

# (Colossians) 10 the Spirit Filled Life

by Bob Utley

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*Bob Utley's sermon on Colossians emphasizes the transformative power of the Spirit-filled life and the call to embody Christ-like characteristics.*

**Duration:** 39:42

**Scripture:** Romans 9:20, Colossians 3:12

**Topics:** "Colossians"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of making choices that align with God's kingdom rather than personal preferences. He highlights the need to act on the truths we know and walk in faith, trusting that more truths will be revealed to us. The speaker also addresses the issue of musical preference causing division in churches, expressing disbelief at the extent of this problem in Southern Baptist life. The sermon is based on Colossians 3:12-17, which discusses the importance of living in wisdom and gratitude, and highlights the sovereignty of God.

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## Transcript

I'd like to take just a moment to say something personal, if I could. As you know, Peggy has not been able to come with me the last several weeks, and I want to thank you all for praying for her. We do have an appointment with a surgeon on Thursday to see what they can do to help her, and thank you for your prayers and cards.

That's just so kind, and we appreciate it so much. About four or five years ago, I was teaching at an OMS seminary in Haiti, in a worship service on Sunday, when I really felt like the Lord spoke to me to go home and give away all of my Bible studies. At that point, Peggy and I together started an international online Bible study ministry.

It's called Free Bible Commentary. It's been online for four years, and something close to 550,000 people have visited that site, most of them outside of the U.S. I went ahead and brought my newsletter about this ministry that includes some of the emails from overseas. I've put them at the back and on the front on both sides.

I hope you'll get one of these so you can pray for Peggy and I as we really try to impact particularly the Muslim world with commentaries in their languages and third-world countries who have no opportunity for any kind of Christian education. So I thank you for praying for us, and I just wanted to mention that. Your

church has mentioned this newsletter because of your generosity in letting me re-tape this seminar on Bible interpretation.

We're about to produce a CD and a DVD to be given away to the Baptist World Alliance in Hawaii, and the DVD is of the 15-hour seminar that I did here. So what you produced here is about to go around the world and hopefully be a seminary option for countries that do not have a Christian education possibility. So I wanted to thank you for that very much.

Today I want to continue my study in Colossians, and last week as I talked about the take-off, we were in the old man, new man last week, and the take-off was a message to Christians. They used to be this way, but something has happened. Something has changed.

And Paul says, you used to be like this, but now you have met Christ. Now you have the indwelling Spirit. So take off these things, he says.

And it's very parallel to Colossians 5, 19 through 21, the deeds of darkness, the take-off. Now today this is the put-on. So this would be the Spirit-filled life, and of course this is very parallel to the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5, beginning at verse 21, 22, right through there.

And it is a powerful, positive witness on now that we have been freed from the tyranny of self, from the slavery to sin, from the influence of the fallen world and its culture, wisdom, and desires. Now that we're freed from that, what do we do? And so this text, and I'm only going to deal with the next paragraph, which is verses 12 through 17, but it has some wonderful, exciting, I think, theological truths and applications. So I hope you will open your Bibles with me to Colossians 3, verses 12 through 17.

Now it starts off with a characteristic Pauline emphasis that we would probably call predestination or election. Now I certainly believe that the first point of any theology has to be the sovereignty of God. I mean, Romans 9 is a pretty good text when it says, I'm God, sit down and shut up.

I'll do what I want to, thank you. I made the place, it belongs to me, and I'm going to be God. Now there is no place to start a theology apart from who God is and what God wants.

So the little phrase is, chosen of God, holy and beloved. Now if you are a student of the Bible, you will recognize that this is an Old Testament phrasing for the people of God, Israel, beginning early chapters of Deuteronomy, Deuteronomy 4, 7, 10 is where these words are used to describe Israel. And it's interesting to me that I believe the church in many ways has become the new Israel.

I do not believe the church replaces national Israel. I do not. But I do believe that Israel has fumbled the ball in great commission.

And I do believe the church has been given the task of taking the gospel to the world. So in some ways, I think it is interesting to me that this title for Israel, and there are several titles for Israel that are taken on by the church. There is much discussion in theology about this, but Galatians 6, 6, which calls the church the Israel of God.

