

Studies in the Epistle to the Colossians
Chapter Sixteen
When God's Word is at Home in Our Hearts

“¹⁴ And above all these things *put on* charity, which is the bond of perfectness. 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. 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 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” (Colossians 3:14-17).

In the first two chapters of the epistle to the Colossians, God has shown us the distinctives of a Bible believing Christian. He has shown us the particular beliefs that distinguish Bible believing Christians from all other religious beliefs. **Some of these are:**

1. Separation from false religious beliefs; the emphasis here is not to allow the influences of false religions to absorb us and cause us to lose our distinctiveness (Colossians 1:24-29)
2. Beliefs that hold to the distinct uniqueness of Jesus Christ (Colossians 1:15-23)
3. The Biblical expectation of a new life for true believers (Colossians 2:1-8)
4. The Biblical distinction over all false beliefs of total, absolute “completeness in Christ” for the true believer (Colossians 2:9-13)
5. Contradictions to the believer's completeness in Christ:

A. Legalism; Colossians 3:14-17

B. Mysticism; Colossians 2:18-19

C. Asceticism; Colossians 2:20-23

In chapters three through four, the instruction moves from doctrinal distinctiveness to the expected and corresponding change in life style, or a PRACTICAL DISTINCTIVENESS. Going back to verse 12 of chapter three, the command “put on” calls for a firm determination to practice, or manifest in our life styles, what we are positionally in Christ (2:10).

The girdle of love (Colossians 3:14)

In the Middle East, people wore very loose garments because of the heat and humidity. In order to travel (*which was usually done by walking*) they would gird themselves up. A person who allowed his garments to be loose and who would not gird up his loins would make very little progress on his journey. We should have an open mind to the things of God's Word, and a closed mind to the philosophies of the world.

“¹³ Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; ¹⁴ As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: ¹⁵ But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; ¹⁶ Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy” (I Peter 1:13-16).

Therefore, this metaphor of girding ourselves with “charity” speaks of that which constrains us to be obedient.

“¹⁴ For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: ¹⁵ And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again” (II Corinthians 5:14-15).

This relates the virtues of Colossians 3:5-13 to the environment in which we live. Virtues are useless unless they are applied to relationships. Love holds all of these virtues in a proper perspective. This kind of love is distinctively Christian. This kind of love finds its only source in God. It is implanted within the child of God in the Person of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

“¹⁴ We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. ¹⁵ Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. ¹⁶ Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. ¹⁷ But whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? ¹⁸ My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. ¹⁹ And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him” (I John 3:14-19).

“⁷ Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. ⁸ He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. ⁹ In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. ¹⁰ Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (I John 4:7-10).

Biblical love is not the mindless, universal acceptance of all beliefs systems within the *Christian* community. Some of these beliefs directly contradict the Word of God. In fact, many of the epistles, like the epistle to the Colossians, were written to correct false beliefs we are now asked to blindly accept as simply other acceptable alternatives.

“⁵ And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another. ⁶ And this is love, that we walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it. ⁷ For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. ⁸ Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward. ⁹ Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. ¹⁰ If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: ¹¹ For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds” (II John 1:5-11).

“I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth” (III John 1:4).

Love is the bond of “perfectness” (maturity, or practical completeness). It has been said, *No believer has achieved spiritual maturity until all of his works are thoroughly encompassed with love.* “Bond” is from the Greek word *sundesmos* (soon'-des-mos). It means that which binds together, a band, bond; of ligaments by which the members of the human body are united together; or that which is bound together, a bundle. In the context it refers to Christian love as the bonding agent of spiritually mature believers; love being define as sacrificial obedience to the Lordship of Christ through the leading of the indwelling Holy Spirit and the Word of God.

God’s peace is a practical manifestation of practical completeness or spiritual maturity (Colossians 3:15-17).

God’s peace will rule our emotions (v. 15). When the circumstances of life seem overwhelming, we become anxious. Anxiety is the opposite of trust. When that happens, God’s peace is not ruling our hearts. Christ should be more than the Lord of our salvation. We must allow Him to be Lord of our emotions. When that happens, God’s peace will protect us from the influences of the harmful circumstances of life. When God’s peace does not rule our hearts, the difficulties intended to increase are faith have the tendency to have the opposite effect. Those difficulties become erasers of faith.

