

“Some Christian Qualities to Seek”

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A brief message from the Book of Colossians. Colossians 3, in the fifteenth verse, often read and memorized by the people of God but still as fresh as a new morning. The Holy Spirit says to us, let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body. And be ye thankful. And 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. 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.

Now, he says, "let" here, and as you know, the word let means, see to it. It doesn't mean permit only. It's stronger than that. It's an affirmative, positive word—permit. Let as we say, let him do it. It's to grant permission, but "let" here. And also let means hinder. But in this instance, it means see to it that. In other words, as George Duncan said last Thursday night at the Keswick, there is no place in grace where we are free from the necessity of discipline and choice. I agree with that fully. There is no place where you're going to float to heaven on a pink cloud. You must take hold of yourself, because in us dwell two powers, the natural life, with bad inclinations. I know that some say that the bad, natural life is taken out, but I've never met anybody yet that I'd trust if the Lord left him. I've never met any Christian yet that I'd trust him very long if the Lord left him.

They say that one great old brother who believed in the elimination, that is eradication of the natural bad in man, the natural flesh. They said to him, brother, you say that the natural life received from Adam has been eliminated? He said, yes sir. That's what I believe. And he said, let me ask you a question. Suppose that a young man who had had the natural Adam life completely eliminated, married a young woman who had had the natural life completely eliminated. And they had a baby, would the baby be redeemed automatically and not need the new birth? They had him. So, he gave an illustration. He said, well, it's like this. He said, you have a sour apple tree and you graft a good apple branch in, he said, that good branch will bear good fruit. But if you plant the seeds, you would get a bad tree. That was supposed to answer that question, but all it did was confirm the other man's opinion, because obviously, that seed was bad, and it's bad still. So, we've got that to deal with. It's possible to live above it and live in the Spirit and not fulfill it as I tried to preach last week at Keswick.

But there is within us the power of Christ, the presence of the new Man and the holy inclinations and the good inclinations we find in the seventh of Romans yearning to do good. And in the eighth chapter of Romans we're taught how the yearning to do good can overcome the yearning, the gravitational tendencies of the natural man. But our lives will go in the direction that we

determine they should go. He said, let's see to it, see to it. The indwelling power of Christ then will furnish the power. This that I have said previously is not in any way to excuse poor living. I don't believe in it. I believe that God's children are to live day by day in the Spirit and not sin and fulfill the lusts of the flesh. He said, let's permit, see to it that the peace of God rules in your heart. And whatever rules in your heart, that's the way you'll go, just as whoever is at the wheel of the car, that's where their car will go. And whoever runs the country, that's the way the country will go. And so, whoever rules your heart, if it's the peace of God, why, you will have that in your heart and that will be the way your life will go. To which also he says ye are called.

Now, Adam, old Adam and his brood come from that bad seed the brother talked about in that apple. There's inward discord there. That's our trouble, inward discord. We've always had inward discord you know. It's only recently that we invented psychiatrists who lay you down on the couch and have you tell your story. But everybody has had inward discord. I can imagine that Adam and Eve walked around grinding their teeth many of time. And Adam went away shaking his head saying, that woman. I am sure of it. I'm sure of it. That's just because they were fallen human beings, discord was their inward discord. And always it's the inward discord that causes the outward discord.

If suddenly, everybody in the world had peace of heart we could eliminate the Sputnik and all the armies and navies and policemen. If we had inner accord, I said discord, but accord, inner accord, if we had inner peace, everybody had inner peace, we can eliminate all armies. And we could call home John Foster Dulles and all the rest and say, now, go fishing. There's nothing to worry about, nothing to worry about, because the inner discord is taken away and everybody's at peace. And when people are at peace, they won't hurt each other. It's when they're not at peace that the trouble comes, and most people aren't.

So, he said, have peace. Let's see to it that the peace of God rules in your heart to which you're also called. And it's the inward discord that causes the outward bickering and brawls and wars. And it's the inward redemption, redemption and reestablishment of peace that results in inward harmony. And he said, ye are called, you're called in one body, harmonious accord between ourselves as a source of measureless enjoyment. No question. It's a source of measureless enjoyment. And discord is the source of the greatest suffering in the world.

I have said, I have never had anybody answer it. Maybe it wasn't worth answering or maybe nobody could, that I have said that I believe the source of the most pain and suffering among mankind is bad dispositions, people with bad tempers. But you say, isn't cancer worse? No, cancer kills its victim and gets it over with, but a fellow with a bad disposition lives with it, maybe seventy years. And his wife lives with it, poor woman, maybe fifty years. And she suffers, not as sharp and as acute maybe as tuberculosis or cancer or leukemia, but it doesn't kill its victim. It just tortures

them till they die. But inward peace, the harmony and love inside the heart is a source of great enjoyment to us all.

So, let the peace of God rule in your heart to which you're called in one body. And let the word of Christ dwell in you richly. Now, here's what the Gideons are dedicated to, to giving out are the word of Christ. The word of Christ. The word of Christ, what does it mean? Does it mean that you will buy a red-letter testament? If you have a red-letter testament, don't be offended by what I say, because it's perfectly alright for you to have one I suppose. But I think the red-letter testament unintentionally gives a bad impression, because it gives the impression that the letters written in red, were the words of Christ and the other ones are the word of man which is not true.