And in 1 Peter 2 and Revelation 1, where the very title for Israel from at the foot of Mount Sinai, where they are called a kingdom of priests, a peculiar people, a special treasure. These very titles, 2 Peter 2, 5 and 9, Revelation 1, 6, are now applied to the church of Jesus Christ. So I would say to you that we are chosen.

And what are we chosen for? And then that is so important. I think, for my theology, that the key to the doctrine of predestination, which is so paramount in Romans 9 and Ephesians 1, John Calvin's favorite verses. Okay.

I think the key is Ephesians 1, 4. We were chosen in Him. He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world. There's that predestination word.

Chosen in Him before the foundation of the world. To what? To be holy and blameless before Him. We were not predestined to a special privilege, to an elite group, to a, we're special.

We were chosen, can you listen to me? We were chosen to Christ's likeness. The goal of God for every Christian is not just heaven when we die, but Christ's likeness now. Because we are the hands and feet of Christ on the earth and God wants the world to know Him.

So I think it's a powerful way to start this out. And then he goes to put on the next phrase. Put on, an exact opposite of strip off that we found in verse 8 and 10.

Take off these things, put on these things. Then I mentioned to you last week, but I think this is a possible allusion to Zechariah chapter 3 where the high priest Joshua is dressed in filthy clothes and he is redressed at the Lord's command in the royal wonderful robes of a high priest. And I think that's what God wants to do for us as we, as the children of faith, the children of Abraham by faith are wrapped in the royal robes of Jesus Christ Himself.

Fully accepted in the finished work of Jesus Christ. So because we are accepted, because we're called, because we're indwelt, because we are the children of Abraham by faith, then this is God's call to us. Follow up with me in your Bible.

Here are the things we are supposed to put on. Now I'd like to read, before I get into that, this parallel in Galatians chapter 5. Listen to the fruit of the Spirit and see how parallel this is. Now Galatians is written very early, very early in Paul's ministry, possibly his first book.

If that alone is not his first book, Galatians is. Late 40s. Ephesians is a prison epistle somewhere in the mid-60s.

So this is the first expression of the same truth earlier. But the fruit singular of the Spirit, the fruit is, maybe love, colon, maybe this rest is a description of true love. The fruit of the Spirit is love.

And how do we know love? How do we characterize love? How does love come across? It comes across as joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such things there is no law. Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

If we live by the Spirit, let us walk by the Spirit and let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another. And that's how the parallel in Galatians ascribes. Now this has it, the heart of compassion.

Now this literally is the bowels of compassion. If you're a King James person, you know it several times in the Gospels. The bowels of compassion are used to describe Jesus' axe-tard people.

The ancients did not view the body in the way that modern science does, the head being the thought process, the heart being the pump. They just didn't do it that way. If you ever had a real stomachache, you know why they thought that the lower viscera was the seat of the emotions, right? We're talking about the kidney, the liver, the bowels.

And so this is that deal of put on compassion, deep feelings, strong emotions. This is one of the characteristics of those who know God. And then the word kindness.

I often think about this because this is kindness to others. I can remember my wife and we had little children at home in Lubbock around the table. We would always have a Saturday morning cook donut holes.

I don't know if you have a tradition at your house. And then the kids and I would always fight over the biggest hole. But Peggy would always quote this to our children.

And the way she would quote it is the Ephesians 4.32 parallel. And with three kids, we needed to take this seriously. Be kind one to another, gracious, forgiving one another, just as God and Christ has also forgiven you.

What a wonderful admonition to the people of God. The next one is humility, a uniquely Christian virtue. Now many of Paul's list of vices and virtues are very similar to the list of the stoic philosophers of the first century.

But humility is a unique Christian virtue. The Greeks saw humility as a weakness. The Bible only calls two people humble, Moses and Jesus.

Humility is a sense that we're not that hot. Humility is a sense that we don't always have to be in charge. Humility is a sense that we are part of a body and we need each other.

