

Dr. Ron Armstrong • June 6 & 7, 2020

Letters from Prison: It's Time to be "With"

Col. 3:1 Since, then, you have been raised **with Christ**, set your hearts on things above... [2] Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. [3] For you died, and your life is now hidden **with Christ** in God.

[5] Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. [6] Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. [7] You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. [8] But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. [9] Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices [10] and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. [11] Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.

[12] Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves **with compassion**, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. [13] **Bear with each other** and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. [14] And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

[15] Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. [16] Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another **with all wisdom**, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs **with gratitude** in your hearts to God. [17] And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

A. "With" Jesus, Paul, and us.

1. Being "with" Jesus is about the relationship, not agreeing. Salvation, baptism, and the resurrection depend on being with him.
2. Paul was "with" them even though he hadn't met many of them. He was a leader who genuinely loved the people.
3. Paul provides the church the metaphor and the desired result.
 - a. The local church is a body.
 - b. You should be part of it and at peace with the other members in it.
4. Verse 11 gives us a clue to one of their problems that is still one of our problems: "He is different from me."
 - a. Be each other's people. See what we have in common.
 - b. And get rid of the things that destroy relationships. (Anger, malice ...)

B. Being with each other is even more important in times of hurt, fear, or crisis.

1. What does it look like?
 - a. Compassion.
 - b. Forgiveness.
 - c. Accepting differences.
 - d. Love and unity.
2. Whether it's agreement or connection, I get to choose my "with" and no one else gets to choose it. So, I can choose ...
3. Paul is teaching us to be with Jesus, with our brothers and sisters in Christ, and when our community is hurting, with them too.