

Goal #3 Become More Like Christ Every Day (Part 2)

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[0 : 00] If you got up one morning and it was 10 degrees outside and your six-year-old came out of his room dressed in shorts and a t-shirt and said, I'm ready to go to school, how would you respond?

Would you say something like, okay, but next time it's 10 degrees outside, don't wear summer clothes. Wear what will make you warm.

You wouldn't do that, would you? You would order that child to go back to their room, take off those summer clothes, put on some warm winter clothes, long pants, sweatshirt, coats, something like that.

And the reason you do that is because you want to make sure your child is dressed appropriately. Well, in Colossians chapter 3, Paul is telling us how to live appropriately as God's children.

And he actually does it in a way like taking off certain things, putting on certain things. Turn with me if you would to Colossians chapter 3. And as you're turning, I want to remind you that we've already looked at the kinds of things that we're supposed to put off, take off.

[1 : 23] He even says, put to death. Things like sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

He also said to put off anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouths. Do not lie to one another. We looked at that for two weeks.

Last week, we started looking at the kinds of things we're supposed to put on. Things that should be in us and come out of us as Christians. Look at it.

Put on then as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience.

Bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other. And above all these, put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

[2 : 27] Before we go any further, I want to reemphasize. This is not saying this is how we become a Christian. I have tried to stress from the very beginning of this series, Paul is not saying that we become a Christian by putting off certain sins and putting on certain Christ-like character qualities.

Excuse me. Salvation is something we can't earn. We don't do anything to get it. Salvation is by the grace of God that we receive through faith in Jesus Christ.

Probably the most well-known statement in the New Testament about that is Ephesians chapter 2. Look at this. For by grace you have been saved through faith.

And this is not your own doing. It is the gift of God. Not a result of works so that no one may boast. In Colossians chapter 3, Paul is telling us that if we are truly united to Christ by faith, if we are one with Him through faith, then we are accepted by God.

We are God's chosen ones, holy and beloved. Now what He's going to, what He's, all the details of chapter 3, He's telling us, if this is who we are, we need to live like it.

[4 : 03] As God's people, we are responsible to live like the people that we are. United to Christ. Filled with His Spirit.

We don't do it by our own willpower. As I've said, we do it because the Spirit of Christ lives in us. And within us, He gives us the desire to put off sin.

To develop Christ-like character qualities. He not only gives us the desire to do that, but He will help us. He'll prompt us, encourage us, give us the ability to do these things.

But we've got to cooperate with Him. Paul tells us in Colossians 3 how we cooperate with Him. We're looking at it in terms of three goals that God has for us.

Goal number one, be mindful of who you are in Christ. Goal number two, don't be who you are apart from Christ. And goal number three, we began last week, become more like Christ every day.

[5 : 09] We saw last week why we can do that. Understand, this passage of Scripture is saying we can become more like Christ in terms of character development every day.

Look first, here's why. We are God's special people. We're God's chosen ones. We looked at it in detail last week. We're God's holy people.

We are beloved or dearly loved. Now, let's look at how we actually become like Christ.

We started last week, point number two. We can live like God's special people. We can live like the special people that we are. And love is the key.

Look at verse 14. Let the love of Christ fill you. And above all these, put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

[6 : 14] Now, note that little phrase, all these. It refers to the list of virtues found in verses 12 through 13. Compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, or gentleness, and patience, bearing with one another, forgiving each other.

Those qualities are bound together like pages in a book on Christian love. Each one of those qualities you see listed there.

That's some aspect of love. Now, Paul says something similar to this in 1 Corinthians 13, where we have what we might consider the Bible's definition of love.

1 Corinthians 13. I want you to look at it with me. Paul includes most of these qualities we've been looking at by either name or description in these verses.

Note, love is patient and kind. Love does not envy or boast. It is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way.

[7 : 27] It is not irritable or resentful. It does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Here's what Paul is trying to tell us in Colossians 3. If we are filled with the love of Christ, we will seek to express in all of our relationships these kind of qualities.

And especially in our relationships with our brothers and sisters in Christ. We looked at one of the ways Christian love is expressed last week, and I just want to call attention to it now.

Love will motivate us to live in unity with our brothers and sisters in Christ. Look at verse 11. Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free, but Christ is all and in all.

The idea is that all Christians are brothers and sisters in Christ. We ought to live like it.

[8 : 39] We ought to act like it. Even though we're different. And I said last week, if you've got more than one sibling or just one, you're all different.

You may not like everything about your brothers and sisters, but you love one another. We're in spite of those differences, and that's how we're supposed to be as Christians in relationship with one another.