God's peace will rule our hearts. When that happens we have accepted Romans 8:28.

“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”

It is God's peace that **unites** believers (Colossians 3:15b). It refers to an inter-dependency of believers responsible to and for one another.

“¹¹ Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do. ¹² And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; ¹³ And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves. ¹⁴ Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men. ¹⁵ See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men” (I Thessalonians 5:11-15).

God's peace is a peace that generates **thankfulness** in the lives of believers (Colossians 3:15c). The person who understands that God's working in his life is for his good, will become a thankful person.

“In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you” (I Thessalonians 5:18).

The reigning Word of God (Colossians 3:16a); “Let the word of Christ dwell in you”

The “word of Christ” is synonymous with the Word of the Lord (see I Thessalonians 1:8).

“For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing.

What is God's expectation of believers according to the command “let the word of Christ dwell in you? The Word of Christ is the life directing command of the Lord to be unquestionably obeyed.

The word “dwell” literally means *to be at home*. It does not refer to a visit. It refers to allowing the Lord Jesus to sovereignly govern our lives through His Word. A subject of a sovereign understands that all he owned or claimed was at the directive of the sovereign who held all real rights to that property. That is the idea here.

The word “richly” means that it should not be a burden to submit to the Word of Christ. The Word of Christ should be considered a *high prize* and greatly appreciated. A believer must realize that there can not be any real value in life if the Word of Christ is not highly prized and obeyed. Without it, we are nothing more than spiritual paupers regardless of any material wealth we may possess.

Two practical applications for allowing the Word of Christ to reign (Colossians 3:16b)

1. “In wisdom teaching,” wisdom is centered in Christ (*applicationaly*) while teaching emphasizes instruction in the practical application of the Word of Christ.
2. “Admonishing one another” refers to the willingness of fellow believers to receive warning and correction from one another.

When Christ's Word is at home in our lives, these two things will be a welcomed practical reality.

Methods of teaching and admonishment

1. Psalms and hymns in music

We can teach with poetry and song. These two vehicles of teaching have historically embraced all forms of Biblical truth with the intent of promoting spiritual and emotional response from the child of God pertinent to the character and nature of God.

The “singing” of Psalms is intended to be a means by which the child of God expresses verbally that which is a reality in his heart. The “singing” of Psalms was the musical expression of doctrinal beliefs about Who God is and our faith in Him. “Singing is a means to express the testimonies of a believer’s faith and beliefs. “Singing was to be done (v 16) “to the Lord,” and not to entertain or impress men. This is a central principle governing the use of music in worship. If the purpose of “singing” is intended to make you *feel good* it is not Biblical music (v 17).

Whatsoever you say “in word” or do “in deed” should only be done when you have the complete approval of Christ by the authority of His inspired Word (Colossians 3:17).

Studies in the Epistle to the Colossians
Chapter Sixteen
When God's Word is at Home in Our Hearts

1. As we move from the first two chapters into the last two chapters, what is the difference between **doctrinal distinctiveness** and **practical distinctiveness**? _____

2. What is the relationship of the practical command to "put on" in Colossians 3:12 to the doctrinal truth of Colossians 2:10? _____

3. What is the meaning behind the metaphor of *the girdle of love* used in Colossians 3:14? _____

4. Read II Corinthians 5:14-15. Many times love is used as an excuse to allow Christians to do things that really are unscriptural. In what way is true Christian love intended to constrain the believer? _____

5. From the context of your answer to the above question, how do the virtues of Colossians 3:5-13 relate to Biblical love? _____

According to I John 3:14-19 and 4:7-10, what is the only source of true Christian love and how does a person possess it? _____

6. Read II John 1:5-11 and III John 1:4. What do these verses have to say about the false notion that love is the universal acceptance of all beliefs within the *Christian* community? _____

7. List three ways from Colossians 3:15 in which the product of God's peace is a practical manifestation of spiritual maturity in the life of a believer.

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

8. Describe in what way the Word of Christ dwells in the life of a believer. Discuss what that means practically. _____

9. From Colossians 3:16b, what are the two practical applications of allowing the Word of Christ to reign in your life? _____