So here we're called on to humility. I think this series is the will of God for every Christian in spirit-filled maturity. The word gentleness has always been an interesting one to me.

Now I still like to watch the black and white TV shows on Nick at Night and stuff. I don't know if you do that. Paladin, I can't ever find him.

But, you know, Barney Miller, those shows from that period. And one of them is The Lone Ranger. You ever watch The Lone Ranger in black and white anymore? I heard the joke that said Tonto finally killed him when he found out what kemosabe meant.

But you'll get it in a minute. Anyway, that beautiful white horse he rode. It was just beautiful.

Huge horse. How did that little Lone Ranger? That guy's not a big guy. What did he weigh, 150, 170? He's not a big guy.

How does that 170-pound, 50-pound guy control that horse? That horse is huge. How does that little guy control that big horse? Well, that horse has been domesticated. Now that's what this word means.

This word gentleness means domesticated. You don't break the strength of a horse. You channel the strength of a horse to the purpose of the rider.

Now put that into the Christian life. I believe Psalm 139 is so true that we are made physically and emotionally in the will of God. We don't need to be fussing about our body size or our personality type.

Whenever we start fussing about what God has made, in a sense we start fussing at God. Psalm 139 says that we were made for God's purpose. I believe that.

So I do not believe that we need to totally shed the creation of God to let the will of God flow through us. I don't change my personality to honor God, but what I do is honor God with the personality and body and emotion and mind He's given me. I allow my strengths from creation to be channeled for His kingdom's purposes.

Domesticated strength. It's a powerful word. Now patience is always... This is not in the lexicon definition of this Greek word, but it is a connotation of usage.

This always, not always, but mostly seems to be used with patience with people. I usually try to use humor to get some of these truths over. Does anybody in this church get on your nerves? If not, then you don't go here.

We are a variety. We are a plurality, but we are also a body, a unified body. We're not the same, and yet we need each other.

One of the characteristics of being spirit-filled is patience with people who are different than we are. Amen? Because you're not that hot. And nobody has to conform to you.

They have to conform to Christ. Bearing one another. This is a voluntary non-retaliation.

I want to say that again. A voluntary non-retaliation. Though there is opportunity and willingness and strength to retaliate, in Christ chooses not to retaliate.

We might put it, bite your tongue. Forgiving each other. Do you realize that forgiving each other is the mark that you've been forgiven by God? I've listed all the verses here in Matthew.

They're so scary I refuse to read them. What they say is if you don't forgive, God won't forgive you either. Do you remember those verses? They are powerful, scary verses.

Now, I do not believe that I'm accepted by Christ because I forgive others, but I do believe with every ounce of energy, passion, and understanding in me that because I've been accepted by Christ, I will accept others and forgive them. Forgiveness is the flow of being forgiven. You can't have the Spirit, at least the Spirit freely flowing through your life, and not forgive other brothers and sisters in Christ.

Forgiveness is the mark. Love, forgiveness is the mark of someone who knows Christ well. The opposite of these characteristics may describe a new Christian or a baby Christian, but they do not describe, the opposites do not describe a mature Christian.

And we need to strive for maturity. And while I'm on the word strive, just for a minute, does it surprise you that the first verse I read emphasizes predestination and then immediately is a command for us to put on? Do you understand the tension between predestination and human free will in the first verse, verse 12, when we are chosen and then we're commanded to live different? Don't you see that there's somehow in covenant a combination of the sovereignty of God and the free will of man together and cannot be separated? Then because I'm in Him, I must choose to be different, to be more, to be Christ-like, to be

non-selfish. I must choose, I must act, I must be because I've been chosen.

It's a powerful balance here, I think. A little phrase in verse 13, whoever has a complaint, there will be complaints, brothers, sisters. I keep saying if you look for the perfect church and you join it, there it goes.

There will be misunderstandings. There will be disagreements. There will be different thoughts.

There will be different interpretations. There will be different gifts. There will be complaints.

It's not the presence or absence of complaints. It's how we handle them. Amen? Those of us who are mature need to bear the burden of the weak, and the weak usually nitpick you and gum you to death.

