

Living as God's New People Part 2

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Preacher: James Lapping

[0 : 0 0] great there we go well it's really encouraging to see you guys tonight what a joy and I want to talk to you about about unity and the very ordinary way in which we can achieve that so let's pray as we begin father we thank you that we have been chosen and forgiven in Jesus please help us to live and love like it in unity amen well you might recognize by my accent that I'm not from Scotland originally I'm from sunny South Africa you might be wondering what am I doing in Glasgow and when I came over one of the things that I noticed was that British people in general use words differently to South Africans as a rule in South Africa we just omit is or are or those kind of words you don't really need them so you use tired and that kind of stuff a couple could be any number between two and a thousand and we sometimes say must I must I do this for you you guys always say shall I do this for you you're a lot more polite but my favorite one is when I started hanging out with people in the UK they kept on getting really annoyed with me and it took me a little while to figure out why this is and what it was was when you guys say now you mean now surprisingly and in South Africa when you say now you mean any time between now and the return of Jesus generally so often I'd leave a room and I'll say I'll see you now now and I'd get a text a couple hours later saying where are you you haven't returned and I would have left completely at that stage and you can just see how exasperating that must have been particularly for Martin and others when I said I'd do something now and that would turn into later and later and poor communication can be really exasperating and it can cause a lot of confusion and disunity so here's the author of the little prince I won't try and say his name words are the sources are the source of misunderstandings they cause disunity and as last week as we looked at and as we'll look at tonight as Christians we're called to be united as Christ's body in Christ we are one body but it's not just Christians who want unity and inclusivity all people want unity and inclusivity and so it's hard we want to be united but there are so many causes and reasons for us being disunited and last week we had that wonderful verse of what it looks like for God's people to be united and I'll just read it again 3 verse 10 if you've got your bibles here there is no or 3 verse 11 here there is no gentile or jew circumcised or uncircumcised barbarian scythian slave or free but Christ is all and is in all and that's a really diverse group that have been united in Jesus it's complete opposites and so in our reading tonight Paul tells us the ordinary secret of how to be united as God's new people in Christ and the secret is this I hope you're listening is that you have been chosen in Christ therefore be clothed like Christ clothe yourselves in Christ forgive like Christ love like Christ so chosen clothe forgiving loving that's going to guide our talk for this evening and unpack that secret so just by way of reminder the Colossians is written

by the apostle Paul to a church who've heard a various messages coming into them various voices alternative gospels and those messages and voices are threatening to divide them they're saying yes it's all right that you've put your faith in Jesus but if you want to be the full Christian if you want to have fullness and by fullness there we mean satisfaction meaning in life salvation living the victorious Christ then you need to do Jesus plus have this experience or Jesus plus do keep these rules and Paul says no you either have just Jesus or you have nothing in all everything that you have rests by being in Christ and we see that in our very first verse of our reading tonight in verse 12 chosen in Christ so what's the cause of this colossal Christian unity as God's new people it comes from God's kindness to them just look down at verse 12 again therefore as God's chosen people holy and dearly loved and the good news for us tonight is that if we are trusting in the Lord Jesus tonight then you have been chosen chosen by God and if you're anything like me that fills you with enormous confidence and encouragement so I had this friend at a primary school I was about seven at the time and when I met his parents for the first time it was very evident that he was not like them he looked completely different and in my naive seven-year-old nurse I asked him why are you different from your parents and he said well here's the thing James I was chosen by them what he meant was that he had been adopted but you could see his joy and enthusiasm in being chosen by them and by contrast my family referred to me as the accident which was less encouraging and it's not just that you have been chosen but you are holy you are set apart

