

Responsible Living in a Reluctant World # 11

Colossians 3: 12-17

The world we inhabit today is much different than it was just a few short years ago. We have entered a technological age with vast amounts of information at our fingertips. Adolescents and young adults alike are accustomed to seeking answers and solutions to questions and difficulties from multiple sources. Many believe the solution to every situation imaginable is available on the internet. They like to see facts, figures, graphs, and supposedly reliable information. Very little today is accepted by faith alone.

Although the sources of information were much different, Paul's day possessed many similarities to our day. He lived among a people who sought answers and expected concrete proof. They were engaged in deep thought and philosophy, but little credence was given to simple faith. In fact, many were outright skeptical of the gospel. They could not fathom that God would come to earth as a man and give His life a ransom for sin. Many were reluctant to receive the gospel and believe in Christ by faith.

Paul was well aware of the need for an effective witness from believers. For a people that sought proof, changed lives would present the necessary evidence. Our text today deals with the lives believers are to live among the world. Our actions speak so loud that others can't hear a word we are saying. If we are to be effective in reaching those who need Christ, we must model our faith before the world. I want to examine the [attributes](#) we are to possess and portray as we consider: [Responsible Living in a Reluctant World](#).

I. A Word Concerning our Compassion (12-14) – The first attributes Paul describes concern the compassion shown toward our fellow man. Notice:

A. The Recognition (12a) – [Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved...](#) Prior to addressing the attributes we are to possess and portray, Paul challenges the believer to remember who they are and to whom they belong. He reminds us we are chosen of God, redeemed from sin and adopted into His family. In Christ we are [holy](#), "*set apart, separated*" and [beloved](#), "*recipients of His special love.*" He was not speaking to a people who knew nothing of Christ nor had received anything of value from Him. He was dealing with the children of God, the redeemed of Christ.

- If the believer keeps their relationship with Christ in view, fulfilling our responsibilities will be much easier. In fact, apart from a proper recognition, we will bear little fruit in a reluctant world.

B. The Obligation (12b-14) – Here Paul describes several attributes we are to possess and portray regarding our compassion. We are obligated to put on, be clothed in:

- **Bowels of Mercies** – Compassion, pity, mercy, sympathy, tenderheartedness.
- **Kindness** – usefulness, kindness, often associated with philanthropy.
- **Humbleness of Mind** – humility, lowliness of mind, esteeming ourselves small, not proud.
- **Meekness** – Mildness, meekness. Willing to suffer injury rather than inflict it.
- **Longsuffering** – Self-restraint, patience and thoughtfulness prior to action.
- **Forbearing one another** – to endure, hold back, put up with, refrain, or control.
- **Forgiveness** – to be gracious, pardon wrong committed against us.
 - **Even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.** It is often easy to spot and point out the wrong in others and yet we often fail to remember the grace we have received. None of us were worthy and yet Christ forgave our sin. Just as He forgave, we too must be willing to forgive!

II. A Word Concerning our Submission (15) – **And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.** It is evident that the attributes Paul speaks of are often hindered by the overwhelming desires of the flesh. It is easy to show mercy and kindness to those who in turn show compassion to us, but what about those who hurt us or seek to work against us. It is easier to forgive when genuine forgiveness is sought, but what about those times when it isn't and we honestly don't feel like offering forgiveness? Each of these attributes may be present in most people at times and with particular individuals, but if we are to effectively possess and portray genuine compassion, we must be submissive to the Lord. We must allow His peace to rule in our hearts, literally direct and govern our existence. This has the idea of an umpire at a game. He deems what is fair and what is to be penalized. The players are subject to his authority and rule.

- So it is with our lives as well. We will never overcome the hindrances we face and treat others as Christ would have us without allowing His peace to govern our lives. God can bring peace to our hearts in troubled times, but we must be willing to accept His peace. It would be of no value to experience the peace of God, which leads to a more productive life, if we neglect that peace and continue to seek our own path or solution. We may have to bear a difficulty or trial for an extended period. Allowing the peace of God to govern our lives will provide comfort and much needed guidance in difficult times.

- Paul also mentions an interesting condition associated with allowing peace to rule in our hearts: **be ye thankful.** This means exactly what it says. Rather than being upset about the idea of showing kindness or longsuffering when we feel it is undeserved, we are to be thankful for the

peace God has given in the midst of a difficult situation. These two go hand in hand. We will never experience real peace in our hearts apart from genuine thankfulness. When the Lord provides peace about a particular situation in our lives, we are to let it go, trusting in Him, and offer thanksgiving for His gracious provision.

