

# Putting On The New Man

Colossians 3:12-17

## Putting on the new man

*(12) Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; (13) forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. (14) And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. (15) And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful. (16) Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. (17) And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.*

Just as verses 5-9 describe characteristics of the old way of life that we are to shun, so verses 12-17 describe characteristics of the new way of life that we are to adopt.

Verse 12 tells us to “put on,” that is, to clothe ourselves in these godly attributes. Because we have put off the old man and put on the new man and because Christ has become our all in all (verses 9-11), “therefore” we are to clothe ourselves with a godly character.

Moreover, we are to do so in keeping with our status as “the elect of God, holy and beloved.” The Old Testament uses these three descriptive words for Israel, but under the new covenant they refer to the church, which is composed of both Jews and Gentiles (verse 11). “The elect” is plural in Greek and means the chosen ones. The gospel call is universal, but only those who respond in faith are actually called out of the world, or chosen. (See Matthew 20:16; John 3:16; Romans 8:30; II Peter 3:9; Revelation 22:17.) We became “holy” by the new birth, yet we have the responsibility

to continually pursue and perfect holiness in our lives by God's grace (I Corinthians 1:2; II Corinthians 7:1; Hebrews 12:10, 14).

The verse specifically lists five characteristics of the new life that we are to adopt. Significantly, it focuses on the importance of interpersonal virtues rather than merely personal ones.

- Compassion ("bowels of mercies"). In the Bible, "bowels" is an idiom for the seat of emotions, much like "heart" in Modern English.
- Kindness (or goodness).
- Humility.
- Meekness (or gentleness).
- Long-suffering (or patience).

*Verse 13* continues the description of Christian character, admonishing us to bear with one another and to forgive one another when complaints arise. (Ephesians 4:32 is a parallel verse.)

To forbear, or bear with, one another means to be patient, kind, and helpful with regard to the faults, short-comings, weaknesses, and trials of others.

"Quarrel" means a complaint or grievance. If anyone has a complaint against another, he is to forgive that person as the Lord has forgiven him. Christ loves us unconditionally. Before we turned to Him, He willingly died to provide forgiveness for us. Moreover, He bore the cost of our sins. If we are to adopt His attitude, then we must continue to love those who hurt or mistreat us, be willing to forgive them whether they seek forgiveness or not, and be willing to suffer because of their actions. (Philemon 18 provides a practical example of Paul's willingness to bear the cost of the sin of Onesimus.) Although those who do wrong have a responsibility to rectify their wrong, regardless of whether they repent or not we must not hold grudges, become bitter, retaliate, or seek revenge. We must maintain a loving attitude towards everyone and through prayer and the grace of God we can.

*Verse 14.* Above, or over, all the virtues listed in verses 12-13, we are to clothe ourselves with love (*agape*). Love is like the outermost garment that

completes a clothing ensemble and makes it appropriate for wear. Without love a Christian is not fully clothed.

Love is the bond of completeness. “Perfectness” comes from the same Greek root as “perfect” in Colossians 1:28, and it means completeness, completion, fulfillment, or perfection. Love unites all the virtues; it “binds them all together in perfect unity” (NIV). It is “the power which unites and holds together all those graces and virtues, which together make up perfection.” As Colossians 2:2 expresses, the saints are to be “knit together in love.”

*Verse 15.* We are to let divine peace rule us. (The critical text says the peace “of Christ” instead “of God.”) “Rule” comes from the same Greek root as “beguile” in Colossians 2:18. Here it means to be an umpire, to arbitrate differences. In other words, the principle of peace should be the deciding factor in a conflict of motives or reasons.

*Verse 16.* The Christian life must be based upon and saturated with the Word of God. We are to let the Word of Christ live in us richly. As the psalmist said, “Thy word have I hid in mine heart” (Psalm 119:11).

“In all wisdom” may relate to the foregoing phrase, as the KJV and NKJV indicate, or it may relate to the following phrase, as the NIV indicates. If the former, then God’s Word makes us rich in true wisdom. If the latter, then we are to teach in wisdom. Both thoughts are true.

Along with the parallel verse of Ephesians 5:19, this verse shows the importance of music in church worship and uses three distinct terms to describe this type of worship:

- “Psalm” (*psalmos*). This word refers to the psalms in the Bible. It also indicates musical accompaniment. *The Pulpit Commentary* explains, “A ‘psalm’ (from psallo, to play an instrument) is ‘a song set to music.’” This word contradicts those who forbid the use of musical instruments in worship. At the least, it instructs us to sing the psalms of the Old

Testament, many of which command us to praise God with various musical instruments.

(See Psalm 150.) How could we sincerely sing such psalms while rejecting their message?

- “Hymn” (*humnos*): hymn, song of praise to God.
- “Spiritual song” (*ode pneumatike*): other Christian songs. *Ode* is the general word for song, so the adjective “spiritual” is used to make it distinctively Christian. This phrase could also include “sing [ing] with the spirit,” or singing in tongues (I Corinthians 14:14-15).

The verse provides guidelines for the use of music in worship. We are to sing (1) with grace, (2) in our hearts, or with inward emotion, and (3) to the Lord. (The critical text says “to God” instead of “to the Lord.”) Music that is not motivated by the saving and sustaining grace of God, that is not an expression of genuine, heartfelt worship, or that is directed primarily toward other people to impress or entertain them has little value in an apostolic worship service.

*Verse 17.* Christians are to do everything—whether in word or deed—in the name of Jesus. We must submit to the lordship of Jesus over the whole of life. This admonition is more comprehensive than a list of regulations such as the ones that characterized the Colossian heresy. Instead of merely checking to see if a proposed action is on a man-made list of forbidden things, we should ask, can I glorify God in doing this? Can I invoke Christ’s help and blessing in this endeavor?

This verse does not require us to pronounce the name of Jesus orally before every activity, but it deals with the attitude in which we conduct every activity. In other words, all our words and actions should be consistent with the invocation of the name of Jesus. When there is cause to invoke God’s name, particularly at a solemn or formal occasion, this verse applies in a specific way, telling us to approach God in the name of the Lord Jesus. For example, we are to pray for the sick and cast out demons in the name of Jesus (Mark 16:17-18; James 5:14), which means actually invoking the name of Jesus in faith (Acts 3:6, 16; 16:18). Water baptism consists of both word and deed, so we should actually invoke the name of Jesus in baptism, as the apostles did (Acts 2:38; 8:16; 10:48; 19:5; 22:16). The name of Jesus

is what identifies Christian baptism and distinguishes it from other baptisms.

Moreover, in everything we do, we should give thanks to God. (See Ephesians 5:20; I Thessalonians 5:18).

We give thanks to God the Father through Jesus Christ. There is only one God, and He is the Father (John 17:3; I Corinthians 8:6). God and Jesus are not two persons, for Jesus is God incarnate (Colossians 2:9). Jesus is the divine-human person through whom God has revealed Himself to us and provided salvation to us and through whom we can know God and have a relationship with Him. God chose the name of Jesus and the Incarnation to manifest Himself to us; therefore, by doing all things in the name of Jesus we actually honor God the Father, not a second person.