

How To Live As Reflections of Christ In a Cold, Cruel & Harsh World

Colossians 3:12-14 & Isaiah 58:8-12

Today, sitting here: we are gathered as the Body of Christ. So the first truth for us to consider today is this:

WE ARE THE BODY OF CHRIST

The Body of Christ: that is what we are called, and that is what we are by God's grace to be.

We are to represent Christ alive in us, as we are living, and going through life in the world. That is what it means that our body is the temple of God. He lives in us; and He wants to radiate out of us in our words, attitudes, and actions.

God wants to empower us as we talk, as we live, as we think, and as we act. God wants to flow out of us, and into this sin-sickened and sin-darkened world. That is a description of what we read about in the New Testament. People living Christ in a Christ-less world.

We were saved to spend the rest of our lives being the only reflection of Christ most people will ever get to see. There are people in our life that we will become the closest thing to Jesus Christ they will ever see.

Wow, that is a big thought. That leads us to the second truth we need to consider:

LIVING A CHRIST-REFLECTING LIFE IS POSSIBLE

We were tasked by God, with living a Christ-reflecting life, no matter what the world, the society, or the cultural norms around us may be. That call to reflect God in our lives has always been the same for every believer from the Garden of Eden onward.

Joseph did in Egypt. Way back in 4,000 years ago in mighty, pyramid building Egypt, a lowly, sold-into-slavery, all alone and away from his family young man named Joseph—lived reflecting God in such a way that Pharaoh and others said that the Spirit of the God was in him. Listen to Gen. 41:38:

Genesis 41:38 (NKJV) And Pharaoh said to his servants, "Can we find *such a one* as this, a man in whom *is* the Spirit of God?"

Daniel did in Babylon. The same was said of the man Daniel, who lived in such a way that 2,500 years ago, as a prisoner of war, carried away captive by the army that slaughtered his people and destroyed his nation—he stood reflecting God before the King of Babylon. Listen to Daniel 5:14:

Daniel 5:14 (NKJV) I have heard of you, that the Spirit of God *is* in you, and *that* light and understanding and excellent wisdom are found in you.

That leads us to our first text in Colossians 3:12-14. The next truth we will see is this:

WE CAN REFLECT CHRIST IN HARSH SURROUNDINGS

When we reflect Christ in any way, it is a proof of the grace of God. Only God can make us fallen, frail sinners to be a reflection of His glorious power. So it is all God's work to make us reflectors, but it is our choice to want Him to be seen in us.

If Christ is not seen in our life, by people around us, it is because we don't want Him to be; not because God is unable to shine through us. We must want to reflect Him. We must ask to be reflections of His grace and power. That is what Paul explained to the Colossians. Please stand with me and listen to God speaking through Paul to these early believers, and to each of us today:

Open there with me to Colossians 3:12-17 (NKJV)

¹² Therefore, as *the* elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; ¹³ bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also *must do*. ¹⁴ But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. ¹⁵ And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. ¹⁶ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. ¹⁷ And whatever you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

Pray

HOW TO LIVE AS REFLECTIONS OF CHRIST IN A COLD, CRUEL & HARSH WORLD

The world of the New Testament was a hard world.

Roman culture was not known for gentleness. Romans delighted in power, in might, and in crushing defeats of their enemies. If you live long enough in a harsh, cold, cruel world, slowly that hardness rubs off.

Each of us today is either becoming more and more a reflection of our cold cruel culture, or more and more a reflection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Who did you reflect most clearly this past week?

Did you reflect Christ in your attitudes?

Did you reflect Christ in your words?

Did you reflect Christ in your compassion for the poor, needy, outcast, and hungry, or the harsh culture around us?

Evil company corrupts good manners as Paul said in 1 Cor. 15:33, quoting a Greek poet. The good manners of compassion, prompted by Christ can get worn away, forgotten, and soon all too absent.

That's why to the city smack-dab in the middle of the epicenter of Roman culture, Paul writes these words about compassion.

COMPASSION COMES BY PUTTING ON CHRIST

Compassion comes by embracing Christ's desires for us. Paul calls this "putting on Christ". We want what God wants so much that we ask for Him to change us. Jesus Christ in me is compassionate, whenever I allow Him to live instead of me.

Remember this Spring when we studied the Spirit of God? Surrendering to God's Spirit is much like driving a car. When we are the driver, if we want a new driver we steer to the edge. Stop and put the car in park.

Then we take out the keys, get out, walk around to the passenger side and allow another driver to sit behind the wheel. Then as we hand over the keys and seat belt in, we are being driven by another. In the life of a believer that Another is the spirit of God. When He is allowed to drive He displays or reflects Christ.

