

Put On Your New Clothes (Part 2) – Colossians 3:15 - 17

Introduction, Outline

- **Scripture reading:** Colossians 3:12-17; Ephesians 5:8-21.
- **Introduction:** There's a Chinese saying that roughly means we should have a new look in the new year. For believers, this saying actually has a biblical basis. Colossians 3:10 says all Christians have, at the time of conversion, put on the new self which is "being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him." If you are a new creation created by God, you will be continuously renewed so that you will be more and more like our Lord Jesus Christ!
- **Context:** Our new life as Christians has two aspects: putting off the old (vv 5-11) and putting on the new (vv 12-17). We have "laid aside the old self and have put on the new self" (vv 9-10) in our inner being, so we must put off the old clothes (sin) that got so filthy and stinky while we were living in the trash piles and we must put on the new clothes as fitting for our new nature in Christ (Christ's character). In today's text (vv15-17), there are four imperative commands to teach us on how to put on our new clothes.
- **Outline:**
 - Title: Put On Your New Clothes (Part 2)
 - Four ways to put on:
 - A. Let the peace of Christ rule (v15a)
 - B. Let thanksgiving in Christ abound (v15b)
 - C. Let the Word of Christ dwell richly (v16)
 - D. Let the name of Christ be glorified (v17)

Let the Peace of Christ Rule (v15a)

- **"Peace":** A state without war or opposition. First of all, "Peace of Christ" is a vertical peace. It's peace with God because our sins are forgiven and we're reconciled with God (cf. 1:20-21). This is the core of the gospel message. It's the peace everyone needs the most! Peace with God is the basis for internal peace in your own heart and interpersonal peace among men. Without peace with God, man's heart will never have true peace and peace with others is only an empty false illusion.
- **"Rule":** Originally a technical term used in the athletic field, meaning a judge or umpire. Paul wants us to have a judge in our hearts, and the judge is the peace of Christ — The peace of Christ is the principle for our decision making. When you consider whether you should do something, you need to ask the judge, and let the peace of Christ tell you what to do.

Common wrong applications: "I don't have peace in my heart today, so I will not go to church." "I don't have peace on my husband's decision on this, so I will not submit to him." "Don't worry, I have prayed to God for starting a relationship with that non-believer, I have peace in my heart." These are all excuses for disobeying God. The peace of Christ is reconciliation with God; and in this relationship, God is father, I am son, God is master, I am slave. Seeking and obeying God's will is the peace of Christ.

Correct application: First, does this decision truly reflect the fact that I've been reconciled with God? Is this truly pleasing to God? Will it help me to enjoy my reconciled relationship with God or will it destroy it? Second, does it reflect the peace among brothers/sisters as members of the body of Christ? Will it promote peace among believers or destroy it?

- “**were called in one body**”: When believers understand their calling, they will let the peace of Christ rule in their hearts.

Theology expansion: Election is God’s choice in eternity past, while calling is God’s call of His chosen people through the gospel to repent and believe in the Lord at the appointed time. Jesus said “For many are called, but few are chosen” (Matthew 22:14). This is the external call of the gospel which can be rejected. What really turns people back to God is the effectual call of the Holy Spirit in the heart through the gospel. The effectual internal calling of the Holy Spirit is irresistible (Romans 8:30). This is the personal experience of every blessed believer! The call of the Holy Spirit awakens the dead soul and enables one to see his own sinfulness and God’s righteousness and the preciousness of the gospel of Christ, to confess and repent of his sin and to trust in Jesus Christ and to commit to following Jesus with his whole life.

“**to which, in one body**”: The former refers to “peace of Christ” in the previous text. The purpose of calling is to enter the peace of Christ (vertical peace), but the result of calling is that we become one common body with one another (horizontal peace). What a precious calling, so we need to let the peace of Christ rule.

Application example: Should we wear masks in church gatherings or not (refer to the SLCCC COVID statement on church website): The two most important principles are the principle of conscience (vertical peace) and principle of love (horizontal peace).

Let Thanksgiving in Christ Abound (v15b)

- “**And be thankful**”: The adjective indicates this is a characteristic mark of a person who often gives thanks to God verbally, knowing that everything is by God’s grace and must be received with a thankful heart. The imperative command means we need to work hard at thanksgiving and not just wait for it to happen on its own. Lack of thanksgiving in a believer is not due to lack of reasons to be thankful for, but lack of effort to guide our minds with biblical truths.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 “Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks”

In contrast to believers, thanklessness is the characteristic mark of non-believers. They don’t acknowledge God for His grace for anything in their life.

Romans 1:21 “For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks.....”

1 Corinthians 4:7 “For who regards you as superior? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?”

We need to learn to be thankful for those who are difficult to be thankful for: 1) See Christ in brothers/sisters, not focus on their uncrucified flesh; 2) See brothers/sisters with a forward-looking view that they will be more and more like Christ; 3) At the very least, be thankful that God put them in your life to expose your weakness in order to sanctify you.

Let the Word of Christ Dwell Richly (v16)

- “**Word of Christ**”: The word of Christ is equivalent to the whole Bible.

