

Wearing your Captain's Colours

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[0 : 0 0] Good afternoon, everyone. It's very nice to see you all here. And I think you've made it into your seats in record time. You're usually still milling around the back at this point. So well done to all of you. Good to have you here. Today we're going to be looking at Colossians 3, verses 12 to 17. But we're going to be reading the whole chapter together so that we can have an idea of what's been going on in the letter. So Colossians chapter 3, which in the Visitor's Bibles is on page 984. 984. And let's pray together and ask the Lord for his help as we come to his word. Our Lord and Father, we do thank you for giving us your word. We thank you that you still speak to us today through it. And Father, please help us to understand it. Please send your spirit so that we would not just know what's happening here and know what you're saying, but that that knowledge would be flowing out into our lives and it would always be shaping us more into the image of your son. Father, we thank you for all we have in him. Amen. So Colossians 3, verses 1 to 17.

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. Put to death, therefore, what is earthly in you, sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire and covetousness, which is idolatry.

On account of these, the wrath of God is coming. And these you too once walked when you were living in them. But now you must put them all away. Anger, wrath, malice, slander and obscene talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, 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.

Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free, but Christ is all and in all. Put on then as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, 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. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body.

[3 : 1 5] 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. Amen.

Amen. I've always loved football, growing up. And when I was a wee boy, I was a big Rangers fan.

Most of the years, I got the strip as a birthday present, watched all the games I could on TV with my dad, and got stuck right in with the banter at school about it. I loved it. And during the late 90s, Rangers named a new captain.

They gave the armband to their big centre-back, Lorenzo Amoruso. He was this giant of a man, the Italian stallion, and my eight-year-old self just absolutely loved him. I idolised him as a footballer.

[4 : 19] And I loved him because he gave his all for the team. He wore his heart on his sleeve and fought tooth and nail for every single challenge. As soon as he stepped out on the pitch, he was going to do anything he could within his powers to make sure they won.

So when I played football, if I ever got the chance to pick my number, I would always go for the number four on my back, because that was Big Amoruso's number, and I wanted to play like him. As soon as I stepped out onto the pitch, I would play my wee heart out and do everything I could to be like him.

Thankfully, I didn't do everything he did. He had a long ponytail, and I'm not convinced I could have pulled that off. But I wanted to play just like he did. Heart on sleeve and fighting for everything.

I wanted to wear my captain's colors when I was out in the football pitch. And as Paul wrote to the Colossian church, he wanted them to do something similar.

He wanted them to wear their captain's colors in life. But their captain, their leader, was of course Jesus. Paul is writing to this church because they had grown well, but at some point people have come in and tried to distract them away from Jesus.

[5 : 30] The Colossian church had been joined together as one body, and the false teachers wanted to separate them from their head, Jesus. And they did this by telling the Colossians that they weren't quite at the level of spirituality that they needed to be.

They weren't quite mature Christians. They needed to be experiencing more if they were going to be mature, in the same way that these false teachers were. And they were putting themselves up as leaders, kind of voices to stand out from the rest.

They said the Colossians needed to do more, more, more, more, to experience that next level. Never quite reaching maturity. Always doing more. And that left the church feeling like they lacked something as Christians.

But what Paul said to them was that they had everything they could ever want or need as Christians simply by having their leader, Jesus, and being joined to him in faith.

He wanted to assure them that normal, bog-standard Christians who believe in Jesus are not lacking in any way at all, but are full to the brim because they have Jesus.

[6 : 41] They're joined to the one who has everything, who is all. That's why Paul says at the end of chapter 1 in verse 28 that all he does, all he does, is preach Christ.

Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom that we may present everyone mature in Christ. That's the way to real Christian maturity, spirituality, and growth as Christians.

To trust in and follow Christ. And what we see in our few verses today flows from what we've just read at the start of chapter 1. chapter 3 in verses 1 to 11.

That since the Colossians are united to Christ, since they're joined to Jesus, they should put to death the old self and the practices of the former man before they came to trust in Jesus.

They're to put that off and to put on the new self, becoming more like the image of the sun. So what does this new self look like? How are the Colossians going to put this message into practice in their daily lives?

[7 : 43] Paul's message was that the new self is chosen to follow their leader gladly. You, if you're sitting here today and you're a Christian, you are personally chosen to follow your leader, Jesus, gladly.

So firstly, you're chosen. In verse 12, Paul tells the Colossians that they, as normal, ordinary Christians, have been handpicked by God himself to service purposes.