There ought to be an amen there, but it's hard. Just as the Lord forgave you, the basic for believer's action toward others. Christ forgave you, you forgive them.

Put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity, the distinctive mark of the Christian. It was some of our reading this morning from 1 John. Whenever a scholar puts up these texts, do you try to think in your mind where they're from? It's 1 John was that first one, I think.

Love, it's this new commandment I give you, that you love one another even as I have loved you. In my theology, Satan counterfeits everything except love. Love is the distinctiveness that cannot be counterfeited.

Everything else can be counterfeited, but the perfect bond of unity is love. Our garbage collector, our person who helps us at the store, the neighborhood kid ought to know us by the way we love one another and the way we love them. Now, notice where it says, let the peace of Christ.

And this, of course, is the phrase that Schuyler was mentioning. I think the word peace is used three distinct ways. Now, the word peace in Greek means to bring together that which is broken, bring together that which is broken or estranged, okay? There is a use of the word peace that's a peace between God and sinful man that is brought forth in the work of Jesus Christ, a peace.

There is a peace that comes to the heart, a subjective peace that we felt so guilty, we felt so estranged, we felt so needy, we felt so purposeless, we felt so apart from God. Something happens and now we feel at one with Him. Now we can talk to Him.

Now we can tell Him how I feel, how we feel. Now we can tell Him the deepest... That's a peace, a subjective peace that is based on the objective truth. The final one is found in Ephesians and it's the peace between Jew and Gentile.

It's the peace illustrated by the middle wall of partition in the temple, the court of the women, the court of the Gentiles, and on and on. And those courts are now removed. So there is an objective peace, a subjective peace, and an objective peace.

That objective peace is that we are all one in Jesus Christ who know Him. All the barriers are really, really down. I think it's interesting in verse 15 that the word rule is here.

I think it is a direct contrast to chapter 2, verse 18. Remember the sermon I did on freedom which is do not let them act as an umpire, someone who claims they have the right to judge you based on what they think the rules are? Now those rules are the Gnostic false teacher's rules. Either there are no rules or there's a

million rules, two different kinds of Gnostics.

But instead of the rule of false teachers, instead of the rules of men, instead of the cultural rules of denominations, what are we to have? The rule of Christ. Christ-likeness. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts.

And such you were called. I always get another emphasis on predestination. We're called.

We call upon the name of the Lord. We're called to Christ-likeness. There's so many ways this word is used, into one body.

And here again I would say this is the diversity and unity dichotomy of the church of Jesus Christ. To me this idea of a body, I think it's first developed, I think as well as anywhere, is 1 Corinthians 12. There's all different gifts.

But instead of the American individual concept of each of us having a gift and each of us doing our gifts, I think the idea of us being a body and that we need each other, that we cannot do it alone, that no matter how gifted we are, we cannot meet the need or fulfill the task. It is only when the gifts are put together, it's only when the strands of the rope are intertwined that the rope becomes unbreakable, that the rope becomes usable and strong. We are the strands that bind together to form the people of God, the body of Christ.

It's a beautiful concept. And I want to say to you, if you're saved, you have a spiritual gift. If you're saved, you have an individual ministry.

If you're saved, you're gifted for the common good. 1 Corinthians 12, 7. By the Holy Spirit at salvation. So I think the question is, and by the way, sitting in a pew on Sunday is not a spiritual gift.

You are intimately integrated into the life of the church and the question is we've got to find our place. I would say quickly here as I pass that few of us are doing too much and we're burning out. We say yes to too many places of responsibility and it is a sense of honor and yes, but it turns into a sense of privilege.

And we do not need to be on two committees or deacon in two committees or five committees or coming to the church. We need to find what we are called to do, train for it, and do it with a single focus and quit robbing other people of their place to serve because you enjoy being in multiple places of leadership. Can I hear an amen? I would also like an a-woman, but it sounds so untraditional.

As we are called in this one body, here again is another imperative. There have been several through here, though I haven't picked them out. Be thankful.

