

## **Colossians: Putting on the New Self**

**Colossians 3:12-17**

By [Kelly Jackson](#)

*November 5, 2014*

I was telling Billy earlier that I feel like him tonight. My throat is, I feel like, leaving me; my voice might leave me while I'm preaching so bear with me. If you will open your Bibles up to Colossians chapter 3 that's where we're going to be tonight. And before we get to the passage, just by way of introduction, I wanted to talk about etiquette. Some of you may have met Dr. Charlie Wingard. He is a fairly new professor that we have out at RTS. He's in the practical theology department. And Dr. Wingard had spent some time teaching folks how to interview for jobs, he's taught some manners classes, and I think he's taught some organized etiquette classes. And etiquette brings together all kinds of things like appropriate dress, appropriate speech, and appropriate conduct in the appropriate setting, right? Notice the word I used four times in a row was the word, "appropriate." There are certain times for certain things, right? The seasons are changing and it's sweater weather, right Billy? When I start to leave in the morning I often forget things that I need and I'll come in and out several times but one thing that I forget is a jacket and Caroline will say, "Kelly, it's cold outside." She will have looked at the weather, told me how to prepare for it, and what to wear; what is appropriate for that season. And tonight we're going to look at a passage where Paul is saying, "Christian, this is the appropriate way to live. Putting on the new self, this is how you are to live." So before we get into the passage I will pray for us and then we will read.

*God, I thank You for another opportunity to gather together as believers in this church in Jackson, Mississippi. I pray that You would bless our time in Colossians right now just as Billy prayed a few minutes ago, that You would be with those who are at the visitation downstairs and that You comfort all those who are mourning the loss of a beloved man. And Lord, I pray that You would draw us to Yourself in feast or in fallow. Bless our time now, in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*

Alright, Colossians 3 starting in verse 12:

Put one then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another

and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in our hearts to God. 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.

This is the Word of the Lord.

## **Putting Off and Putting On**

So last week Chris Brown did a great job reminding us that in putting on the new self we ought to do two things. First he said we ought to cultivate a heavenly mindset and second we ought to destroy the earthly remnant that remains within us. He referenced John Owen's helpful book, *The Mortification of Sin*, which is all about killing sin and then vivifying or giving life to this new man, this new self. And the heart of Chris' passage last week was that mortification part - the old self, put off the old self, take off the old self. And tonight Paul encourages us to do the positive - to vivify, enliven the new self with a list of very good and godly things. Whereas verses 5 to 10 show us what to remove and kill, our text tonight, verses 12 to 17, show us what to put on and what to live out.

We'll divide the text into three parts. First we'll examine putting on the new self in verses 12 to 14 which is the title of my sermon because I couldn't think of anything better! Then we'll look at bowing to the new King in verses 15 and 16, and then we'll conclude with living in the new light in verse 17. So putting on the new self; bowing to the new King; living in the new light.

### **I. Putting on the New Self**

So look with me, starting in verse 12. Our passage begins with this imperative, right? "Put on" - Paul's continuing this idea of getting dressed in the right clothes, right? Like we were talking about. This is the appropriate thing to do. And he's just encouraged us to take off all that he mentions in verse 8. And that word there in the Greek means "put off, take off, put away." It's kind of like, "Take off those clothes. You no longer have any reason to use them. Put them away. Burn them. You're never going to bring them out again. They're no longer the right thing for you to wear." It's like in Narnia where it's always winter and never Christmas, frigid cold and suddenly the seasons change and you have no use for that heavy fur coat anymore. Paul's telling believers to take off and put away sexual immorality, impurity, unbridled passion, evil desire, covetousness, idolatry, anger,

wrath, malice, slander, obscene talk, lying, racism, classism - but why? Why take those things off? Because Christ died for every single one of those things we believers struggle with and now they no longer fit us. "For our sake, he made him to be sin who knew no sin so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." These earthly uniforms don't belong to us anymore because we are in Christ.

For this reason Paul refers to the Colossians in verse 12, if you'll look down with me, as "God's chosen ones, holy and beloved." One commentator writes about that description, "All three of these are standard ways of describing Israel in the Old Testament and the church as the people of God in the New Testament." Paul is saying, "This is who you are, believers. God has chosen you. He loves you. You are holy. Live in light of that." Not just that, but David Strain helpfully reminded me just a few days ago in verse 10, if you'll look down, that they have already put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self. That's why he uses this word, "therefore," in verse 12. "Believer in Jesus, holy and beloved, chosen of God, you've already put on the righteous garments of Christ. So let me now walk you through the process of how to put on the new self day by day." This is what we often call definitive - you have put on - versus progressive - sanctification. The first means that we're no longer slaves to sin; that we've been crucified in Christ, that we're no longer serving that master. And then progressive sanctification, which is mainly what we're dealing with tonight, is the day to day living it out of the Christian life.

