

Place: Lurgan Baptist 3:3:2013

COMPLETE IN HIM

Reading: Colossians 3:1-17

10. CONSISTENT CHRISTIANITY

John Chrysostom was one of the greatest of the Greek church fathers. He lived in AD 347-407. He said on one occasion that the animals which went out of Noah's Ark went out the same way they went in. The crow came in a crow and went out a crow. The fox came in a fox and went out a fox. Chrysostom said the porcupine went in a porcupine and came out still armed with its living arrows. No change. But those who enter into Jesus Christ, who is the ark of salvation, go in one thing and come out something else, totally transformed. Chrysostom said this and I quote,

Like unto a spiteful fox that swindler entered the church who built his house on the ruin of his competitors, and behold he goes out more harmless than a lamb, willing to sacrifice his own interests for the sake of others. Like a crow that sinner entered the church. Now behold, he goes out cooing like a dove. That impatient, quarrelsome man who made everyone smart who touched him like a porcupine, came in bristling, and behold he goes away like a loving spaniel, gentle to touch.

My that's something about transformation, isn't it ?

Conversion to Christ is a transformation. Conversion to Christ is a regeneration. It is a new life. Does Paul not speak in this passage about “ *the old man,*” and “ *the new man ?*” The old man that has to do with out past, the new man that has to do with our present. At the moment of salvation “ *our old man was crucified with him.*” (Rom 6:6) But that positional reality must be worked out in the believer's practical living. The dramatic inner miracle demands an equally dramatic outer change in lifestyle. We enter the ark of Christ in one form. We're transformed to another, and our behavior is to conform. Here in this passage Paul has been using the idea of dress to emphasize how we are to live as Christians in light of what God has done for us in Christ. Now you can tell a lot about people in our society by the way they dress. From football players to bud drivers, from postmen to policemen, people wear the uniforms of their profession. You see, who we are determines what we wear, and failing to “ *dress the part,*” can sometimes have embarrassing consequences.

Is this not what Paul is speaking of in this passage ? He says if we're going to be successful in living the Christian life than we need to know what to take off and what to put on. Negatively, we must throw off the garment of the old lifestyle and positively we must put on the lifestyle of the new man. In other words our practice must match our profession, our conduct must match our creed, and our behaviour must match our belief. This is Consistent Christianity. Now I want to see here that Paul concludes his look at the qualities that should mark the lifestyle of the new man by giving us three things. The new man is

concerned with the peace of Christ, the Word of Christ, and the name of Christ. In other words, if we are going to be consistent in our Christianity, we will be,

(1) STIMULATED BY HIS PEACE

Someone has said that peace is the smile of God reflected on the soul of the believer. “ *The peace of God,* ” here in (3:15) is more accurately *translated* “ *the peace of Christ.* ” Now what is the peace of Christ ? Well, the Greek word for “ *peace,* ” means “ *an agreement or a pact or a treaty or a bond,* ” whereas the Hebrew concept of “ *peace,* ” means “ *an attitude of peace or rest or security.* ” Now objectively believers are at peace with God. Do you recall Paul’s words ? “ *Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.* ” (Rom 5:1) The war between the Christian and God is over and the treaty was paid for by the blood of Christ. That’s a great truth isn’t it ? I am at peace with Christ. Are you ? This the *peace of Salvation.* But Paul talks about the *Peace of Sanctification:* for he says “ *And the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus and the God of peace shall be with you.* ” (Phil 4:7-9) ***Peace with God: that’s good: Peace of God: that’s better: God of peace: that’s best.*** (1) I say that because His peace will stimulate,

(a) GUIDANCE IN THE LIFE:

Do you see (3:15) ? Now the words “ *let,* ” and “ *rule,* ” are one word in the Greek. It was used to describe the

activity of an umpire in deciding the outcome of an athletic contest. “ *Let the peace of Christ function as an umpire in your hearts.* ” You see, the peace of Christ guides believers in making decisions. When we obey the will of God we have His peace within, but when we step out of His will we lose His peace. We must beware however, of a false peace. Do you remember Jonah ? I mean he deliberately disobeyed the Lord and headed for Tarshish instead of Nineveh yet he was able to sleep in the hold of a ship in the midst of a storm. “ *I had peace about it,* ” is not sufficient evidence that we are in His will. We must pray, surrender to His will, seek His guidance in the Scriptures and know His peace. For “ *peace of heart alone,* ” is not always the peace of God. I wonder, is there something in your life this that’s disturbing your peace ? That thing you want to do, that place you want to visit, that letter you want to write, that email you want to send, that relationship you want to form, that circle you want to join is it obstructing the sun of His peace ? If it is don’t do it.

