

Gems from Colossians

3 – Our Life as The People of God (Col 3:12-17)

Paul addresses Christians as "God's Chosen People" , "The People of God", Long before God had chosen Israel as His messengers "not because they were superior to other peoples but because they were the weakest of all peoples". They were chosen to be God's messengers to all peoples but they thought they were God's favourites. They failed God and as the Old Testament progresses God's purpose is to be found in a remnant only. Finally they too failed and God's purpose is found in one person only – Jesus. From Him, His death and resurrection, come a new People of God – Christians. (1 Peter 2.9.). God's love is set upon them and within them and they are to be His representatives in the world. They are God's chosen people, holy and beloved, called to be an alternative society and to present and represent Jesus to the rest of the world.

How? Paul here sets out the character of the People of God. It is far from being very religious, "holier than thou" kind of people. It is in fact receiving and manifesting that character and those qualities which we saw in Jesus; compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience, bearing with one another, forgiving one another – as Christ has forgiven us. Above all we are to put on love – the love of Jesus. So God's peace will fill us. And, says Paul, "be thankful".

There are 2 things the Church needs to give attention to, Paul says: First to good, sound teaching and, with it, praising God. We have so much to thank God for, so much to praise Him for. So let's praise Him, says Paul, with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.

Do everything – live all life – says Paul in the Name of the Lord Jesus – that is in His character and spirit with thanks and praise in it all. What Paul is saying is that when people look at us, either as Christians in society or as the Church, they should find themselves confronted by Jesus Himself acting and shining through us.

Questions for discussion:

1. When a baby is born it often shows an outward likeness to its parents. But it has to learn and grow how to be a true member of that family. What has helped and what is helping you most to grow as a Christian and as part of the Body of Christ here?
2. In Isaiah 5 Israel is called God's vineyard. In Mark 12 Jesus says the vineyard will be taken from them and given to another. Whose job and calling is it now to tend the vineyard of the Lord and produce fruit for Him? (Cf. John 15.16).
3. In the Old Testament the doctrine of the Remnant is strong (Cf. Noah, Abraham, the captivity and disappearance of the 10 Northern tribes and so on). Christ is the end of the remnant idea. The New Life, the new Israel of God, the People of God are "the remnant according to the election of grace" (Rom.11.5). Now Christians are the Chosen People, the People of God – His servants and messengers in the world. How far does our church act like that?
4. How far do our church services help you grow in Jesus and equip you to be His picked representatives in your world? What more do you need? What other forms of church life would help you more to grow and live in Christ and for Christ, showing His likeness and doing His work?
5. Israel of old always grasped at the idea of election as privilege. In Scripture election is always for service. Which understanding is prominent among Christians today?
6. In the Bible "holy" means set apart for the service of God. It does not mean better or superior to others. Have we got that straight today?
7. How much "teaching and admonishing one another" takes place among us? Is this the strength of Home Groups?