

**EXEGETICAL  
NOTES  
EPISTLE  
TEXTS**

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**Series B**

**Festival Season Sundays**

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## Christmas I: Col. 3:12-17: Christmas Brings Us Christian Living.

1. Vss. 1-4 of this chapter are a sort of summary statement of the Christian's life. Vss. 5-17 are an elaboration of these four vss. Vss. 5-11 speak of the works of the flesh and also of the new man. Our text, vss. 12-17, speak specifically of the virtues of the new man. Note that the three sections (vss. 1-4, 5-11, 12-17) each begin with oun. Each section grows out of that which precedes.
2. This text is very fitting for the first Sunday after Christmas. Christmas is usually a time of joy for all ages. On Christmas Eve and Christmas Day people lay aside their differences and usually treat each other with more love than usual. But it should not be temporary. Vss. 12-17 speak about the corporate life of Christians. They can live with each other in harmony, love and peace because of what Christ has done for them. The motivation for Christian living is found everywhere in this text. And so Christmas I is a good occasion for the preaching of sanctification which grows out of the Gospel.
3. Vs. 12: As in vs. 5 so here we have an aorist imperative. In both instances it denotes decisive action. The text is addressed to people who already know and believe in Christ. In Gal. 3:27 the verb "to clothe self" was used of justification. Here it is used of sanctification. (cf. vs. 10) The words "as elect of God, holy and beloved" give us the motivation for Christian virtuous living. Eternal election in Christ includes Christian living in time. Cf. Eph. 1:3-14. The fact that I am now a child of God is proof that such was God's gracious will in Christ from all eternity. In eternity God purposed my justification and sanctification. Cf. Rom. 8:28-30. tou theou is subjective genitive. God did the electing. This is THE motive for Christian living. Whether we consider hagioi and ēgapēmenoi as adjectives or nouns, makes little difference. In any case they further explain the word eklektoi. hagios means "set aside for a specific purpose." And note that ēgapēmenoi is perf. pass., denoting a state of being. From eternity God has set me aside for a specific purpose. From eternity God has loved me in Christ Jesus. This adjective does not denote affection but God's saving attitude toward the elect. On the word agapaō cf. Rom. 8:28 where it also denotes a relationship, not simply affection. And on eklektoi cf. Rom. 8:33. No one can ever accuse God's elect of anything because God justifies them. Very comforting. On the words "elect, holy, beloved" O'Brien remarks: "These descriptions are important since they are designated of Christ." Cf. Lk. 25:35; Lk. 1:35; Mt. 3:17. Now there follow the five Christian virtues with which Christians have the ability to clothe themselves since they are God's holy and beloved elect. Three of these five are listed at Gal. 5:22 as fruits of the Spirit. And Bruce says: "Those qualities, as we consider them, are seen to be the qualities which were preeminently displayed in the life of Christ." Cf. Lk. 1:78; Matt. 11:29,30; Lk. 6:36; Eph. 2:7. On this vs. Kretzmann: "He calls the believers 'elect of God', thereby indicating the source and fountain of all the spiritual blessings of God. God has chosen the Christians in Christ before the foundation of the world. . . . A result of this election is that we are holy, cleansed, sanctified by the blood of the Lamb. . . . These facts are the strongest possible inducements toward a holy life on our part." Lenski: "The three terms (elect, holy, beloved) are synonymous, each casting light upon the other. . . . The virtues here listed by Paul pertain to the second table of the law. Our relation and our devotion to God ever shows itself in our attitude and conduct toward our brethren and our fellow men. I Jn. 4:20-21." Thomas:

"Kindness, the opposite of harshness and severity. . . . Meekness and longsuffering, the very opposite of conduct that is rude and overbearing." O'Brien: "chrēstotēs denotes God's gracious attitude and acts toward sinners. . . . tapeinophrosunē. It is well-known that in profane Greek literature the term occurs on only a few occasions, and then usually in a derogatory sense of servility, weakness or a shameful lowliness. . . . Christ's action in humbling himself is the pattern for believers who, in humility are to esteem others better than themselves and to be concerned about others' welfare. . . . prautēs contains the elements of a consideration for others and a willingness to waive one's rights. makro-muthia denotes that 'long-suffering' which endures wrong and puts up with the exasperating conduct of others rather than flying into a rage or desiring vengeance."