An old story which comes from the Salvation Army in the last century tells of a strong-willed woman who was nicknamed “ *Warrior Brown,* ” because of her fiery temper. She was often belligerent and became enraged whenever she got drunk. Then one day she was converted. Her entire life was wonderfully changed by the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. At an open-air meeting a week later, she told everyone what Jesus Christ had done for her. Suddenly a scoffer threw a potato at her, causing a stinging bruise. Had she not been converted, she would have lashed out at the man furiously. But now God’s

grace had saved her, so that she quietly picked up the potato and put it into her pocket without saying a word. No more was heard of the incident until the time of the “*harvest festival*,” months later. Then the dear lady who had been known as “*Warrior Brown*,” brought as her offering a little sack of potatoes. She explained that after the open-air meeting she had cut up and planted the “*insulting potato*,” and what she was now presenting to the Lord was “*the increase*.” My Warrior Brown had allowed “*the peace of Christ*,” to be umpire of her life.

(b) GLADNESS IN THE CHURCH:

Do you see how Paul puts it ? “*To the which also ye are called in one body*.” (3:15) You see unity is essential. Two sisters were at loggerheads in the church at Philippi and Paul had to rebuke them sharply. “*I beseech Euodias and Syntyche that they be of the same mind in the Lord*.” (Phil 4:2) Isn't it sad that so often a breach of fellowship in the church comes between two mature believers? Two office-bearers who won't speak to each other. Two women, who bear each other a grudge. Two men who ought to know better. Two Christians who are prepared to allow that breach to go on until it affects the life and testimony of the church before an ungodly world. But when God's peace reigns in our hearts, we will be at peace with others in the assembly.

Myhow often we hear of church trouble, church splits, and church disagreements ? Yet, how much of that problem would have been avoided if the peace of God

would have ruled that congregation. My God has not called us to be “*troublemakers*,” but “*peacemakers*.” I think of two porcupines that were huddled together, in the winter, trying to keep warm. Their quills kept pricking each other, so they moved apart. While they were apart they nearly froze to death, so they huddled together again. Yet, together, they continued to needle each other. Is this not a picture of the local church? where believers “*needle*,” each other ? This believer gets upset with this believer. This member becomes angry with this member. This Christian raises up against this Christian. And, before you know it you have something that resembles a bar-room scuffle. But when God's peace is evident in our lives, God's peace will be expressed in our churches. For His peace will stimulate (a) (b) and,

(c) GRATITUDE IN THE HEART:

“*And be ye thankful*,” You see, when there is peace in the heart there will be praise on the lips. My gratitude will be the natural outcome of Christ's peace in the heart. Do you know something ? The believer out of God's will is never found with gratitude in his heart. Do you remember David when he committed adultery ? For twelve months he ran around with unconfessed, unrenounced and unforgiven sin. You see, when he concealed his sin, he lost his peace and he lost his praise (Ps 32: 51) But when he confessed his sin his song returned. Now here's the first thing. If we are consistent in our Christianity (1)

(2) SATURATED WITH HIS WORD

Do you see (3:15) ? Listen, if you want to measure your spirituality ask yourself this question. How much time do I spend in the Word of God ? “ *The word of Christ,* ” of course here means the Word of God. Now do you recall that Paul is dealing in this letter with the Colossian Heresy ? I mean the false teachers came to Colossae with man made traditions, religious rules and human philosophies. They tried to harmonize God’s Word with their teachings but they could not succeed. For God’s Word always magnifies the Lord Jesus. It was not the word of the false teachers that brought salvation to the Colossians, it was the Word of the truth of the Gospel. (1:5) And that same Word not only saves us but sanctifies us. Now do you notice that Paul speaks here of,

(a) *THE RECEPTION OF GOD’S WORD IN THE LIFE:*

“ *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom,* ” (3:16) The word “ *dwell,* ” means “ *to be at home.* ” Let the word of Christ be at home in you. Home is comfortable isn’t it ? Paul is calling on these believers to let the Word take up residence and be at home in their lives. “ *Richly,* ” means “ *abundantly.* ” Let the Word fill you up so that you are jammed full of it. So that if they cut you anywhere you will bleed Bible verses. My are you content with spiritual snacks ? Or are you allowing the word of Christ to dwell in you richly ? Well, how is it going to do that ? Well, I’ve got to read it, then I’ve got to study it, then I’ve got to live it. Did you know that there are **four things** that you have to do with the Word ? Heed it: (Matt 13:9) Handle it: (2 Tim 2:15) Hide it:

(Ps 119:11) and Hold it forth: (Phil 2:16) Now when you have done all that it will dwell in you richly. Do you recall what was said of the blessed man in (Psalm 1) ? “ *His delight is in the law of the Lord,* ” is yours ? I mean I love to hear this Word preached. I love to hear it taught. I love to read it in my own devotional time. Do you have a devotion time ? Do you have a time when you open up the Word and let God speak to you ? This is where you need to get your advice, your counsel. You see, God is the authority on the church, on marriage, on the state and on the home. Now it’s interesting to notice here that the parallel passage to (Col Ch 3) is (Eph Ch 5) Do you know what Paul says there ? He says “ *Be filled with the Spirit.* ” (Eph 5:18) People say “ *Oh, to be filled with the Spirit,* ” well what does it mean to be filled with the Spirit ? Does it mean you go spiritually bananas and have all kinds of ecstatic experiences ? No, to be filled with the Spirit of God is to be filled with the Word of God.

John McArthur says, “ *The Word in the heart and mind is the handle by which the Spirit turns the will.* ” It’s clear that these two concepts are identical because the results are the same in both passages. So to be filled with the Spirit is to be controlled by the Word. And to have the Word dwelling in you richly is to be controlled by the Holy Spirit. (a)

(b) *THE PRODUCTION OF GOD’S WORD IN THE LIFE:*

I mean what will God’s Word produce in my life ?

1. MINISTRY:

I think of a time when C. H. Spurgeon was approached by a young seminary student. The lad had a great desire to know the Lord, and serve the Lord, but, was deeply troubled, and said, “ *There are so many things about the Bible that I don’t understand.* ” Spurgeon wisely replied, “ *My son, you must expect God to know some things that you don’t understand.* ” You see, when God’s Word “ *dwells in us richly,* ” ministry will be the outcome. You’re going to go out and with all wisdom you’re going to teach (that’s positive) and you’re going to admonish (that’s negative) Now do you see the reason why there is a dearth of ministry at the Lord’s Table ? My if the word of God is dwelling in you richly, ministry will be the outcome. 1. Then,

2. MELODY:

In other words when you are filled with the “ *word of Christ,* ” there will be a song in your soul. Now did you notice Paul speaks here of,

1. The MATTER of our Praise:

What ? Well, *Psalms* were taken from the Old Testament Psalter, the book of Psalms. They put psalms to music much as we do today. *Hymns:* were expressions of praise to God. Its thought that some portions of the New Testament such as (Col 1:15-20) and (Phil 2:6-11) were original hymns sung in the early church. *Spiritual songs:* emphasize testimony. (Rev 5:9-10) They express in song

what the Lord has done for us. Now did you notice there is a definite relationship between our knowledge of God’s Word and our expression of worship in song ? My has there ever been a day when there have been so many unbiblical songs ? Am I not right when I say that a singer has no more right to sing a lie than a preacher has to preach a lie ? You see, the great songs of the faith were written, for the most part, by believers who knew the doctrines of the Word of God. Many so called “ *Christian songs,* ” today are written by people who have little or no knowledge of this Book. 1.

2. The MANNER of our Praise:

How ? “ *Singing with grace in your hearts,* ” (3:16) its does not meaning singing in a gracious way, but singing because God’s grace is in our hearts. Sometimes it takes grace to sing, sometimes it takes grace to listen to others sing. My do you like to sing ? I did not ask can you sing ? The question is the not the ability to sing but the desire to sing. James Merritt tells the story of a man who was standing on the street corner singing, hoping that people would give him money. One man walked by listened to him for a moment or two and then approached and said, “ *I want you to sing at my funeral. I am a very wealthy man, and I am going to write you out a cheque now for \$500. Will you sing at my funeral ?* ” The man said, “ *I would be honoured to sing at your funeral, but why do you want me ?* ” The man said, “ *Because I want everyone there to be genuinely sorry that I am dead.* ” Now you may not sing well but it will be well when you sing because you will be “ *making melody in your heart to*

the Lord.” (Eph 5:19) You see, we listen to the voice but God listens to the heart and He wants every heart singing praise to Him. 1, 2, and there is

