

Put on Your New Clothes (Part 1) —— Colossians 3:12-14

Introduction, Outline

- **Scripture reading:** Colossians 3:5-17; Ephesians 4:1-3, 21-24.
- **Introduction:** Conversation is a transformation which says goodbye to the old and welcomes the new. Internal nature, this is a one-time finished transformation; external manifestation, believers must live out this transformation continuously. Goodbye to the old —— kill your sin (vv 5-11); welcoming the new —— put on Christ (vv 12-17).
- **Outline:**
 - Topic: Put On Your New Clothes (Part 1)
 - A. The Prerequisite —— Being a New Person
 - B. The Command —— Pursue Sanctification
 - C. The Motivation —— Your Dignified Identity
 - D. The New Clothes —— Christ's Character

The Prerequisite —— Being a New Person

- “Therefore” (v12): This is the 5th time this word occurs (cf. 2:6, 16; 3:1, 5). Paul uses this word again and again to connect theological doctrine to practical living. What precedes is always teaching of theological truths, and what follows is exhortation on practical living.

Some believers have no interest in theology, thinking it is an academic ivory tower, a hobby only for a few, and that believers need no theology — just live a godly life. But Paul uses “therefore” again and again to show us theology is closely connected to daily life.

Theological basis: “since you laid aside the old self with its *evil* practices, and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him” (vv 9-10) Our internal nature has been transformed. The old is gone and the new has come. We have become a new creature. This is the prerequisite of our progressive sanctification, that is, putting on Christ.

Note: As the following text shows, the new person has many virtuous characteristics. But If you don't have the new life (non-believer) yet, then you don't have the prerequisite for putting on these features, no matter how much you want to put them on. If you are interested in a life of forsaking sin and pursuing righteousness, the first thing you must do is to confess your sin to God and repent and trust in Jesus that His death on the cross has paid the price of your sin in full and His resurrection has overcome the power of sin, and thus trust God has made you a new creature with a new nature. Otherwise, the following teaching will benefit you nothing.

The Command —— Pursue Sanctification

- **“Put on”** (v12): It is the same word as in v10 “put on the new self.” It is an imperative, fronted for emphasis —— “Put it on!” In the previous text, “put on the new self” happens once for all. Once you've put on the new self, you never lose it; here, we are to continuously put on the outward practice in accordance with our new nature. Putting aside sin does not bring about righteous deeds automatically. If we do not intentionally strive to put on righteous deeds, we will only get caught up in sin again and again!

Put off + put on example: “*laying aside falsehood* [put off], *speak truth* each one of you with his neighbor [put on]” (Ephesians 4:25) “He who steals must *steal no longer* [put off], but rather he must *labor, performing* with his own hands *what is good*..... [put on]” (Ephesians 4:28); “*Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth* [put off], but *only such a word as is good for edification* according to the need of the moment. [put on]” (Ephesians 4:29) etc.

Application: The manifestation of a new creature in Christ is to continuously put off sin and put on righteousness. If you are not satisfied with the progress of your sanctification, you may need to put on more righteous practices and not give yourself the chance to indulge the flesh.

Application: Both putting off sin and putting on righteousness require effort. (Imperative command). It is not like “let go, let God,” as if you don’t need any effort, God then can use you to work. The Bible is full of commands for believers to do good and pursue sanctification. This does not mean for us to be saved by our works, but that the path of sanctification that God has clearly delineated for us is to strive to obey the guidance of the Holy Spirit and live out a progressively sanctified life with the new nature God has given us!

The content to put on: One word to summarize all — Christ. We are to put on Christ. The new person that has already put on Christ internally needs to put on Christ on the outside continuously in his daily life.

Galatians 3:27 “For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.” (This speaks of the new nature, put on once for all.)

Romans 13:14 “But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.” (This speaks of outward practice, a continuous effort.)

The Motivation——Your Dignified Identity

- “So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved” (v12): This is the motivation to put on Christ. What people wear often relates to their identity. Doctors wear white coats, business men, suits and dress shoes, workers, sturdy overalls with many pockets; IT guys, loose and worn white crew-neck shirt Christians, your identity is God’s chosen people, holy and beloved, so your clothes should reflect this dignified identity!

“**Chosen people**”: The NT uses this word group more than 50 times, almost all referring to God’s election of believers. God’s unconditional election is the most humbling doctrine, shattering all human pride, leaving us nothing to boast of ourselves.

Ephesians 1:4 “..... just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world”

“**Holy**”: God’s attribute, not just His moral purity, but its basic meaning is separation. He is separated in position from all worldly and filthy things. God elected believers from the world to become His people, and this in itself is positional holiness. This also means we must pursue moral holiness and put on Christ.

Psalms 99:2-3 “The Lord is great in Zion, And He is exalted above all the peoples. Let them praise Your great and awesome name; Holy is He.”