The word of Christ is not only the words Christ spoke, but they're all the words spoken about Christ by inspired man. So, letting the word of Christ dwell in you richly may mean letting the first Psalm dwell in you or the 23rd Psalm or the 22nd Psalm, or the 46th Psalm or the 103 Psalm, or any of the Psalms or the Prophets, or the Gospels, or the Acts or the Epistles or Revelation. So don't imagine that if you see some words printed and read that that means that they're Christ and they're more important, they're not more important. In addition to the fact they murder your eyes, I don't know whoever invented that, but it's invented and so we have.

But the word of Christ is whatever the holy prophet said about Christ, what the holy apostle said about Christ and what Christ said about things when He was on earth. That's the word of Christ. And let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.

Now, where does it dwell in you? Well, it dwells in your mind by memorizing, and we ought to memorize the Scriptures. We ought to memorize it by loving it rather than mechanical memorization, but we ought to memorize it. It's in your mind by memorizing. It's in your heart, by loving it. It's in your will by choosing. And it's in your life by enthroning. Those four things--that would make a sermon in itself and anybody can have it if he wants it for a sermon outline of four points here. The word of Christ dwells in your mind by memorizing it. There's something about the word of God, when it gets into the human mind, it corrects faults and purifies the mind and does something good for it. And then it's in your heart by loving it. We should love the word as David said he did and it's in your will by choosing to obey it and it's in your whole life by enthroning it. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom.

Now, the Holy Ghost put that little phrase in, "all wisdom," a little prepositional phrase thrown in here as a modifier. And I want you to notice that he said, let the word of Christ dwell in you and in all wisdom, because it's perfectly possible to have a lot of the word of God in your mind and have no wisdom at all. And so, it will be worse off than if he didn't. I mean for instance, Jehovah's Witnesses quote the Bible continuously, but they have no wisdom. They quote it all out of its context and give their own meaning to it. And so there are other groups that quote the Bible, but

it's not in wisdom. There is a divine wisdom. The same Holy Spirit that inspired the Bible must teach the Bible. He must illuminate the Bible so that when you hear it and read it and memorize it, you'll know what it means in spiritual meaning.

Then he says, teaching and admonishing one another. In this day and age, we hire our teachers. We hire teachers at school, and we sit and listen to them and go home. But the Scripture says teaching and admonishing one another. Every one of you should be a teacher of somebody else. Admonished means to reprove and to warn gently and kindly, but seriously and determinedly.

I've been doing a bit of research on the old Methodists for a series I'm writing on those amazing Methodists. And you know what I find? I find they divided their churches up into groups of twelve, called classes, and up into smaller groups called bands. And they had group leaders, class leaders, and then they had persons over those bands. And the business of those class leaders was not to lead the meeting, not to be as we say now, the emcee. The Methodists never heard of that horrible thing. But what they did was this, they picked out some wise old sharp-eyed, prayerful brother and they said, now we'll make you a class leader and we'll put eleven people under you, not actually under you, but we'll put them into your prayerful care.

And they gave him the list and gave him their names and said, now you watch over them as over your own soul and pray for them. And if you see them going wrong, go to them. So that this class leader with these eleven persons to whom he was responsible, women for women I suppose and men for men. But when this class leader saw anybody beginning to slip, he didn't go to the pastor and he didn't go to the open prayer meeting. And he didn't talk behind his back. He went right straight to his Christian brother. And he said, my brother, I am bothered about you. I'm worried about you because of the way you're living. And most often he got him straightened out and nobody ever knew anything about it. It was the Holy Spirit using a man to admonish another man-teaching and admonishing one another. But we're not honest enough nor courageous enough now to do that. Now if you admonished a man he gets blazing mad, but that's because we're so carnal and far from God.

In Colossae, they were assumed to be close enough to God to accept admonishments. And in the Methodists, they had to be close enough to God or they got shown the back door. They actually did show them the back door. And if Wesley found things weren't going right, he said, straighten out you'll see my face no more and he walked out on them and they straightened out.

Now, if we did this, this would head off many a bad fall on the part of some of our Christian people, particularly young Christians. It says we're to teach and admonish each other, and one way of teaching and admonishing is to sing. Sing songs and hymns and spiritual songs. Now, this is Paul's threefold classification: psalms of David set to music, hymns written by the Christians and you'll find a number of them if I had time. I'd point them out to you in the New Testament. Some of Paul's

epistles contain little gems which Paul didn't write, but which we borrowed and set in there, the same as if you hear a preacher preaching a sermon, and suddenly, he goes off into a four-line stanza of a hymn saying what he wants to say better than he can. So, Paul, in some of his epistles, quoted certain passages, which were actually hymns which the Christians were singing. And he said that they ought to sing these, and not only the songs but hymns of what the old Methodists and Presbyterians called a human composition. And then spiritual songs, I don't know what that would be, perhaps it would be another way of saying the other two, songs and hymns.