Continue to be thankful. Sounds like 1 Thessalonians 5, doesn't it? 18. Do you mean that thankfulness characterizes the children of God? Yes, it's just like love.

Thankfulness is another marker. May I say to you, and I want you to close your eyes just for a minute, please. Thankfulness is not related to the circumstances we find ourselves in.

Thankfulness is not related to health. It's not related to giftedness. It's not related to education.

It's not related to money. It's not related to things. It's not related to people.

We're thankful because of who we are in Jesus Christ. Circumstances come and go. Christ stays.

All of our lives have good times and bad times. All of our lives have things we think we ought to be thankful for and things we aren't. But I tell you what Christian wisdom does, and I remember when I was young, I bought this old ski boat, and I thought it was so cool.

And then I realized that I was using that ski boat more than I was worshiping and serving Christ. And what I thought was so good was really a disaster. And it's taken me years in my life because immediately I think, oh, that's great, that's good.

But it hadn't been very long that what I thought was great and good has turned out to be really a problem. But things that I thought were a problem, things that I wondered, God, why did you send this? God, why now? Why me? God! It's not been long till those are the very things that have drawn me to him, helped me mature in him, and taught me how to trust him. We are thankful not for circumstances, but we are thankful that we are called into the body of Christ.

Hallelujah? So whatever you're going through, give thanks. You say, well, that's a cruel statement. No, it's a biblical statement.

I can't change the things, but I can change my attitude toward the things. I can choose to be thankful and gentle. I can choose to forgive because I'm indwelt by the Spirit of God.

We have a choice. Let the word of Christ richly dwell in you. Do you know this is the only place in the whole Pauline corpus that the phrase the word of Christ is used? Now, the word of the Lord is used.

The word of God is used. This is the only place the word of Christ is used. Now, I want you to follow with me.

I don't get you to flip over in your Bibles a whole lot, but I want you to do this. I want you to turn over to Ephesians 5.18. Ephesians 5.18. When I first saw this, I was giddy for a month. I just can't tell you how exciting it was.

This is the text on ever be filled with the Spirit. Ever be filled. Present, passive, imperative.

Ever be filled with the Spirit. But the question is, what does that mean? I mean, is that speaking in tongues? Is that jumping pews? What exactly does it mean to be filled with the Spirit? That's a question I can't answer. And yet, because I know that Colossians and Ephesians are parallel books, and quite often the outline matches, and sometimes Paul says it a little differently.

Now, if you'll look right below, beginning at 5.22, you'll see the husbands and wives and children and parents and slaves and masters, which I'll get to next week in Colossians. We are in exactly the parallel in Ephesians 5. Do you mean that ever be filled with the Spirit can be refocused, can be understood as let the word of Christ richly dwell in you? That is exactly what I'm saying. Those are absolutely structural parallels, not word parallels, structure parallels unique to Ephesians and Colossians.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you. Now, that refers to the gospel. That refers to the oral teachings of Christ because these folks did not have a Bible.

It refers to them having the indwelling spirit, they can hear the word of God. Let the word of Christ richly dwell in you. You would say to me, well, Bob, practically how would I do that today? How would I do that

today? Prayer, Bible reading, meditation, put into action what you think God is saying.

Prayer, Bible reading, meditation, put into action. Now, I used to get tickled at students who say, well, I want a church and I'm going to go in my room and pray until God gives me a church and I always say to them, give me a resume on your way in. You know, we're always wanting the will of God and the wisdom of God.

Friends, there's a price to be paid in how you do that. We can't just pray for that. We've got to act on what we know is true and then more will be given us.

We can't meditate until we get it all because we're never going to get it all. We must walk in faith one step at a time on the truths we understand and as we walk, more truths will be opened. It's the only way I know this will happen.

Notice it says, with all wisdom in contradistinction to the false teacher's emphasis on wisdom. Now, scholar, I just want to look at you when I say this. These next few verses are the psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.

I just cannot believe what's happened in Southern Baptist life with music. The number one cause of church splitting is musical preference today. I remember I was visiting a church in Fort Worth and the pastor told me, he said, my music guy said, if the guy hadn't been dead 300 years, it's not worshipful music.

