that we may present everyone mature in Christ." So we see here that Paul is calling us to imitate himself in this sense. We are to be teaching and admonishing one another.

We may be a little more familiar with teaching than admonishing. To admonish someone is to warn them. Literally it means to put into the mind. Now, if you have teenage children, sorry to the teenagers here, you may sometimes wonder, "What were you thinking?" and the truthful answer is, "Uh, I wasn't thinking. There was nothing in my mind." Well, to warn someone is to put some wisdom into their mind so every once in a while, we need to help one another in this way. We need to warn; we need to admonish one another; we need to put wisdom into one another's mind. We need to help one another learn to think biblically.

And beautifully he says, "teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom," then, "singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God." I read pages and pages and paragraphs and paragraphs of various authors trying to distinguish psalms, hymns and spiritual songs and my conclusion after all that study is: there's a variety of songs that we use to worship God and we shouldn't get too hung up on one kind or another. If you think about even the songs that we sing together in our assembly, we sing some songs that are declarations of our belief. They're sort of convictional songs, this is what we believe. There are certain songs that we sing that are prayers to God and sometimes even when I introduce them I'll mention, "Let's sing this prayer or let's pray as we sing," because the nature of the song is directed to the Lord and it's a prayer, really, set to music. Other songs are songs of testimony where we declare what God has done for us and that sense of variety, I think, is what Paul is getting at or at least what we can understand of what he intended psalms, hymns and spiritual songs.

But it's interesting in its position right next to teaching and admonishing one another. Even our singing is a way that we teach and admonish one another. Our public singing helps one another. We're teaching and admonishing one another as we do that and yet at the same time, we're singing with thankfulness in our hearts to God. It's directed to the Lord. It's as though perhaps you've heard, there's an audience of one.

And he ties up this passage saying, "whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." As I've thought about "word and deed," these two major classifications of our behavior, I'm reminded of 1 Peter 4 in discussing spiritual gifts. I think he has good insight here. He says, "whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies -in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever." Whoever speaks, whoever serves, whatever you do in word or in deed and finally in the name of the Lord Jesus, in his authority, consistent with his character and his will. And as I think about in the name of the Lord Jesus, I think not just of a little phrase we tack onto the end of our prayers to make sure, "Okay, this is the postage stamp. Make sure it gets delivered all the way to heaven," but rather in the name of our Lord Jesus is, again, consistent with his character and his will, his desires.

Several of us work for large corporations and it would not be unusual to be sent, in a sense, on a mission to accomplish something and so you might say, "I have come at the direction of Vice President So-and-so in order to accomplish this project and I need your help." Now imagine in the corporate world if someone said, "Yes, I've come. The President of the corporation asked me to come and you need to make available this and that and the other thing." Well, what if it turned out, no, the President really didn't send you? You'd be in big trouble because you said you were coming in his name, in his authority, and you really weren't.

So just in the same way that in a major corporation you might be very careful about how you approach something and made sure if you were doing it in the name of one of the executives, that it really was consistent with their will and their desires. We should similarly be very careful about what we do, what we say, what we bring up before the Lord in prayer. It's very sobering to think of, is everything we do or say, is it consistent with our Lord Jesus and his character, his desires, his will?

Well, last week we ended with "Christ is all and in all," and this time in a very similar way, we've seen, "do whatever you do in a way that reflects the character and will of the Lord Jesus Christ." And perhaps Keith Getty and Stuart Townend were thinking of this passage when they wrote the modern hymn, or maybe it's a spiritual song, "Speak O Lord." It's a wonderful corollary to what we've seen today in Colossians 3:12-17. Just this little part, "Take your truth, plant it deep in us." That's grace internalized.

"Take Your truth, plant it deep in us;
Shape and fashion us in Your likeness,

That the light of Christ might be seen today
In our acts of love and our deeds of faith."

That reflects grace that has been received, expressed to others and internalized. Whatever you do in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

So as we consider this passage, are you still wearing the stained and ruined clothes from your past? Our Lord Jesus has clothed us with his righteousness and invites us to put on his godly character. He has purchased every article of clothing with his own blood. Will you put them on?

Let's pray.