But we also looked at very briefly last week that we are members of one race, the human race. And so we, as God's people, we must not let differences like we see in that list there, differences in race, social classes, or cultures, we can't let that divide us.

We definitely can't let it divide us in the church. But we need to demonstrate how, as being members of the human race, we don't let such divisions divide us in our community at large.

Now, Paul is just getting started in the ways we ought to express love. So let's move on and see that love will motivate us to be gracious with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

[9 : 52] And these qualities listed in verse 12 are characteristics of graciousness. Look at it. As we look at each of these gracious expressions of love, keep in mind, these are Christ-like character qualities that Paul describes in Galatians 5 as fruit of the Spirit.

What you see on the screen, what we're going to look at, they are Spirit, Holy Spirit-produced qualities that will cause us to desire, to desire them, to develop them, and then put forth the effort to demonstrate them toward other people, especially other Christians.

And here's what I want us to think about as we go through all this stuff. I'm not going to say it over and over again. But we're talking about, as Christians, with the Spirit of God living within us, we can develop these qualities in relationships with people.

Home and the church is the practice field where we develop these things. Home. Those people you live with.

The church here. Church family. This is where we work on. And sometimes through trial and error, developing these qualities.

[11 : 24] Let's look at them. The first one is compassionate hearts. It's often translated heartfelt compassion. Or maybe even tender-hearted mercy. It means to feel deeply for another person.

Now, we may have a hard time doing that today because everybody's life is busy. You think about it. Many people in this room, you've got more on your plate than you really want to be there.

You've got so much you've got to think about, so much you've got to do on a daily basis. And so it could be that just the routine of life, the busyness of life, not anything bad, it so consumes you that you don't really notice the people around you.

You don't notice what's going on in other people's lives. Think about it. How closely do you really pay attention to what's going on in your fellow Sunday school class members' lives?

How much attention do you give to them, especially if there's something going on that they're down, they're discouraged?

[12 : 45] What about the people you live with? The people under your roof? Do you notice when something's going on in their life?

Do you notice when their countenance is different? Do you notice when the tone of their voice is just not normal?

normal? Do you notice when they're not acting as they typically do? Do you notice when they're down what I'm getting at?

Your parents, your children, your spouse. Do you notice when something's just not quite right?

And then do you care enough about these people in your life that you really do feel deeply for them when you know they're hurting?

[13 : 55] Well, Christian love will compel us. Paul is saying Christian love will compel us not to overlook the people around about us who are struggling.

We will be compelled to demonstrate heartfelt compassion in the words that we speak and the things that we do for them.

It's a part of being gracious, showing love, compassionate hearts. Number two, kindness. Jerry Bridges doesn't really describe it or define it.

He more or less describes it. I want you to look at this. Apart from God's grace, most of us naturally tend to be concerned about ourselves, our responsibilities, our problems, our plans.

But the person who has grown in the grace of kindness has expanded his thinking outside of himself and has developed a genuine interest in the happiness and well-being of those around him.

[15 : 04] I want you to stop and think. Do you have a genuine interest in the happiness of the people that you share life with in your home, in your Sunday school class, those that you are close to?

Lisa told me a story a while back about her grandfather. brother. He told this story about when he was a teenager.

He was a teenage boy, had a brother who was another teenager, and they moved to a new house out in the country. And the house that they moved into, the people who moved out, they had already planted a garden.

And so when Lisa's grandfather and his brother and family moved in, they had a garden there ready, waiting for them. Well, one morning of the first week they lived in that house, they heard a knock at the door very early.

They opened the door and it was an angry neighbor that they had never met. And his first words to his new neighbors were, do you have two cows?

[16 : 22] Well, Ms. Murphy said, yes, we do. Well, he angrily informed her, that her cows had gotten out during a thunderstorm that night and had trampled down a good bit of his garden.

And he, before he gave her time to say a word, he told her that the damages would amount to \$4. This is a long time ago. Well, she apologized, didn't say a word, apologized, paid him the \$4 and sent her two teenage boys to get the cows and repair the fence.

And that was it. No more words from that guy. Well, several weeks later, another storm came up at night. And the next morning, the Murphys looked out and there were two strange cows in their garden.

Ms. Murphy told the boys, put those cows up, the owner will be looking for them, probably come by here before very long. And sure enough, he did. Later that morning, that neighbor who had made her pay \$4 for damages to his garden came by, asking if they had seen his cows.

He said that the wind had knocked down a tree and the tree had knocked a hole in the fence and they had gotten out. Well, Ms. Murphy told him, yes, your cows have been here, been in our garden.