Now back to the world of Colossians 3. One professor back at Dallas Seminary used to describe the 1st Century this way—

*"Taxes were high; wages were low, hypocrisy was rampant; honesty was rare. Freedom was gone; Roman rule was hard. The rich were getting richer; the poor were always struggling. Morality was ebbing; rebellion was brewing; cruelty was reigning."*¹

To the Romans of Colosse Paul exhorted them to "put on Christ" in some very powerful ways. One way to live out the truths of Col. 3:12-14 is what we see in Isaiah 58. God there explains how we should:

SEEK TO DISPLAY CHRIST'S LOVE FOR THE POOR, NEEDY, OUTCAST & AFFLICTED IN SOCIETY AROUND US.

Isaiah 58:10 If you extend your soul to the hungry and satisfy the afflicted soul,

We are to notice and respond to the needy that God has placed in our path. It was those who walked along the same road with the Good Samaritan that Jesus condoned. Not everyone was responsible for the man beaten and left for dead along the road. Just those who traveled that road.

We are responsible to have love and compassion for those who God places along the road of our lives. Remember that our love and compassion is contagious?

It is Christ in me the hope of glory, that is what God has planned, designed, and desired

¹ Author unknown.

from us. Listen to what Paul says in:

Colossians 1:27 (NKJV) To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

COMPASSIONATE PEOPLE JUST REFLECT CHRIST'S COMPASSION

In this sin-parched world, we are overflowing with Spirit of God generated streams of living water.

In this sin-darkened world, we are reflecting the Light of the World who lives in us.

In this sin-cursed and starving world, we are sharing the Bread of Life who lives in us.

In this sin-enslaved world we know the Truth who lives within us, and can point people to how He can set them free.

In this sin-blinded world we have had our sight restored by the touch of Jesus and we want all we meet to also feel His touch and have their eyes opened as they are turned from darkness to light.

That is the abundant life with which:

GOD PROMISES TO BLESS HIS FOLLOWERS

Isaiah next lists of the ten blessings God pours out through His Spirit into the lives of those who follow Him, love Him, and serve Him.

Each of these blessings are just reflections of Christ living in us, shing through us, and flowing out of us. It isn't us. It is never about us.

Isaiah 58:8a Then your light shall break forth like the morning. 10b Then your light shall dawn in the darkness, And your darkness shall be as the noonday.

We can call this the **Enlightened Living** that Jesus spoke of when He promised in the Gospels to all that follow Him, that they would "not walk in darkness...but have the light of life".

Are we reflecting what Jesus promised in John 8:12 (NKJV): Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."

Isaiah 58:8b Your healing shall spring forth speedily.

We can call this the **Strengthened Living** that Jesus spoke of when He promised in the Gospels to all that follow Him, that they would like Him "have food to eat ye know not of..."

Are we reflecting what Jesus promised in John 4:32 (NKJV): But He said to them, "I have food to eat of which you do not know."

Isaiah 58:8c And your righteousness shall go before you.

We can call this the **Holy Living** that Jesus spoke of when He promised in the Gospels to all that follow Him, that they would "hunger and thirst after righteousness."

Are we reflecting what Jesus promised in Mt. 5:6 (NKJV): Blessed *are* those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled.

Isaiah 58:8d The glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard.

We can call this the **Secured Living** that Jesus spoke of when He promised in the Gospels to all that follow Him, that they would know that "Lo I am with you always..."

Are we reflecting what Jesus promised in Mt. 28:20 (NKJV): teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age." Amen.

Isaiah 58:9 Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; You shall cry, and He will say, 'Here I am.'

We can call this the **Godward Living** that Jesus spoke of when He promised in the Gospels to all that follow Him, that they would find that "whatever you ask...I will do it."

Are we reflecting what Jesus promised in John 15:16 (NKJV): You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and *that* your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.

Isaiah 58:11a The Lord will guide you continually.

We can call this the **Confident Living** that Jesus spoke of when He promised in the Gospels to all that follow Him, that they would have "My peace I give unto you..."

Are we reflecting what Jesus promised in John 14:27 (NKJV): Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

Isaiah 58:11b And satisfy your soul in drought.

We can call this the **Satisfied Living** that Jesus spoke of when He promised in the Gospels to all that follow Him, that they would have "Life, and live more abundant..."

Are we reflecting what Jesus promised in John 10:10 (NKJV): The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have *it* more abundantly.

Isaiah 58:11c And strengthen your bones; You shall be like a watered garden, And like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail.

We can call this the **Renewed Living** that Jesus spoke of when He promised in the Gospels to all that follow Him, that they would have "never thirst...out of him flow rivers of living water..."

Are we reflecting what Jesus promised in John 6:35 (NKJV): And Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst. **John 7:37-38 (NKJV):** On the last day, that great *day* of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. ³⁸ He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water."

PUTTING ON CHRIST ALLOWS HIM TO BE SEEN

Each of these blessings are just reflections of Christ living in us, shining through us, and flowing out of us.

It isn't us. It is never about us.

Is Christ reflecting His LOVE through you?

In the Old Testament is Christ concealed; and in the New Testament is Christ revealed.

HOW'S YOUR REFLECTION OF GOD TODAY?