The Colossians, who thought they were unimpressive and lacking, well, they were chosen by God to be his people. And the important thing to remember here is that God chooses them because of who he is rather than who they are or who we are.

Because God the Father didn't say that since the world was so lovely or so deserving or so special or so beautiful that he sent his son to die for us. Not in the slightest. Sometimes we might wonder what God saw in us that he wanted to save us at such great cost.

But the reality is that God didn't see anything special in us. We as people are not instantly lovable to a holy God, as surprising as that may sound to us. We're not good and we don't deserve to be saved because of anything in ourselves.

[9 : 06] Paul says in Romans 5 that God demonstrates his own love for us in this. While we were sinners, Christ died for us. The only reason we have any opportunity for salvation is entirely based on God himself, his kindness, his love, and his grace.

Nothing to do with us. It's not ours. We've not earned it. So the truth that we are chosen says a lot more about who God is than who we are.

That he is a God of kindness, patience, and compassion, seeking out those who don't deserve his blessing, those who don't deserve to belong to him. You might not be all that impressive or special, but the God of all creation who made the heavens and the earth, he has decided to include you in his eternal plans anyway.

Isn't that something to rejoice in? And those who are chosen are holy. They're set apart from the world for a different purpose.

That's why Paul talks about putting off the old self in verse 9 and putting on the new self in verse 10. Because once they are saved, there is to be a transformation. It's like you're under new management.

[10 : 18] There's a new leader in town, no longer living for yourself in this world, but you're living for God and his purposes. You're set apart. You've got a different job from the rest of the world.

And Paul says that they are not only chosen and holy, but beloved. They're loved. We're not just God's employees here.

There's nothing cold about this relationship, but we are loved deeply. It's not transactional. God doesn't just do the saving so that we do the holiness.

It's not like that. He saves us because he first loved us. So of course we should respond to him by loving him and loving his rule in our lives.

Listening to the voice of the God who saved us at such great cost. God lovingly chooses them to be his people. But what are we chosen for?

[11 : 20] Well, you are chosen to follow your leader. You're chosen to follow your leader. Here Paul spends a lot of time talking about how the Colossians are to act. He said that they as a church are chosen, they're holy and beloved, and because of that, what follows is how the church are to act together, how they are to put those truths into practice.

Because the truths we learn about God don't just stick in our heads and stay there. They're to work out into our daily lives, changing how we live and how we treat each other. So the Colossians are to be, in verse 12, compassionate, kind, humble, meek, patient, bearing with one another in love, forgiving.

Verse 15, peaceful. Verse 16, teaching their brothers and sisters in wisdom, singing to each other. And verse 17, Paul sums up this by saying that in everything, you're to do it in the name of Christ Jesus.

In just a few brushstrokes, he covers literally everything you do as a Christian in your life. But through all of these verses, as you build up more and more of a picture in your mind of what the Colossian Christians are to look like, and you kind of sit back and let your mind run with it, you think of someone compassionate, kind, humble, meek, patient, loving, forgiving, peaceful.

Well, you start to picture Jesus, don't you? Everything Paul writes points us to him, to their Lord and their leader. In verse 10, Paul says that Christians are being renewed in knowledge after the image of our creator, who is Christ, becoming more like him.

[13 : 02] And if you look at verse 15, we're to let Christ rule in our hearts. Verse 16, Christ's word is to dwell in us richly. And verse 17, we're to do everything in whose name?

Christ's name. You are built to follow your leader. There are so many ways this can be done and a million different things Paul could mention, but here he has focus on how this is done in the church family itself.

Together, as a body, they've been gathered together and they've to put on all of these characteristics as they slowly start to resemble their leader and savior. When we think of the most Christ-like things a person could do, I don't know what you think of, but I don't instantly go for something as kind of normal as loving your church family.

When I think of the most Christ-like things someone can do, I instantly think, you know, big sacrifices, big impressive spiritual experiences, things like that. But Paul's much more down to earth about this because looking like Christ isn't just up there, it's not big impressive things, it's down here and it's in the middle of your church family.

That's where he's working it out. One of the most Christ-like things you can do is to love your church family, especially when it's difficult. Paul even uses the phrase to bear with one another in love because Paul lives in the real world where it often is a burden.

[14 : 31] Loving your church family, it's not straightforward, is it? I wouldn't recommend locking eyes with anyone right now, but loving your church family is not always easy.

It's just not. We've all experienced it because we're all still sinful and broken people. Redeemed Christians are still fallen people living in a fallen world.