III. A Word Concerning our Exhortation (16) – Here we discover another essential attribute we are to possess and portray, the exhortation of one another. Consider:

A. The Pursuit (16a) – *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom.* Actually this pursuit is essential to every aspect of our Christian lives and our exhortation of one another is no exception. If we are to live our lives in a way that pleases the Lord and benefits others, we must seek the Word and the wisdom it offers. Through it we find instruction for our lives, comfort for our pain, help in the struggles we face, and correction for our mistakes. Those whose lives reflect the Word of God will make an impact on a skeptical and reluctant society.

- It is interesting to note that this is dependent upon our desire. Christ is pleased to impart wisdom through His Word, but we must seek it and apply that wisdom to our lives. Knowing the Word is good, but that alone isn't enough. We must take it a step further and allow the Word to direct, challenge, and change our lives. If we are to be all that we should be, we must continually pursue godly wisdom.

B. The Participation (16b) – *teaching and admonishing one another...* Paul reveals we are responsible to actively participate in sharing the truth and wisdom we have learned with others. Admonishing is a multifaceted exercise. It involves exhortation, building up one another through encouragement, and it also involves admonishment, confronting sin and wrong with a willingness to correct through discipline. This is simply taking the truth you have received and sharing it in corresponding situations in the lives of others.

- Some view this as a responsibility reserved for the pastor or deacons, but Paul is speaking to the church at large. We all have a responsibility to teach and admonish one another. This will only be accomplished through sound wisdom. Some are good encouragers, but are unwilling to discipline or correct. Others are quick to point out faults and failures, but rarely have an encouraging word to share. We need wisdom in order to create the proper balance.

C. The Praise (16c) – *teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.* Valuable instruction can be shared through songs and

praise as well. Paul knew the value of praise through song and we do also. We have all been encouraged in our Christian journey through songs and praise being offered unto the Lord. We may have experienced someone whom we knew was facing a difficult season in life sing praises unto the Lord and their praise encouraged our walk with Christ.

- Paul's emphasis doesn't have as much to do with ability as it does attitude. He challenged them to offer praise with grace in their hearts to the Lord. He was mindful of all he had received in Christ and that resulted in praise being offered. We can't focus on the grace of God and the blessings we've received in Christ without being compelled to offer praise. Let us offer the praise He is due! It will exalt our Lord and encourage others in the process.

IV. A Word Concerning our Ambition (17) – Paul concludes his thoughts on Christian responsibility with a word about the ambition of believers. He addresses:

A. Our Activity (17a) – *And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus.*

That is simple enough to understand and yet it is very profound. Whatever we do, whether in word (conversation) or in deed (activity), all is to be done in the name of Christ. Essentially all our activity is to be done in such a way that Christ is honored and uplifted. We should engage in no activity, whether word or deed, that the name of Christ could not be associated with it. I don't know how you feel about that, but this is very convicting to me. That doesn't mean our lives are to be void of any fun or pleasure, but everything we do should reflect Christ and bear witness of Him.

- Honestly, could we say that all our activity this week could be viewed as being done in the name of Christ? Probably not. I pray this will be a challenge to each of us to consider our activities and ensure that we honor and reflect Him in all we do. *1 Cor.10:31 – Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.*

B. Our Appreciation (17b) – *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.* Not only are we to live in such a way that honors the Lord, we are to express our appreciation unto Him for providing the life we live. Really when we think about it, we accomplish nothing in and of ourselves. God provides the strength we need to go about our daily activities. He provides the wisdom we need to navigate life and process all that we encounter. His blessing is evident in every aspect of our lives, even those times when we are asleep or completely unaware. He is worthy of our praise and thanksgiving for all of His many benefits in our everyday lives. *Rom.14:7-8 – For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.* ^[8] *For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.* Keeping this in its context, we could not be of help in

advancing the kingdom were it not for His help and guidance. God chooses to use human instruments to further the gospel, but ultimately He is worthy of all the praise. We are just vessels used of the Master!

Conclusion: We are all aware that our lives are being observed and scrutinized more than we care to admit. The world offers so many opportunities and paths to travel, but many are seeking for truth. We have the awesome privilege and responsibility to share that truth with those who need to be born again in Christ. Every believer is responsible to be a living witness for the Lord. Apart from Him such a task is impossible, but through Him we can be used to reach others.

Each of us needs to examine our hearts and be honest about where we are. We may be active and even fruitful for the Lord, but there is room for improvement in each of our lives. I want to be used of the Lord in this life. Seeking to possess and portray the attributes described in this passage will certainly help ensure that. Christ alone can save from sin and He alone can equip us to reach others and be a blessing to one another. If there are needs, Christ is the answer!