### **Compassionate Hearts and the Attributes of Christ**

So what does Paul tell us to put on? Let's look at our text. First he mentions compassion or compassionate hearts. The Greek actually would have said "compassionate bowels" or intestines because culturally in their day this was where the emotions lived. You know it's about as low as you can get; it's just the umph. You know, Kelly, with all that I am, I feel this. And one commentator writes that "this word points concretely to the bowels as the seat of emotion and tenderness." It's one of the most vulnerable spots in someone, right? In the fantasy world, if you wanted to take down the dragon, where would you go? For the scales on the back? No, you would go for the soft underbelly. That is the vulnerable spot. And Paul's telling these Colossians to feel sympathy and concern for others, to enter their lives, and to not just keep things superficial. Compassionate hearts.

He also tells them to put on kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. They are to be thoughtful of others, right? Generous as they interact. Humility means they are to think of others before themselves, living a life of obedient submission. They are to be gentle and patient. Philippians 2:8 is helpful here. It says that "Jesus, being found in human form," did all these things. "He humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." Paul is piece by piece giving the Colossians a picture of who - Christ, right? And these attributes

bring to mind the fruit of the Spirit which I've also been studying this week. See if you can name them off as I list them. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. These things only come about for the believer in Jesus through the supernatural working of the Spirit, do they not?

### **Bearing With and Forgiving One Another**

Paul then moves on to these participles in the next verse, I believe, as he shows us the way in which we put on these things - bearing with one another, and if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other. I love that he uses these two examples because they require two people engaging each other. This is not shallow interaction. These actions communicate investment of time and emotion. It's not always easy to engage your fellow believer, is it? Or to engage your children or your spouse. It's not easy because we're sinners and we oftentimes grate against each other like sandpaper. That's what happens when people engage. Oftentimes our patience is tested and we find ourselves sinning against others because they don't operate the way we want them to. Paul knows our hearts are just as sinful as his and as the Colossians to whom he is writing so he know right where to go with his letter, does he not? He encourages us, "Just as the Lord forgave you, so also forgive another." Ouch. That hurts. You may say to yourself and maybe the Colossians did too, "Alright Paul, you know that's not that easy." And then he drops this one and you're like, "Oh, that's true. I forgot about the Gospel."

How can we act like the unforgiving servant with others when we know that we've been forgiven a debt we could never possibly repay? God shows us every one of these things in ways we can't even fathom every single day. Part of the Christian life is just becoming more and more aware of these attributes in God and just being blown away by that. And we see our sin and we say, "How? How do you keep doing all of those things towards me when I keep sinning towards you? This is ridiculous." As we examine our hearts we'll come to see that His compassionate kindness with us, His gentle correcting of us, His knowledge that we're fragile and that it takes patience to change us, whether it's through our spouse or through our kids - that's crazy; God's teaching us stuff through our kids - through our friends, through our relatives, through our pastors, through others, He takes time. He doesn't just drop it all on us at once. God's exhibiting these attributes so we have to trust in His provision in order for these things to be exhibited through us. And y'all, as we do trust in Him and as we do submit to Him and as we come to Him confessing that of ourselves we don't have those things, He uses us somehow in spite of ourselves for the kingdom in the lives of other people.

### **Putting on Love**

If you'll look down again at your passage, Paul then escalates his exhortation. He

says, “And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.” It’s like lots of individual patches sitting there intending to be quilted but they’re no good, they’re not going to keep you warm if you don’t have the necessary means to put them together; you don’t have the tread to put those patches together to make the quilt that’s going to keep you warm and love is that thread. It’s essential in putting on the new self. You may be seeking to grow in the area of kindness towards someone or you may be trying to be a little bit more patient with that person you really struggle to love. But without love, the gong will bang and the cymbal will crash and these attempts will be empty. Maybe that person won’t recognize it but it will be hollow. It takes love to make these things happen and it’s a love that comes through Christ through the Spirit at work.

That’s why we pray, like we just sang, “May the love of Jesus fill me as the waters fill the sea. Him exalting, self abasing, this is victory.” “We love because He first loved us.” This both explains how we can and why we do. He loved first and so we love. “We love because He first loved us.” Let me encourage you to put on the new self, to do the difficult thing and love your neighbor instead of naturally loving yourself. Paul’s telling us to do this because he knows we can or else he wouldn’t tell us to do this. It’s a gift to die in service to your newborn baby. It’s a gift to exercise patience when you disagree with someone, to listen to a friend hurt and tell them how much you love them, to get up early before your spouse and watch the kids while he or she gets an extra few minutes of sleep, and to be open and honest with each other as sin manifests itself and we have real conversations about it and we don’t just pretend like it’s not there. That’s not a healthy relationship. Putting on the new self is the first thing that Paul encourages us to do in our passage.