4. Vs. 13: NIV and AAT consider vss. 12-14 as one paragraph and vss. 15-17 as another. That makes sense. Vss. 12-14 speak of Christian virtues and vss. 15-17 speak primarily of the peace of Christ and the Word of Christ. Vs. 13 speaks of the forgiveness of Christians toward Christians. Two participles of attendant circumstance describe this forgiveness. No stronger statement on forgiveness can be found in Scripture. anechomai means "to put up with" and takes its object in the genitive. charizomai is somewhat stronger than aphiēmi. allēlōn and heautois both mean "each other." Mutual forgiveness is stressed. These notes suggest that the first colon of this vs. amounts to a present general condition: "Always put up with one another, always graciously forgive each other, if ever anyone has a complaint against anyone." The apodosis covers mutual forbearance of present situations and mutual forgiveness of past sins. The protasis covers all complaints, whether real or not, and no matter against whom. The Apology, IV, Justification (Tappert 141, 240) says of this verse: "If any dissensions arise they should be quieted and settled by calmness and forbearance. Dissensions, it says, grow because of hatred, as we often see the greatest tragedies come from the most trifling offenses." In the final colon of this vs. we have Christ Himself as our standard of forgiveness. Note the correlative kathōs kai-houtōs kai. His forgiveness knows no bounds and He told us that ours should be likewise (seventy times seven). kurios here refers specifically to Christ. Kretzmann: "We can at the worst speak only of complaints on account of insults in comparison with the unspeakably great mass of guilt which is charged against every man before God." Bengel: "Christ had the greatest cause of complaint against us." Lenski: "Paul says, the moment you have a complaint against anyone, graciously forgive. Bury it at once in genuine forgiveness." Bruce: "The Teacher of unlimited forgiveness had taught His lesson by example and not only by precept." Carson: "Even if there is a reasonable cause for complaint (a quarrel), this does not justify a refusal to forgive." On the close connection between divine forgiveness and our mutual forgiveness cf. Matt. 6:12; Lk. 11:4.
5. Vs. 14: Here we come to the final, the seventh, Christian virtue in our text, agapē. This vs. involves us in three problems: 1) Do we repeat endusasthe from vs. 12 as do KJV, NKJV, RSV, NASB and NIV or leave it as is (NEB, AAT)? 2) Does epi mean "in addition to" or "as a crowning summary?" 3) Does sundesmos tēs teleiotētos mean "that which binds all virtues together" or "that which yields Christian completeness?" We suggest RSV: "And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony." The genitive tēs teleiotētos is difficult. It has variously been analyzed as possessive, attributive, subjective, objective, appositional. In any case it does not mean moral perfection but

rather spiritual maturity. On agapē cf. I Cor. 13:13 and Rom. 13. 9.10. If one takes vs. 13 seriously, vs. 14 will cause no problems. Forgiveness lies at the heart of the Gospel. Forgiveness lies at the heart of sanctification. There is an excellent paragraph in Apology, IV, Justification, Tappert 139, 231 on this vs. It summarizes the battle between Rome and Wittenberg. We quote snatches: "He (Paul) is obviously discussing love of our neighbor. . . . If it is love that makes men perfect, Christ, the propitiator, will be unnecessary. . . . He is talking not about personal perfection but about fellowship in the church. He says that love is a bond and unbroken chain linking the many members of the church with one another." Kretzmann: "Without love all the other Christian virtues and works are useless and vain." Bengel: "Love comprehends the whole range of the virtues, II Pet. 1:7." Lenski: "Paul has a cluster of seven in 12:13; he crowns it with love. . . . The Lord awards the prize to those who have this teleiōtēs, this completeness." Bruce: "here teleiōtēs is the full expression of the divine life in the Community, devoid of bitter words and angry feelings, and freed from the ugly defects of immorality and dishonesty. The argument is a parallel to that of Mt. 5:43-48." O'Brien: "If each of the graces previously mentioned was seen to be characteristic of God or Christ then this is preeminently so of agapē." It hardly need be said that this passage speaks of forgiving love, not condoning permissiveness.