God's choice for you is not just once it's reserved forever and ever and ever it's absolutely secure and so the high point of my school career under nine I got selected for the under nine a rugby team and I was ecstatic until the next week when I was dropped and then I was absolutely devastated and I was never picked in the next week when I was dropped and I was never picked up and I was never picked up and I was never chosen unreservedly you are a treasured possession you are holy God is never going to give you up in the words of Rick Astley and not only are you chosen and holy but you are dearly loved in Christ think of Jesus at his baptism when he got baptized God said to him from heaven you are my dearly beloved son you know what it's like if you've grown up with siblings and there's always that one sibling who's your parents favorite I know your parents aren't meant to have favorites but there's always that one that is the favorite so in my family is the middle bro my middle brother he was the good-looking one he was the smart one and and recently I had a I've been seeing a lovely girl Sarah and we had a zoom chat with my mum and my mum's response was I'm so pleased to meet you I mean he was a bit of an accident and he's no oil painting so that just lets you know I how was I meant to feel after that and by being in Christ you've been clued into the greatest love in the universe the love of an eternal perfect father for an eternally perfect son in Christ you'll never be more loved than you are in Jesus right now tonight and the next thing that we see as being united as God's new people is that you should be clothed like Christ so verse 12 then well I'll just read it again clothe yourselves with compassion kindness humility gentleness and patience and what

Paul is saying here is that be who you are in Jesus in Christ now that you have been chosen now that you're holy now that you're loved be who you are in Christ and so clothe yourself there that's the the big word that's driving this passage that's the distinctive or the command and then in verse 12 he gives a list of what Jesus looks like and of Jesus's attributes and what you need to put on in order to be like Christ and so we see compassion and we remember that word compassion is used for Jesus's compassion for the widow in Luke chapter 7 for the widow of Nain and how she lost her husband and then her only son and how John how Jesus had compassion for her brought his son back to life and I had this friend who he is a Christian chap and he was married to a lovely Christian youth worker and she apostatized she left the faith and she left him and he came to us enormously broken to our church family but in his compassion for others he had learned to clothe himself in Christ and so he had this enormously prickly housemate we've always got one of them and in the way that he cared for him looked after him I was absolutely blown away in his compassion for them and then we look and we see a gentleness and we think of how Jesus is of how Isaiah speaking of Jesus is a bruised reed he will not break and we think of how many friends we have and maybe in the Glasgow University community and that who are going through a really tough time now and who need gentleness and support and then we consider

Jesus's humbleness how he humbled himself to death on a cross and so when I when I was a student a little while ago I studied in Cape Town in South Africa and there was this chap at university with me he was he wasn't at university he was at church with me uh Johan and he had been he'd gone to America and he'd made it big there he'd produced these massive American movies and he had stars as his neighbors and then he moved home and retired and bought a vineyard because that's the kind of thing you do and he loved the Lord and he'd go to church but whenever someone walked into church who's a bit sketchy he was a bit rough around the edges he was always the first chap over to them he was always the one to go and speak to them to bring them in because he knew that Jesus was humble and he knew that he needs to be humble and speak to folk who are lowly and I think the temptation for us as Christians who are eager to be live the victorious Christian life is not to value these ordinary Christian attributes of living we might say that that basic stuff is all right to get started in the Christian faith but if you really want to bring yourself to fullness then you need to do something extra you need to do something special you need this or that experience but Paul says no these simple attributes these simple things of clothing yourself like Christ that's the serious business of heaven it's the very purpose of life putting on Christ and the amazing spectacular thing in the Christian life is when Christians are united in Christ and as ordinary Christians grow in unity it's like starlings

[12 : 28] British people are amazed by starlings and if you saw a starling by itself and it had dressed itself up and it had put a wig on or dyed its feathers you'd simply think it's a bit of an odd bird but when they fly together in unity and they swoop down in a massive horde in a murmuration that's when they become amazing and when they swoop when they zoom when how do they do it they fly together in complete unity and that's the thing that makes them spectacular and amazing is their unity but no matter how much we try to place on these clothes ourselves with these attributes we will still get stuff wrong we are still broken people living in a broken world and so we need to know learn how to forgive like Christ and we're getting looking at verse 13 here and we're thinking of chapter 2 verse 13 and 14 so verse 13 goes bear with each other forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone forgive as the Lord forgave you and in the context of Colossians persuasive speakers have come in and what they were saying is that Jesus's sacrifice is not enough his forgiveness was not full enough it was a conditional forgiveness and so it might be that you might start going to church and you might come to St Silas or church like St Silas and at first it's great there are nice people there they serve nice coffee the building's normally warm everyone behaves politely and the vicar or Martin stands up and they say on Sundays and they say Jesus died so that you can have forgiveness of sins all of them and we are all sinners in need of forgiveness but then something happens someone lets you down and says something or something and you leave and you say something like those guys are just a bunch of hypocrites they're not real Christians real Christians would never behave like that and straight away you can see what's happened there as you've gone to that church thinking yes