“**Beloved**”: Perfect tense, passive participle, literally “those who have been loved.” The passive voice means God is the giver of love, and the perfect tense means this is a past action with ongoing effect. Christians are beloved people, having been loved by God from eternity past and will be loved to eternity future! People are often moved by love, but God’s love is the most moving truth. That the holy and great God would love insignificant sinners like us with His eternal unchanging love is compelling motivation for us to respond in action.

The New Clothes — Christ’s Character

- “**Heart of compassion**” (v12): “heart” is literally bowels, the internal organs we often feel move when strong emotions hit. “Compassion” means to care for others in hardship, sympathizing and empathizing with those who are suffering. It’s the opposite of heart of stone, which is indifferent to the suffering of others.

Compassion is one of God’s attributes (also translated as “mercy”). We live in a sinful world and are tasting the bitter fruit of sin from ourselves and others, so we need compassion. God’s compassion is the reason that we did not receive the deserved punishment for our sins.

Psalms 145:9 “The Lord is good to all, And His mercies are over all His works.”

Hebrews 4:15-16 “For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Therefore, let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

- “**Kindness**”: “*It is the grace which pervades the whole nature, mellowing all which would have been harsh and austere.*” The opposite is to speak harshly and act rudely. The speech and deeds of a kind person is soft and mellow. This word is also used to describe good old wine (Luke 5:39), which has a soft and mellow fragrance. The truth of Christ should not make people harsh and cold, but rather, full of kindness.

Kindness is also one of God’s attributes. Romans 2:4 “the kindness of God leads you to repentance”; Matthew 11:30 Jesus says His “yoke is easy” also use the same word. When we understand Jesus’ kindness, we will imitate Him and be kind to one another.

- “**Humility**”: The one who knows God and himself correctly will not be prideful. The character of humility begins with the knowledge that God is the supreme God, and that we are all insignificant creatures, our lives are dependent on God’s grace every moment of the day, and we have nothing at all to boast of before God and man.

Humility is also God’s attribute; Lord Jesus is the ultimate example of humility (Philippines 2:6-8). Jesus’ humility is a humility centered on obeying God and serving others. Therefore, true humility is not seeking one’s own benefit, obeying God wholeheartedly, serving others. It’s not the kind of self-abasement of false teachers (cf. false humility in 2:18, 23). Knowing Christ correctly is the prerequisite for putting on Christ.

- “**Gentleness**”: It is not a weak and cowardly character, but a demonstration of strength in the Spirit. It means that you persevere and not get angry when you are wronged, and this requires the power of the Spirit.

Gentleness is also an attribute of God, Lord Jesus “am gentle and humble in heart” (Matthew 11:29), He could choose to pour out righteous anger on sinners any time, but He submitted to the will of God, tenderly tolerated the offense of sinner. Therefore, the Bible commands Christians to be gentle and not quarrelsome.

Titus 3:2 “to malign no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing every consideration for all men.”

2 Timothy 2:24-25a “The Lord’s bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition”

- **“Patience”**: It is similar to gentleness. It means “slow temper”. For a quick-tempered man, when you provoke him, he will burst out immediately, and slow-tempered people will be slow to anger.

Patience is also God’s attribute. Lord Jesus is our example for patience. The most important application of gentleness and patience in church life is “forgiving each other” as v13 specifies.

1 Timothy 1:16“.....so that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience”

2 Peter 3:15“.....and regard the patience of our Lord *as* salvation”

- **“Bearing with one another, forgiving each other”** (v13): “whoever has a complaint against anyone” implies Christians will offend each other and harm each other. People who imagine church is a perfect environment need to know this fact. When two sinners come together and connect in life, it is inevitable that your sins will be exposed. Others will harm you and you will harm others. If you have not harmed or been harmed by others, that's probably because you're not committed enough to church.

Common wrong reactions to offense: 1. Doubt the faith of the offender: “How can he say that he is a Christian? My non-believer friends are better than him!” 2. Retaliate, accuse face to face or rumors behind people’s back. 3. Stay far away, isolate yourself from the offender in your heart, as if this person no longer exists.

The only right reaction: bearing with one another and forgiving each other. “Just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.” The Lord’s prayer asks God to “forgive us our debt, as we also have forgiven our debtors.” (Matthew 6:12, 14-15) If someone cannot forgive his brothers/sisters, it really calls into question whether he was truly forgiven by the Lord.

- **“Love”** (v14): It is listed separately at the end, highlighting its importance (cf. 1John 4:8; 1 Corinthians 13:13; 1 Timothy 1:5; Romans 13:10), “which is the perfect bond of unity.” The parts connected by the love bond could be the virtues above or it could be all believers.

Just like other virtues, the knowledge of love must begin with the knowledge of God, because God’s love is totally different from secular love. Secular love focuses on satisfaction of oneself; but the very definition of God’s love is denying oneself to serve others (cf. Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 5:2, 25; Romans 5:8; 1 John 4:10).

Summary: Christians, look at your new clothes full of virtues: compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, bearing with one another, forgiving each other, and love. Have you put it on today?