

**Emmanuel Reformed Church of Neerlandia**  
**Elder Home Visits – AD 2017**  
**Being Renewed**

**Colossians 3:10–14** <sup>10</sup> *put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.* <sup>11</sup> *Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.* <sup>12</sup> *Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience,* <sup>13</sup> *bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.* <sup>14</sup> *And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.*

Paul is writing to the New Testament church about establishing a new community – one not defined by nationality, ethnicity, social status, or economic condition. God is taking those who by their old identity were hostile to one another and reconciling them to one another in one new body, the church. He is renewing them inwardly as they grow in knowledge. That is why he prayed, earlier in this letter, that they might grow in “the knowledge of his will and in all spiritual wisdom and understanding so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God” (Colossians 1:9-10). Humanity was created in God's image but sin defaced that image. Now, from out of fallen humanity, God is recreating a new humanity, being renewed in and through Jesus Christ. That new humanity or new community is the church.

Paul addresses the church as “God's chosen ones, holy and beloved” reminding us of our privileged position. “Chosen” is a frequent designation of God's people in both the Old and New Testament and points to the fact that God's people owe their existence as his people to his sovereign and merciful choice, not our supposed enlightened choice of him. We can take no credit for being his people, having been chosen for reasons in himself, not in us; chosen not for our merits but despite our demerits. Because the church is chosen, it is “holy” which means “set apart for God.” Those whom God has chosen and set apart for himself are “beloved.” God's love is the basis for his choice. Love is foundational to God's character because he is triune – three persons who have known infinite, perfect love among themselves for all eternity. So great was their love, that they created image bearers with whom to share that love. It is not our loveliness that elicits God's love for us but his infinite love that moves him to find a just way to love even those who have spurned his love and deserve his wrath.

Because we have been chosen, set apart, and loved, we are called to live as his people and put on those virtues which build community – virtues that are the opposite of the vices that used to drive us apart, such as wrath, anger, malice, slander, obscene talk, and lying to one another. There are seven virtues listed. The first six can be paired with each other.

First are compassion and kindness. Compassion is a heartfelt sympathy and tenderhearted concern for the needs and well-being of others. Kindness takes compassion into the realm of action. True compassion generates acts of kindness, doing good even to the undeserving.

The second set of virtues is humility and meekness. Humility is the quality of not being over impressed with the sense of one's own importance. It is thinking of others as better than yourself and putting

their needs ahead of your own. Meekness is humility in action. Meekness is personal sacrifice to serve the needs of others without drawing attention to oneself.

The third set of virtues is patience and forgiveness. Patience is suffering wrong without complaint. It is enduring injustice without taking revenge. It is continuing to honor and respect those who disappoint you or hurt you. Patience is expressed in acts of forgiveness. Paul anticipates that believers will have complaints against one another and instructs us to forgive those complaints in the same way we have been forgiven by the Lord, freely and unconditionally. All six are summed up and bound up in the supreme virtue, love which is both an attitude of the heart and mind as well as acts of self-denial and willing, self-sacrifice.

All these virtues were exemplified by Jesus. He had compassion on the multitudes for they were like sheep without a shepherd, so he was kind to them. He healed them, taught them, and fed them. Jesus was humble. He took the form of servant. He was gentle with the weak. He did not snuff out the smoldering wick or break the bruised reed. Jesus was patient, demonstrating that patience even while dying on the cross and praying, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” The command to clothe yourselves with these virtues is the command to put on Christ. It is the command to be conformed to Christ – to be Christ like.

That’s a tall order and impossible to carry out in our own strength. No amount of personal resolve will empower you. No amount of strong emotion will enable you. Like New Year’s resolution, all self-effort will fail. In the end, we either give up in despair or lower our standards, accommodating them to our inability. Is there any hope? Yes!

Our hope is found in the first verse of this chapter, in the words, “If then you have been raised with Christ.” The believer in Christ has been united to Christ, in his death and in his resurrection, which yields a new spiritual life – the life of Christ. You “have put on the new self” (vs. 10). Now Christ, by the indwelling of his Spirit, strengthens the believer, renewing the believer inwardly day by day. Christ strengthens us in answer to our prayers and through the wisdom gained from his Word. Those who seek him and his righteousness, shall find him. Those who ask not and trust in themselves fall into sin, like the disciples who denied Jesus by running away when he was arrested. They had slept when Jesus had told them to pray that they would not fall into temptation.

### **Questions for Discussion:**

1. How are you attempting to grow in “the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord”? (Colossians 1:9-10)
2. If there are children at home, how are you helping them to grow in the knowledge of the Lord?
3. How does being chosen, not because of your merits but despite your demerits, affect you?
4. How does our calling to be “holy” or “set apart for the Lord” affect your relationship with the world and with non-Christian neighbors, co-workers, or acquaintances?
5. Why are we more prone to condemn sinners than have compassion for them, and why is it often hard to forgive as we have been forgiven?
6. How can we at Emmanuel serve one another better?