3. The MOTIVE for our Praise:

Why ? “ *Singing with grace in your heart to the Lord,*” My when you sing, do you sing for the glory of the Lord ? All of this musical concerts and I enjoy them, but for whose glory ? People always say, “ *Well we’re here to minister to you in song.*” Now I don’t mind getting ministered to, but that’s not really the purpose of music. The purpose of music is to minister to the Lord, it’s for the glory of the Lord. Someone has said that a successful Christian life gives attention to three books. God’s Book, the Bible, the cheque book, and the hymn book. My Do we know anything about this spirit of adoration ? This joyful worship coming from redeemed hearts ? (1) (2)

(3) SEPARATED UNTO HIS NAME

Do you see how Paul puts in (3:17) ? To do everything in the name of Jesus is to act consistently with who He is and what He wants. Let me break it down further. It means,

(a) RELATING EVERYTHING TO HIM:

Do you see how comprehensive this is ? “ *Word or deed,*” takes in everything in life. Preaching, teaching, eating, exercising, driving, cleaning the house, shopping, visiting, working, playing, everything. Our words are everything

that passes our lips, even in unguarded moments. Everything we say or do is to be done “ *in the name of the Lord Jesus.*” A strange dog came to a preacher’s house, and his three sons soon became quite fond of it. It so happened that there was three white hairs in the animal’s tail. One day an advertisement was seen in the newspaper about a lost dog which fitted that description perfectly. “ *In the presence of my three boys,*” said the minister, “ *we carefully separated the three white hairs and removed them.*” The real owner discovered where the straying canine had found a home and came to claim him. The dog showed every sign of recognition, so the man was ready to take him away. Quickly the minister spoke up, “ *Didn’t you say the dog would be known by three white hairs in its tail ?*” The owner, unable to find the identifying feature, was forced to leave.

The minister said later, “ *We kept the dog, but I lost my three boys for Christ.*” His sons no longer had confidence in what their father professed. He hadn’t practiced what he preached. My are you relating everything in your life to Christ ? Acting according to His will, with His power, for His glory ?

(b) RELYING TOTALLY ON HIM:

The prophet Micah says, “ *All people will walk every one in the name of his god and we will walk in the name of our God for ever and ever.*” (Micah 4:5) It points to entire dependence on Him. And since we are united with Christ through the indwelling Holy Spirit we have all the resources we need for holy living. (a) (b)

(c) *RENDERING PRAISE THROUGH HIM:*

For whatever we do in the name of Christ, ought to be joined with thanksgiving. (1:3, 12, 2:7 3:15, 17, 4:2) And if we cannot give thanks then we had better not do it or say it. A city missionary in London was called to an old tenement building where a woman lay dying in the last stages of a terrible disease. The room was cold and she had nowhere to lie but on the floor. When the missionary was asked if there was anything she could do she replied, “ *I have all I really need, I have Jesus Christ.*” Upon hearing that story, Charles Wesley wrote,

**In the heart of London city,
'Mid the dwellings of the poor,
These bright golden words were uttered,
“ I have Christ.” What want I more ?**

**Spoken by a lonely woman,
Dying on a garret floor,
Having not one earthly comfort:
“I have Christ.” What want I more ?**

**He who heard them ran to fetch her,
Something from the world's great store;
It was needless, died she saying:
“ I have Christ.” What want I more ?**

**Oh, my dear, my fellow saint
High or low, or rich or poor,
Can you say with deep thanksgiving,
“ I have Christ.” What want I more ?**

Do you want it all simplified ? Just do this, everything you do, do in the name of Jesus Christ. That means consistent with who he is, consistent with what He would want. Whatever you do, do all consistent with the person of Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God. Do you know what that means ? We're right back to the same thing. When you put on the new man, who are you putting on ? Christ. Do you recall how Paul puts it ? Here it is, the sum up of everything. “ *But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ.*” (Rom 13:14) Isn't that great ? Put Him on. My that's one way to say the whole thing. Paul can say put off, put on, or just get love together and put it on, or be ruled by the peace of Christ and the word of Christ, or better yet do everything you do in the name of Christ, or better yet just put on Christ.

Under the banner of C.S.S.M. a group of young people were bringing Christ to the children at morning sessions on the beach and afternoon games. One little boy had joined in it all for several days. One night when his Mummy was tucking him he asked, “ *Mummy, what was Jesus like ?*” Mummy didn't know what to answer and as she was thinking he went on, “ *Oh, I think I know Mummy.*” Then naming one of the workers among the children he said, “ *Mummy I think Jesus must have been like Mr. So and So when he smiles.*”

***Have thine own way Lord Have thine own way
Hold o'er my being absolute sway
Fill with Thy Spirit till all can see
Christ, only, always living in me***