[17 : 49] And we put them in the barn, waiting for somebody to come and get them. Well, you know how the man felt. He asked her, what did he owe her for the damages?

Now, Lisa's grandfather said that when he and his brother heard this, they couldn't wait for their mother to save \$4 and get their money back.

But that's not what she said. She told that man, you don't owe us anything. Things like that happened. And then she told her boys, help this man get his cows back home and stay and help him repair his fence.

Well, those boys were, they were just mad at what their mother had done. But the neighbor, her grandfather said, as a teenage boy, he noticed.

He was obviously humbled by her kindness. And that very night, there came a knock at the door.

[19 : 00] That neighbor brought them what he said was the biggest apple pie he had ever seen. And from that day, he said they were not only good neighbors, but they were also good friends.

He said until they moved, that man could not do enough to help them around their farm. I tell that story, that is one of the best stories I've ever heard to illustrate what kindness can do.

The power, the power of treating someone kindly. Not like they have treated you, but in spite of how they've treated you.

Let's look at the next one. Humility refers to an absence of arrogance and self-promotion. It was not considered a virtue in the ancient world. It's not considered a virtue by many people today either, is it?

But Christianity changed that. And the way Christianity changed that for Christians, that is, it was a quality that Jesus demonstrated when he left the glory of heaven.

[20 : 05] Jesus has always existed as the Son of God, always in heaven with the Father, the Spirit, the Trinity. But Jesus left the glory of heaven to come into this world as a man to die for our sins on the cross.

Paul explains it, describes Jesus doing this like this. He says that Jesus emptied himself by taking the form of a servant and that he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Now that's humility. humility. This kind of character quality will lead us to humble ourselves in order to serve the people in our lives that we see have a need and we know we can meet that need.

This kind of humility goes with these other things. We have compassion. There's kindness within us. There's something within us.

It's the Spirit of God working that causes us to humble ourselves, to put somebody else first for their benefit, to meet their need.

[21 : 16] The fourth one is the word meekness. It's more often than not translated gentleness. Probably the most undesired quality that we could think of, the idea of being meek.

Because the idea of being meek sounds weak, doesn't it? But in the Bible it's really talking about strength that is under control. In Paul's day this word was used to describe animals that had been tamed such as a horse that could be controlled and guided by the reins in a man's hand and on the other end of the rein it was in the horse's bit in his mouth.

I want you to think about how the driver of the Budweiser wagon controls those powerful Clydesdale horses with the reins there in his hands.

Those are some of the most powerful horses you'll ever see. They could run away with that wagon if they wanted to. But those Clydesdales, their strength is under control.

And they allow themselves to go this way or that way according to which way the reins pull them. In Numbers chapter 12, one of the best examples you'll find in the Bible of somebody who was called meek but was far from weak is Moses.

[22 : 47] In Numbers 12 and verse 3, he's actually described as the meekest man on earth. But a lot of you know from Bible stories growing up, some of you know from reading the Bible, some of you know from the movie the Ten Commandments that Moses was one of the most powerful leaders in the Bible.

He made hard decisions. He was tough as nails on people when necessary. There were times that he demonstrated righteous anger.

Moses described the most meek or the most humble man in the Bible but he was a man who was powerful. He was a true leader.

He got things done but his strength most of the time was under control. That's what God calls us to do. Look at one more, patience.

Sometimes translated long suffering. This word means more than just staying calm or not losing control under stress although it applies that way but refers to a willingness to put up with difficult people or situations for a long period of time without retaliation or bitterness.

[24 : 08] This is a spirit given ability to not let other people or situations dictate our actions or our response.

Here's what I'm talking about. things happen sometimes in your life. Somebody does something, you get angry and you say, he made me mad.

Some situation happens that just ticked me off. No. People may do something that sets the stage or tempts you to get angry.

Some situations happen and the temptation arises for you to lose control, respond inappropriately. But we need to just admit, accept when we lose control, we say what we shouldn't do, do what we shouldn't do.

That's our choice as Christians. The spirit of God lives within us. We can resist any temptation. You control how you respond to everybody in your life and every situation in your life.

[25 : 19] Some are more difficult. Some are just more emotionally charged, but you control how you respond. And what the spirit of God will help us do in this kind of thing is, he will help us to learn to act rather than react to the people in situations that sort of get us emotionally charged up.

You know, trusting that God's in control will help us be more patient with people and with situations. Trusting that God really is sovereign, he's in control. This morning I was almost late to the first service because my truck wouldn't crank.

Battery was dead. And believe it or not, I didn't just say ugly words, throw something around or do something like that.

Because Lisa was there and I was just going, I just rode with her. That helped me out in that situation. But I want you to think, there's a reason why that battery didn't start.