And then, singing with grace in your heart to the Lord. You know, whenever I go, almost any place I go, what I miss is our singing here. I miss it. We don't have the greatest singers in the world here. We have good singers. And we have some who have a reputation as good singers. But I mean that we're not a St. Olaf's outfit here. But there's something here, the singing; singing with grace in your heart. And I hear grace in a song when I hear the song. There are some religious songs that you couldn't get any grace and grace would enter that place. But there are other songs that you'll sing with grace in your heart, you'll make a rather ordinary song pretty good. Have you ever had the experience of having a fellow who wasn't too well instructed, but who did love God and who sang with the Spirit. He would get up and choose a rather ragged number that wasn't too good and put his head off on one side and close his eyes and sing it, and pretty soon you were getting blessed even if the song wasn't the best. Now if he'd had a good one, he'd have multiplied his usefulness. But, I've seen that happen more than once. And if somebody sang with grace in their hearts, and if the song wasn't so good, they made it good. And I've heard some of the most noble songs ever composed by the pen, inspired man, ruined by being sung without grace.

And then it says, sing to the Lord. Not sing to the congregation, but sing to the Lord. And if you sing a good song to the Lord, somebody's going to get help as sure as you live. And it's my positive conviction that next to the preaching of the word and expounding of the Scriptures, the next greatest power to do good in the public assembly is grace-filled singing of great songs to the Lord. Sing with grace in your heart. There oughtened to be anybody in the choir that couldn't come stand right up before the board and take an examination on whether they had grace in their heart or not. The paid and the professional singer doesn't do much good.

One of the sexiest singers singing today, I'm not even going to advertise him by speaking his name. One of the most, one of the most carnal, sexiest singers singing today has some sacred album. They said they did it to try to help to counteract bad publicity. Can you imagine a guy, a man, a young fellow so terrible? He's got a reputation says, well, I want to get away from this reputation for being that kind of a fellow, so I'm going to sing some hymns and so he sings himself some hymns and poor, dumb Christians buy them and put them on and play them and wipe the tears out of their eyes. Well, singing with grace in your heart. And if we don't sing with grace in our heart, we might just as well not sing.

Then in closing it says, whatsoever you do, whatever you do, and you know we've all got a lot to do. Do you ever get up in the morning and say to yourself, I haven't much to do today, but before 10 o'clock, you were involved in so many things you wish you had twelve hands instead of two. It happens to me all the time. I get up early and come up to church here. I'm up an hour and a half in the church here before you're present, looking around at things for the Sunday school and straightening out things and praying a little and going over my sermons, and I'm here. And I think I'll have nothing to do when I get up there but sit and meditate and pray. When I get up here, I find that there's so much to do that it takes up to church time and behind the scenes, but I'm doing it. Whatever you do, he said, the world's full of things to do. Personally, I think if we were wiser than we are, we'd find some things that didn't have to be done. We cut down on our activity a bit. We do them. But if we, do it to the Lord it says, whatever you do, do to the glory of God, in the name of the Lord Jesus giving thanks to God the Father. So, this glorifies all activities, that is if they're divine, if they're in God.

Domestic toil, one of our poor pastors. Here he's been up every night now for ten days. And his poor bleary-eyed wife. The little fellow is healthy, but he just mixed up. He thinks night is day and day is night. So poor Brother Moore has to lug him around at night you know, so if you hear a tramp, tramp, tramp, don't think the enemies coming, it's just Brother Moore. He's carrying the new baby around. You can do it to the glory of God, son if you know how.

And you can do everything to the glory of God, domestic toil, labor, caring for babies, your business, your long-distance calls and closing of that deal if it's honest. If it isn't honest, you can't. But if it's honest, you can do it for the glory of God and your school. You can do that for the glory of God and your travel, whether it's by bus which is the worst way to travel, or by plane which is the fastest. Why, you can still glorify God, giving thanks to God the Father. And I say, we must preserve a thankful heart.

I wonder what there is about frost and yellow leaves that makes people thankful? I don't think we ought to wait until the birds go south to get thankful. Thankfulness should be an ingredient in our Christian hearts, and we shouldn't be thankful all the time. For thankfulness is more precious than diamonds. And I for my part, I'm determined to be thankful. Every day I considered a bonus. I ought to be dead long ago if God had dealt with me. And if he'd have been as hard on me as I've been on His people, I would have been. But He still lets me live. And every day I think of it and say thank Thee Lord and another day a bonus. Every day is a bonus, every day. I think we ought to thank Him and keep thankful. And if we keep a thankful heart and a singing heart and a Bible-filled heart, a Scripture-filled heart and a good honest, courageous heart that isn't afraid to admonish and reprove when we have to, why, we'll certainly have peace of heart. And if we have peace of heart, why, we'll have, and it's all here in this text. We'll have harmony and accord and that's the sweetest thing in the world. It's like the oil on the head of Aaron that went down to his beard and

went down to the skirts of his garment for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life forevermore.