Does that tell you something about that, brother? Now, the other guy said, if it wasn't written last year, it's not worshipful music. Now, if you like 300-year-old music, buy a couple of cassettes. Amen? Put it in your car.

Play it at work. Play it at home. I think we ought to have some 300-year-old hymns from time to time.

The problem is when we say, unless you worship this way, there's something wrong with you. Now we're in trouble. Because it looks to me like there are three kind of different musical things here.

Hymns, psalms, and spiritual songs looks like not three different ways of characterizing first-century music, but three different kinds of first-century music. Now, if music... A few years ago, I used to go every year to the BSU black student retreat. Every year, I'd go to the Bible study.

I was over at Gaston Avenue when it was still Gaston Avenue years ago. Black choir did. I don't even know the name of the hymn, but the theme they just kept repeating is, I am available.

I'm available. I'm available. I had a tremendous, traumatic worship experience in that chorus.

Now, some of you have had some tremendous worship experience in hymns. Some of you have had some tremendous worship experience in praise songs. The purpose of music.

Now, I don't listen to sermons. Yuck! My filter, my hermeneutics kicks in. I don't enjoy listening to sermons, but music goes straight to my heart.

I'm not judging the words and criticizing the forms. It just goes straight to me. We need to provide an incubator atmosphere in public worship where those who are in Christ can grow, and those who are not in Christ can come, feel welcome, and begin to grow.

If a different kind of music can reach the neighborhood, there is no great commission option but to do different kinds of music. Now, what I heard once, I thought it was so cute, they said, blended services make everybody mad. You ever heard that? This group wants it all one way.

This group... In our day, we have solved this by multiple worship services, multiple opportunities, special events. I don't know how you're going to solve it, but may I say this? If a certain kind of music reaches the homes this way and this way, is there any reason in Christ why you wouldn't support the use of that music? Because, see, what we tend to say is, I like. Now, I'm really happy for you.

God bless you. I'm glad you like Christian music. Buy some.

And quit chewing on Schuyler. He looks bad enough as it is. Verse 17, and I'll close with this.

This verse has always grabbed me. It first grabbed me in Ephesians 6, the parallel. But it's here.

Look with me at 17. Whatever you do in word or deed... Oh, my goodness. My life is not my own.

I've been bought with a price. I don't have personal choices. I just have kingdom choices.

I don't have personal privileges. I just have stewardships. Every word, every deed, every thought, every act, every goal, every use of resource is not mine.

It belongs to him. And whatever we do as spirit-filled, mature believers, we do it for him. Whether we sweep the floor, sing the songs, preach the sermons, pass out the bulletins, guard the parking lot, greet the people, whatever we do, whatever we do, we do as unto the Lord.

May the power and presence of the name that's above every name fall upon us. May the Holy Spirit have freedom to engage every heart, every mind. May we kneel corporately before the one who died in our place and rise to serve him 24-7 for his honor and glory and not our own, for his purposes and not our own, for his gospel and not our own.

Give us the wisdom to know the difference. Give us the courage to walk in the light we have. Give us the love that people will know that we've been with you and give us the power and energy of the Spirit to accomplish that which cannot be taken away and that which is eternal.

In Jesus' name we pray, amen. We feel like that invitations are not an addendum but the focus of our corporate worship. We try to provide opportunities for Christians to pray, pray with staff, pray by themselves.

We offer opportunities for people to join our group, to find a place of service here, to find their spiritual gift. We have all been praying that if someone is here who has not yet trusted Christ, that today might be that eternity-changing moment for them where they trust him and him alone as their only hope for heaven. So we never know exactly what's going to happen and thank God that we're not in control of that.

But we want to provide a time for the freedom of the Spirit to move in the life of his people. We call that an invitation. We usually stand and sing.

I would invite you today to let Schuyler and the choir sing and I would invite you to pray as the Spirit of God takes this wonderful message of Spirit-filled Christ-like maturity and applies it to each and every heart as we stand together and pray individually, as our choir sings, as your staff is ready to meet you and pray

with you in Jesus' name.

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