Jesus forgives sins but Christians aren't sinners they're not I mean they need forgiveness but they're not really sinful down and nasty sinners are they guys like that wouldn't go to church I'm not a sinner yes I'm I need forgiveness but I'm not a sinner and what you're saying is that to be full and you need Jesus plus respectability brings fullness and so when you find sinners at church you're shocked see most of us go to church because there are people just like us at church and then when we discover that there really are people just like us at church we're shocked most of us probably haven't lived long enough just to realize how sinful we are and so the gospel is simple it's got two parts first part is do you believe that you're a sinner in need of forgiveness and the second part is do you believe that you have forgiveness in Jesus and the truth is the greater and the greater and the you see the depth of the sin and come with open hands to the cross the greater you'll see the glory of Jesus and where you have been raised to in Christ and the more you become able to forgive others because you have been forgiven in Jesus and so if we're going to be united as a family forgiving others and being forgiven then we're going to have to take risks as a church family so here's the author

Rosario Butterfield on this on on going to church and she says maybe churches are filled with hypocrites because you're not there i.e. you'd be the one person that's not the hypocrite at that church or maybe churches are filled with hypocrites because you are there in your pride and self-promotion and here's my challenge to you she says for those with church ties start going to church in honest vulnerability come to church needing to be forgiven and go to church expecting to forgive others and the reason for all these attributes that we've looked at is love and we love one another because god is love so we're looking at our fourth one there love like Jesus and we look at verse 14 and over all of these virtues put on love which binds them all together in perfect unity and here's the thing here's the take-home point love is going to be the serious business of heaven and therefore we better start loving one another now so what's it going to look like it might look like simply getting to know your neighbors better taking a meal around them around to them it might look like coming to church on Sundays and getting to know people at church even the awkward ones even the prickly ones it might mean having that hard conversation with a friend because it's the loving thing to do and conversely it might mean not having the hard conversation with them because it's not appropriate at that time and that's the loving thing to do it might mean having folk around to tea or a meal you might not normally have around for tea or a meal let me tell you about Robertson McCorkin he was a president that's the American word for a principal of a Bible college in America and when his wife developed Alzheimer's lots of people said well you should put her in care and you should go on doing your big important job for the Lord but what he did was he retired his job early and he left and he went home to care for her and what he says is she had after all cared for me for almost four decades with marvelous devotion and now it was my turn and such a partner she was if I took care of her for 40 years

I would never be out of her debt he was clothing himself with love because he recognized that he was in Christ and that he was forgiven and chosen by Christ and Christ has loved him and so if we're to be a united people as we are in Christ then we'll need to see who we are in Jesus that we have been chosen that we've been set apart that we have been loved that we need to clothe ourselves in Christ with gentleness humility compassion kindness patience that we have been forgiven and therefore we need to forgive others and over all of that we need to put on love the distinctive language of heaven that we'll live by there every day here's how King David put it on how we can live together and what it looks like to live together as united people so Psalm 133 how good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity it's like precious oil poured on the head running down on the beard running down on Aaron's beard down on the collar of his robe it is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mount Zion for there the Lord bestows his blessing even life forevermore so Father please help us to be united on earth as we are in heaven as sinful people living in a sinful world may we be clothed with kindness humility gentleness compassion and patience may we forgive as we were forgiven may we love as we have been loved in Christ to his praise and glory

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