6. Vs. 15: About half of the versions render kai with "and." The others skip it. Bengel suggests "and so" but that can hardly be the case. Perhaps it simply introduces a new thought. tou Christou is evidently subjective genitive. KJV, NKJV, RSV, NASB and NIV render the verb with "rule." NEB has "be arbiter." AAT: "decide things for you." Kretzmann says: "This peace, therefore, should rule in our hearts, be the governing principle in our lives in love." Bengel explains this verb thus: "to regulate a person running until he reaches the goal." Lenski remarks: "The peace of Christ comes through no regulations about material things but through Christ's ransoming and remission of sins (1;14), through his reconciliation effected in the body of his flesh by means of his death (1:22)." Bruce: "When hostile forces have to be kept at bay, the peace of God garrisons the believer's heart as in Phil. 4:7." Thomas: "It may be said without much fear of contradiction that peace is the deepest need of man. This may be noted throughout Scripture (e.g. Lev. 3:1-11; Num. 6:26; Ps. 29:11; Prov. 3:19; Lk. 1:70; 2:14; Jn. 14:27; Acts 10:36; and all through the Epistles)." brabeuō occurs only here in NT. O'Brien says simply: "It (peace) is almost equivalent to salvation." The prepositional phrase en tais kardiais humōn denotes that the Gospel (peace) effects the very inner personality of the believer for Christian living, ruling him and causing him to make the right choices. The clause beginning with eis hēn denotes that to which a person is brought in conversion. eklēthēte rules out all and any synergism. It denotes the effective call of the Gospel. en heni sōmati is adverbial, denoting manner. It denotes the corporate unity of believers. AAT reads: "as one body." Bruce: "It was not to strife but to peace that God called them in the unity of the body of Christ. In a healthy body harmony prevails between the various parts." At this time of year we think of Lk. 2:14. O'Brien says at this point: "en heni sōmati indicates not the purpose of the believers' calling but the manner or mode." That brings us to the final clause in vs. 15. The translation is very simple: "And be thankful." Thankfulness is mentioned again in vs. 17 below. To be thankful to God means to recall His great deeds of mercy in Christ toward us. And such remembrance is motivation

for Christian living. Thus Bruce says: "Christian behaviour can be viewed as the response of gratitude to the grace of God. . . . The pagan did not give thanks (Rom. 1:21)." O'Brien very aptly says: "The regular offering of thanks to God is almost synonymous with being a Christian." And Carson: "A spirit of humble gratitude to God has its effect on relationships with men." Thankfulness toward God shows itself in thankfulness toward people. It is a constant attitude.