It may be that I cleaned it yesterday and I didn't tighten it back. But it may be that if I had gotten that truck this morning and needed a crank and I had come down here, I would have been killed.

[26 : 41] I don't know and I don't have, I don't worry, I don't spend any time wondering about what ifs because we don't know what these what ifs are. But God is sovereign. He's in control.

Even about whether a battery starts or not. And what we need to do, what will help us, what helps me, and I don't always do this by any means, but what helps me when I do is to realize God is in control.

There's a reason for this. I need to just act the way I should and not react, get all torn up out of shape because there's a purpose for it.

I want you to look at what Paul tells us. We've looked at both of these verses many times over the years. We've looked at one of them every week in this series. We're going to look at them two verses together now.

Look at this. And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose, and for those God foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son.

[27 : 43] God works in everything, people, situations, batteries, not starting. God works in every situation to shape and mold us to the person He wants us to be, which is ultimately like Jesus.

If the love of Christ fills us, we will be motivated to be gracious by showing compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience toward the people in our lives, and especially other Christians.

Look at one more thing real quick. Such graciousness will also lead us to bear with others. Look at this. Love will motivate us to bear with our brothers and sisters in Christ. Verse 13.

Bearing with one another means to put up with somebody in a positive way. Have you ever thought about how much God puts up with you? I mean, if you have a realistic understanding of yourself, if you know who God is and His holiness, you know who you are as the sinner you are, you know God puts up with you.

I'm thankful. I'm thankful that He does, that He's patient in spite of my disobedience, hard-heartedness, selfishness, and those kind of things.

[29 : 08] We need to learn to bear with each other just as God bears with us. When my boys were little, there were times I used to get mad, I used to get frustrated at them doing just foolish things, old enough to know better, trying my patience.

I used to get so frustrated and do the same thing over and over again. But there were times when it was, I didn't hear it, I never heard any kind of voice, but there were times it just occurred to me, I think God put it in my mind, that's how I put up with you.

That's how you are to me. Stupid things, things you know not to do repeatedly. It always made me stop and think how grateful I am for God's grace and how I need to turn that grace toward them.

That's what we need to do. No one in this church, your house, or anywhere you go is perfect. Even the most faithful Christian that you know is still a working process.

Everyone in your life needs for you to bear with them. Pray for them. And help them by showing compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience.

[30 : 41] That's love. Now, let's wind it up. Remember what I pointed out at the very beginning. Everything in this passage is talking about what a Christian is by virtue of being united to Christ and filled with His Spirit.

We can't make ourselves more loving just by trying harder. But we can become more loving like we're seeing in this passage by being more sensitive to the presence of the Holy Spirit within us and then obedient to His leadership.

It's the Spirit who gives us the desire and the ability to love like this. But we're responsible to follow through on these desires. We're responsible to use the power He gives us to deny ourselves to show this kind of love.

An old farmer once said, what comes up in the bucket is usually what's down in the well. What comes up in our attitudes, words, and actions is usually what's down in the well of our heart.

What does that say about what's in your heart right now? Are you a true Christian who is indwelt by the Spirit of God and while none of these qualities are fully developed, there is such love within you to some degree?

[32 : 07] Or, are you just someone with a heart that is filled mostly with sinful desires, selfishness, and love for yourself, more than others?

Let's pray. Dear God, I pray that you'll help each one of us to see the content of our hearts right now.

And Father, if there's people in this room who, they have to be honest, there's really no signs of the kind of love we've been looking at within them. But what is within them is just selfishness, sinful desires, little to no concern, real concern for other people.

Father, if that's the content of someone's heart, help them to know they cannot be a Christian because that shows that the Spirit of God is not within them. Father, I pray that you would disturb them over that, humble them, cause them to admit the truth, to repent, turn from, change their minds about such a life.

And dear God, so work to enable them to call upon Jesus to save them now. Father, for all of us who are Christians in this room, help us to see just how strong these qualities are right now within us.

[33 : 51] Father, show us where we need to confess our selfishness, where we fail to look at and take an interest in people.

help us, Father, to see where we just refuse to be sensitive to the Spirit's presence and act on His leading.

Help us to confess our sins, to seek Your forgiveness. Help us, Father, to make the commitment and start spending more time with You to develop a greater sensitivity to Your Spirit and demonstrate true obedience that results in us loving people around us the way we've seen this morning.

Let's just in an attitude of prayer respond to the Lord as He speaks. I'd be happy to pray with you during this time. I'll be here at the front. But what is the main thing is to hear God and just obey Him.

Let's just pray and respond. Amen.