- **“Dwell”**: Used also to describe the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Here, the Bible is personified. Paul wants us to let the Bible live within us and let it vividly affect our life.
- **“Richly”**: It does not only refer to the quantity, but also quality; not only the width, but the depth. The Word should permeate all aspects of our life and fully control our thoughts, emotion, what we say and do.

Example: John Owen’s comment for John Bunyan: “Poke him anywhere and he bleeds Bibline.”

- **“All wisdom”**: Such as memorizing scripture, having a Bible reading plan, praying through scripture, writing down scripture, etc., all for the purpose of getting more familiar with the Bible. In the original text, the phrase “all wisdom” can modify either “Let the word of Christ richly dwell” or “teaching and admonishing one another.” Wherever in our personal life or church body life, we are to use all wisdom to make the Word richly dwell in us.
- **“Teaching, admonishing, singing”**: Three participles used to explain the main clause – “Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you”. These three things are both the methods to fill us with the Word and also the results of such filling.

“Teaching, admonishing”: Teaching is positive instruction, while admonishing is warning and reproof from the negative side. These are duties of all Christians given by God, and they’re our responsibility toward one another in the church. (cf. 1:28)

Romans 15:14 “..... you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able also to admonish one another.”

Application: This can be a challenge in our Chinese shame culture! We want to be “the nice guy” and don’t want to say or hear any hard words of admonishment. So, the one who gives admonishment and the one who receives it both need spiritual wisdom and character (cf. 3:12-14), especially humility and love!

“Singing”: This is why there's a singing part in our worship. Singing has always been the way to express affections. Nothing better expresses than singing, whether the affections expressed are holy or filthy. Our world is filled with filthy music, with all kinds of lust, evil, violence, etc. Many people are first attracted to the church by our worship music. The reason Christians love to sing, especially to sing together, is that God has given us the same holy affections and the same love for the same truth. Therefore, when singing praises to God together, our hearts find a strong resonance with one another.

- **“Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs”**: Various types of music to praise God with. NASB connects it with “teaching and admonishing” but it is better to connect it with “singing.” “Singing ... to God” emphasizes that the One who receives our singing is God. God is the only audience when we sing praises.

Application: A choir leader has a good sense of humor. Each time someone’s voice stands out, he’ll say: “Who’s singing for mama? No singing for mama here, please.” Although he means that their voices should blend well, his words actually reflect a common temptation in our heart — to sing to man rather than God.

“**Psalms**”: The text of the Psalms set to melody; “**Hymns**”: Songs written as reflections of biblical truths, centered on the theme of praising God for His greatness; “**Spiritual songs**”: Songs that focus on personal testimony, singing of the great things God has done for us, such as “It is well with my soul”, often with personal testimony story behind.

The connection to “**be filled with the Spirit**”: When we look at Colossians 3:16-17 and Ephesians 5:18-20 in parallel, we find that being filled with the Spirit is identical to being filled with the Word. “*The Word in the heart and mind is the handle by which the Spirit turns the will.*”

Let the Name of Christ Be Glorified (v17)

- “**Whatever you do in word or deed**”: It sums up all of life, including everything you do or say in public or in private, even the mundane things like eating and drinking.

1 Corinthians 10:31 “Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”

- “**in the name of the Lord Jesus**”: The name of the Lord Jesus encompasses all that He is. Do all in the name of the Lord Jesus means to reflect who Jesus is and what His will is for you in all your words and deeds.

Jesus has many names in the Bible, each name reveals His identity from a different aspect. For example, **Jesus** — — Jehovah saves (Matthew 1:21); **Christ** — Anointed one, as the Messiah prophesied in the Old Testament and awaited by His people (John 20:31); **Lord** — Supreme authority, equal with God (Philippians 2:11); **Immanuel** — God with us (Matthew 1:23); **the Lamb of God** — who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29); **the Son of God** — eternal divinity (Mark 1:1); **a son of man** — a messianic title with broad significances (Daniel 7:13-14); **Descendent of David** — the eternal King prophesied in the Old Testament (2 Samuel 7:11-16); **Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace** (Isaiah 9:6)..... Whatever we do, it ought to reflect our knowledge of this wonderful Savior. We have to put on Christ and demonstrate the character of Christ in word and deed.

- “**giving thanks through Him to God the Father**”: Thanksgiving in this verse sums up the whole Christian life. Whatever we do, we give thanks through Christ to God the Father, for all is God’s grace given to you through Christ.

Application: Eat with thanksgiving, even if the food tastes bad; work with thanksgiving, even if the job gets boring and laborious; fellowship with thanksgiving, even if someone’s personality always challenges your attitude; face trials and sufferings with thanksgiving, and do not complain but trust firmly in God’s perfect will.

Summary: Yes, we all have much sanctification work left. But God has made us a new creation in Christ, which is being renewed continuously according to the image of Christ. Therefore, let us be diligent to cooperate with God in His work. Let us strive to put on Christ daily through our growing knowledge of Christ, and to live out the life we already have in Christ!