So we are more than capable of sinning against our church family. And often the pain caused by our church family can seem quite great, can't it? Feelings are hurt, people are ignored or offended, pride is damaged, and it's easy to let that kind of fester and stew away become something that stops a church from serving effectively.

Disagreements and squabbles in church may seem small because, well, it's only two people who aren't getting on and, you know, they sit on opposite sides of the room anyway so they don't see each other, it's fine. But it really will stop a church from serving effectively.

If people aren't getting on and won't be on the same rota as this person or that person, or they won't talk to someone after the service because of something that person said in anger years ago, or they hold a grudge against the minister because they felt ignored at one point, well, a church like that is in danger of not following its leader.

[15 : 51] They're not following Jesus. But in a church family, Paul says that we are to be like Christ. We're to be forgiving, showing patience, compassion, and above all, showing love which binds everything together.

It's important we remember that everything is bound together by love as it stops us from just being a faithful-looking Christian at surface level on the outside who tolerates people they don't warm to.

Just putting up with someone even though, to be honest, you kind of hate them. But if we are binding everything together with love, then we will have real, heartfelt kindness, compassion, and patience for those who frustrate us the most.

We'll ask our Heavenly Father for help when our hearts want to hate our brothers and sisters. I'm really guilty of not doing this. I'm good at kind of getting on with people but keeping them at arm's length, being nice when I see them at the church door but not inviting them around to my house for Sunday lunch, not really getting to know them on a personal level, not getting to know them as the brother or sister they are in Christ.

And when someone annoys or offends me, I find it really easy to look like I'm okay with them on the outside, to still share a joke with them and have the occasional chat but have grudges and bad feelings towards them for quite some time.

[17 : 23] I fool myself into thinking it's fine because while everything on the outside seems okay, we're not fighting with each other, we're not causing squabbles and fights on a Sunday, we're not arguing publicly, I just have to grin and bear it for 10 minutes after the service on a Sunday.

I'm just putting up with them. I'm not loving them like Jesus and I'm not living with the theological truth that they are my brother or sister in the Lord. And I don't think I'm the only person in the room who would feel like that.

I don't think I'm the only person who would need to repent of attitudes like that. So the next time someone at church gets on your nerves or steps on your toes or offends you in some way, instead of having a moan about them in the car or the bus or the train on the way home, follow your leader.

Follow Jesus and ask God to help you to forgive them, to be patient, compassionate and loving. When God forgives us, he doesn't just wipe the slate clean and then leave us alone.

He adopts us into his family. He gives us all the privileges of being a perfect son and welcomes us in. So that person who you find so hard to love, invite them around for lunch, have a cup of tea, with them, take them out for a walk with a dog, do anything so that you can get on board with each other.

[18 : 50] And while you're doing that, look to something that is far bigger than your disagreement. Look to the gospel itself. Because if we all look to the gospel together, then we're left looking at Jesus, our leader and savior.

We're left looking at the Christ who died for us while we were still his enemies. Which puts our differences and squabbles with each other into perspective, doesn't it?

As verse 13 says, we are to forgive each other as the Lord has forgiven you. And it's quite a forceful command actually. We're to forgive in the same manner as God has forgiven us.

And this is really helpful as it reminds us that our problems are not just part of church we should accept. It's serious business. Christian believers are to be great forgivers at heart because of course those who have been forgiven much will forgive others of much too.

And if that happens, if all of that comes together, then the church will look like a team joined together to live for Christ. Fueled by the Holy Spirit working in them as they wear their captain's colors.

[20 : 05] Following his way in everything as they fight the good fight together. And so how are we all to do this? Finally and briefly, you are chosen to follow your leader gladly.

Gladly. Three times Paul says that the Colossians are to be thankful. At the end of verse 15 he writes, and be thankful. End of verse 16, with thankfulness in your hearts.

And end of verse 17, everything is to be done giving thanks to God the Father through Jesus. Everything that we do as Christians is to be done with an attitude of real thanks and gratitude.

It's a strange thing to command, to command thankfulness. It feels, it feels a bit like a guilt trip, doesn't it? You should be so grateful. How could you not do this for me when I've done so much for you?

But it's not like that. It's not guilt trippy at all. It's actually the antidote to just ticking the boxes. And fooling ourselves that we're mature Christians when really, we hate the church family we're in, the church body we're a part of.

[21 : 14] We are to follow Jesus with real thanks and joy because of everything we have in him. It stops us from acting like joyless slaves who are just doing what we think we have to do, what we feel like we need to do, doing the bare minimum we can to get by with to survive.

Instead, we will be like the sons and daughters we are created and redeemed to be, eager to please our Lord and Savior with every breath we have. But why should we be thankful?

