

**BETHEL CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP
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**“Doing All In The Name of Christ”
Colossians 3:17**

In the opening chapter of his book, *A Quest for Godliness: The Puritan Vision of the Christian Life*, J. I. Packer explains why we need the Puritans. The fundamental reason, he writes, is that “the Puritans exemplified maturity; we don’t. We are spiritual dwarfs. A much-travelled leader, a native American, (be it said), has declared that he finds North American Protestantism, man-centered, manipulative, success oriented, self indulgent and sentimental, as it blatantly is, to be 3,000 miles wide and half an inch deep. The Puritans, by contrast, . . . were giants.” (p. 22)

Through the legacy of their literature, he goes on to suggest some of the specific ways that the Puritans can help us discover the maturity that they knew, and that we need. His initial suggestion is one which all of us should take to heart:

First, there are lessons for us in *the integration of their daily lives*. As their Christianity was all-embracing, so their living was all of a piece. Nowadays we would call their lifestyle holistic: all awareness, activity, and enjoyment. . . . was integrated in the single purpose of honouring God by appreciating all his gifts and making everything ‘holiness to the Lord.’ There was for them no disjunction between sacred and secular; all creation, so far as they were concerned, was sacred, and all activities, of whatever kind, must be sanctified, that is, done to the glory of God. Seeing life whole, they integrated contemplation with action, worship with work, labour with rest, love of God with love of neighbour and of self, personal with social identity, in a thoroughly conscientious and thought-out way.

In their blending of the whole wide range of Christian duties set forth in Scripture they were eminently balanced. They lived by ‘method’ (we would say, by a rule of life), planning and proportioning their time with care, not so much to keep bad things out as to make sure that they got all good and important things in – necessary wisdom, then as now, for busy people! We today, who tend to live unplanned lives at random in a series of non-communicating compartments and who hence feel swamped and distracted most of the time, could learn much from the Puritans at this point. (p. 23-24)

One of the central texts that exhorts us to embrace this very mindset is the verse that is before us this morning: “And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.” (Col. 3:17). Obviously, this is a thoroughly *Christian* mindset, one which Paul has previously expressed: “So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31). Because of the profound role that this mindset plays in the development of our maturity in Christ, there are five observations I

would like to make about this text.

First, when viewed within its context, this text continues the theme of the centrality and Lordship of Jesus Christ. We should forgive others because Christ has forgiven us (Col. 3:13). The peace of Christ should rule in our hearts (Col. 3:15), and the Word of Christ should dwell in us richly (Col. 3:16). Here, the name of Christ should govern whatever we do (Col. 3:17). Consequently, this is one of the most *Christological* mindsets found anywhere in the New Testament. It deserves and necessitates our attention – if we are to mature in Christ.

Second, when Paul admonishes us to do everything “in the name of the Lord Jesus” he is using an expression that is found frequently in the New Testament. It is in the name of the Lord Jesus that we are baptized in water (Acts 10:48). Salvation from sin is available only in that name (Acts 4:12; 10:43), as well as eternal life (1 John 5:13), the presence of the Holy Spirit (John 14:26), dominion over demons (Luke 10:17), and miraculous healings (Acts 3:6, 16). “In the name of the Lord Jesus” therefore means “for the sake of the Lord Jesus” or “to the glory of the Lord Jesus.” What, then, would our lives look like if everything we did or said or thought was “in the name of the Lord Jesus?”

Third, the scope of Paul’s language is comprehensive and universal. In Colossians 3:17, he speaks in terms of “word or deed;” in 1 Corinthians 10:31 it’s “eat or drink.” By using such terms, his intent is to be all-inclusive of every aspect of our lives, whether it be physical, mental, verbal, financial, vocational or whatever. Everything we do is to be done for His glory. “The New Testament does not contain a detailed code of rules for the Christian . . . with a long list of ‘Do’s and Don’ts.’ What the New Testament does provide is those basic principles of Christian living which may be applied to all the situations of life as they arise. Such a principle is enunciated here” (F. F. Bruce, The Epistle to the Colossians, p. 285)

Fourth, this is a text which also instructs us to give thanks in whatever we do and in whatever circumstance. As we have already noted, gratitude is a consistent theme in Colossians (Cf. 1:3, 12; 2:7; 3:15-16; 4:2). Here, however, the emphasis is upon thanksgiving in every circumstance of life. There is a rather remarkable entry in the diary of Matthew Henry, written shortly after he had been robbed, that illustrates this well: “Let me be thankful: first, because I was never robbed before; second, because although he took my purse, he did not take my life; third, because although he took all I possessed, it was not much; fourth, because it was I who was robbed, and not I who robbed.” (Cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)

Fifth, and finally, the principle of this passage can serve us well when we are compelled to make difficult ethical decisions. “When the . . . Christian is confronted by a moral issue, he may not find in the Bible any explicit word of Christ relating to its particular details. But he can ask himself: What is the Christian thing to do here? Can I do this without compromising my Christian confession? Can I do it “in the name of the Lord Jesus?” (For His reputation is at stake in the lives and conduct of His known followers.) And, can I thank God the Father through Him that He has given me the opportunity of doing this thing? Questions like these commonly provide surer ethical guidance than special regulations may do.” (F. F. Bruce, p. 286)