7. Vs. 16: In vs. 15 we had hē eirēnē tou Christou and a present imperative. Here we have ho logos tou Christou with a present imperative. In both cases this is followed by en. All our versions, except NEB, render en with "in." NEB has "among." The terms "the Word of the Lord" "the Word of God" "the Word of Christ" or simply "the Word" are all synonymous and interchangeable. It covers all of Scripture but denotes especially the Gospel here. We have two translation problems here: 1) Do the words en pasē sophia go with what precedes (KJV) or with what follows (RSV, NASB)? 2) Do the words psalmois humnois odais pneumatikais go with what precedes (NASB) or with what follows (RSV)? Perhaps the words en tē chariti are a third problem: Do these words mean "with grace" (KJV and NKJV) or "with thankfulness"? Thus RSV, NEB, NASB, NIV, AAT. In either case our attention is directed to the Gospel, the means of our salvation. If it means "with thanks" this idea is found in vss. 15, 16 and 17. Remarkable. There is no such thing as a thankless Christian. plousios evidently means that the Word must be a constant principle in our lives. Assuming that en pasē sophia modifies the participle we are reminded that all Christian teaching and admonishing (Gospel and Law) must be done wisely. If one uses the Word unwisely one can do much harm. That is not the fault of the Word. All our versions take heautous as reciprocal (one another) and not as reflexive (yourselves). The commentaries point out that the words "psalms, hymns, spiritual songs" cannot now be differentiated as separate types of songs. But surely corporate, congregational singing is indicated. But the words en tais kardiais humōn indicate inaudible singing of the heart. By the way, one need not be musical to do what this verse says. The abiding of the Word of Christ rules the remainder of the verse. The three participles didaskontes, nouthentountes and adontes are best taken as attendant circumstance. RSV, TEV, JB and NEB take them as imperatives. It makes little difference. But note tō theō at the end of the vs. This vs. is saying that as we are dealing with one another we are also dealing with God. Kretzmann: "The abundant comfort and strength of the Gospel should be used abundantly, not only by the pastor in the pulpit and in the homes, but also by every individual Christian." The whole book of Psalms is an interesting commentary on this verse.
8. Vs. 17: This vs. speaks of everything we say or do to others. en logō ē en ergō are adverbial, denoting manner. The sentence is a conditional relative clause on the analogy of a present general condition. It holds true at all times. Words and deeds indicate our attitude toward Christ as Savior and example. Here cf. I Cor. 10:31. The imperative poieite must be supplied before panta. On en onomati kuriou Jēsou Bengel comments "so that it may be just the same as if Christ were doing it." Bruce writes: "For His reputation is at stake in the lives and conduct of His known followers." Thomas says: "'Whatsoever ye do' is a searching phrase found three times in the NT (see also vs. 23 and I Cor. 10:31)." Carson: "This verse is primarily a general summary of the preceding verses, but ultimately its basis is the main theme of the Epistle, namely the pre-eminence of Christ." And O'Brien: "There are few exhortations in the NT which are as comprehensive as this one (cf. I Cor. 10:31)." The participle eucharistountes, again a present tense (cf. vs. 15), denotes attendant

circumstance. Note how often thankfulness is mentioned in these verses. Thankfully recalling what God in Christ has done and still does for us is strong motivation for Christian living. Again, as at the end of vs. 16, we have tō theō but this time patri is added. This reminds us of Mk. 14:36 where Jesus prays: "Abba, Father!" and also of Rom. 8:15 and Gal. 4:6. The phrase di' autou at the end of vs. 17 reminds us that Jesus is our only Mediator. Not through Mary, not through saints, not through angels. Only through Christ. All else is idolatry. It is remarkable that in this vs. Paul mentions only words and deeds. Thoughts are not mentioned. Perhaps it indicates that people can judge only our words and deeds, not our thoughts. From what we say and do they can judge whether we are doing and saying everything "in the name of the Lord Jesus."

Christmas II: Eph. 1:3-6, 15-18: What God Has Done for You; and, My Prayer for You.

1. Except for vss. 1-2, the first chapter of Ephesians is only two sentences: vss. 3-14, the main passage in the NT on election, and 15-23, a description of what has happened to individual Christians in time because of God's election, in Christ, in eternity. The 25th ed. of Nestle-Aland places periods only after vss. 14 and 23. The 26th ed. has broken up both sections into individual sentences.
2. Article XI of the Formula of Concord is devoted to election. If the preacher has time, he ought read the entire article in preparation for his sermon. We quote just one passage (Tappert, page 619) which summarizes the doctrine of God's purpose, counsel, will, and ordinance concerning our redemption, call, justification, and salvation, as St. Paul treats and explains this article (Rom. 8:28ff.; Eph. 1:4ff.) and as Christ likewise does in the parable (Matt. 20:2-14), namely, that in his purpose and counsel God has ordained the following: 1) That through Christ the human race has truly been redeemed and reconciled with God and that by his innocent obedience, suffering, and death Christ has earned for us 'the righteousness which avails before God' and eternal life; 2) That this merit and these benefits of Christ are to be offered, given, and distributed to us through His Word and sacraments; 3) That he would be effective and active in us by his Holy Spirit through the Word when it is preached, heard, and meditated on, would convert hearts to true repentance, and would enlighten them in the true faith; 4) That he would justify and graciously accept into the adoption of children and into the inheritance of eternal life all who in sincere repentance and true faith accept Christ; 5) That he also would sanctify in love all who are thus justified, as St. Paul says (Eph. 1:4); 6) That he also would protect them in their great weakness against the devil, the world, and the flesh, guide and lead them