What's so good that Paul actually commands thankfulness for? Well, it's because we're on Christ's team. We're one of his players. So should we wear our captain's colors with real joy and excitement considering that before we joined the team we were dead in our sins.

We were going nowhere. This little section we're looking at is all rooted in what comes before in chapter 3. That since the Colossians are united to Christ they should put to death the old self and the practices of the former man before they came to trust in Jesus.

They're to put that off and they're to put on the new self becoming more like the image of Christ. In short, because they've been redeemed they've got to start living like their captain. And if you've been redeemed, if you're sitting here as a Christian today then you are to be living like your Savior.

[22 : 44] Right at the heart of what Paul is saying is that we are to follow Jesus and wear our captain's colors with real joy. If we're following him then we know we're with him. We're on the winning side and we'll be so glad to be looking like him even just a little.

And it's good being a Christian, isn't it? It's worth being thankful for. I know there are struggles and pains involved in the Christian life. I'm not trying to sweep any of that under the carpet.

We're sinful, fallen people living in a broken world who aren't immune to pain or suffering. And life is just hard. But it's good being a Christian.

knowing our creator who has chosen us. Being redeemed so that we can follow our captain Jesus. Making us the humans we were always meant to be.

Uniting us to our Lord and to his people, his new community of gathered people in the world. It's good, isn't it? Or when you've completely messed up.

[23 : 48] when you've hurt and hated people you're supposed to love and you find forgiveness at the foot of the cross. It's so undeserved.

But you know that Jesus will hold you fast despite your sin. Or when you're broken in pain and you can call on the Lord of creation, the sovereign over all, the only one who can actually do anything about it.

And he is glad to hear your voice. You know he's listening to you with the love of a father to a son who has lived perfectly before him.

Being a Christian isn't something we just put up with. It's not something we just do. But it's something we should be finding a real joy in. Because we are the most privileged people on the planet.

And the good news is just that. It's good. It's worth being thankful for and it's such a pleasure to live for him. We shouldn't be resenting having to forgive people who have wronged us.

[24 : 56] Or consider it a burden to love those who haven't treated us well. But it should count it all joy as we look all the more like our saviour and live as the men and women we were created to be by loving the people he came to earth and died for.

So as we finish, how could you follow your leader? How could you wear your captain's colours? Well for most of us and for me too it all starts by just taking a look around you at the people sitting next to you sitting near you in your room.

That's where it all begins. I find it so surprising that the apostle Paul when he speaks about how to live a Christ-shaped life looking like Jesus he starts with something so small like loving your church family.

We may think it's small and insignificant but the church is who Jesus died for. Just think about that.

Jesus came and died for the people sitting around you right now. From heaven he came and sought her. His church his bride his chosen his beloved.

[26 : 08] So of course we should resemble Jesus by loving the church. Our brothers and sisters were joined to in him. Is there anyone here you need to love better?

Or if you go to a different church on a Sunday is there anyone there you need to love better? Is there anyone there you may need to forgive? It doesn't have to be a grand gesture.

It doesn't have to have all the bells and whistles. It could just be a cup of tea or a meal or a chat after the service. But it's incredibly important that Jesus' church is not one that has grudges friction and agro in its day to day life.

Since we have all been saved into Jesus into the one and same body why on earth would we try to hold each other at arm's length in that one body? It just doesn't make sense.

When we are redeemed we are inseparably linked to each other. We are united to each other because we are united to Jesus. And he doesn't split himself up into different parts. He is wholly and entirely one.

[27 : 18] If you have faith in Jesus then you have been chosen and saved into the same body into the church. So act like it by loving your brothers and sisters in the Lord.

And let's make sure that we do it all gladly. that we don't resent having to get on with people. We don't resent having to forgive others because God most certainly didn't resent giving us his son as a free gift to us.

We are to count it all joy that we as sinful people undeserving of love or salvation have been chosen and redeemed. And let's live like it. Well let's give thanks for all that the Lord has given us.

for what a joy it is to follow our leader. Let's pray. Our Lord and Father we thank you so much that you have chosen us to be your children.

That you have handpicked a group of people who don't deserve your kindness to be sons and daughters of the living God. We thank you Father that we have been saved at the cost of your son's life and ask that you would help us to live like him.

[28 : 28] To wear our captain's colors as we live our daily life in honor of you. And Father please help us to do this all with real gladness and joy in our hearts. To count it all joy to serve you and be saved into our saviour.

In whose name we pray. Amen. Amen.