## **II. Bowing to the New King**

Let’s move on to the second thing in verses 15 and 16 - bowing to the new King. Bowing to the new King is submitting to the Lord of your life. As sinners, we bow down to all the idols that were described in the first portion of our passage but now we’re bowing to a new King. How do we do this? Well Paul tells us. “Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts.” It is the only true peace that exists. Before that we’re a black hole. We’re trying to fill ourselves; we’re at war with God like Romans talks about. But God offers this peace to us. He invites it into our hearts. He comes in there and He takes over. Christ the King has won the battle with sin and He’s taken us from the side of the enemy and brought us into His kingdom. Paul tells us that we were called to this peace of Christ. That’s amazing. God brought us out of a battle we didn’t even know we were in and now we’re part of a body from which we cannot be separated - the body of Christ. Paul writes in his letter to the Romans that we as believers are “more than conquerors through Him who loved us.” And then he says, “For I am sure that neither death nor life nor angels nor rulers nor things present nor things to come nor powers nor height nor depth nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of

God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” If that doesn’t give you peace, I don’t know what will. The love of God in Christ is what gives us peace. It’s our only hope. It’s what makes us thankful. It’s what enables joy amidst the struggles that we continue to face in a broken world. “May the peace of God my Father, rule my life in everything, that I may be calm to comfort, sick in sorrowing.” It’s not until you experience that peace that you can look up from your little bubble, your little world, and really engage in the life of another. Until then you’re at war with God, you’re serving self, and you’re bowing down to the idols that Paul describes earlier in our passage.

### **The Word Dwelling Richly**

Not only as we encouraged to let peace dwell but Paul says in verse 16, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing each other in all wisdom, in psalms, in hymns, and in spiritual songs, singing in gratitude in your hearts to God.” This verse doesn’t need much explanation, does it? Paul’s describing the role of God’s Word in your life. You pray it, you teach it, you encourage others with it, and you sing it all in gratitude to God. This Gospel that you received leads to all of these new things. As we grow in our understanding of who we are in this new self, the peace of Christ and the Word of Christ grow or hunger for worship in its many forms that Paul lays out for us here, both on our own and with other believers. Just as in the first couple of verses, Paul’s continuing to stitch together in our minds an amazing garment that looks like Christ. And he’s telling us that we get to wear it, that it belongs to us, and that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit proudly invite us into their beautiful fellowship as we learn how to fit into these new clothes of righteousness.

### **Trusting in the King**

You may struggle with anxiety about how God’s going to provide for your financial needs. You may worry about the wellbeing of your children who are off at college in Oxford or in Starkville or who are raising little ones of their own, maybe they’re out of college. The peace of Christ is for you and it won’t run out in this life or the next. Seek God in His Word, in prayer, in Gospel community here at the church and with other believers. Offer up those anxieties to Him. He’s waiting for you to fall at His feet today just like He was yesterday. Let me remind you that there’s rest in Jesus because if you’re like me, I forgot yesterday and I forgot today. His Word is sweet like honeycomb. That’s what the Bible says. And as we study it, pray it, sing it, say it, we begin to live it more and more. Jesus said this, “Whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again.” It’s better than this water. And He said, “I am the Bread of life. Whoever comes to me shall not hunger and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.” He’s the well that won’t run dry. He gives an everlasting peace. Jesus is the King and as we bow to Him daily His peace and His Word come to reign in our hearts.

### III. Living in the New Light

The last thing we see in this passage is really a summary statement of the verses we've already looked at - living in the new light. Paul says this, "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." Essentially, he's saying, "Live in light of the Gospel." Using word and deed, he's trying to gather up everything that he's talked about before and he tells you that all of it should be done in the name of Jesus as we give thanks to the Father through Him. This passage parallels Ephesians 5 where in verse 20 Paul writes this, "Giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." He's concluding this portion on the new self by encouraging us to live Christ, right? Like he says in Philippians, I believe he says, "to live is Christ and to die is gain." Life's about the kingdom now. It's about choosing to love someone else when our hearts want to love self. It's about taking off and putting to death anything that gets in the way of our relationship with the Lord and putting on that which the Bible commends, all these things that Paul's been describing. As we study God's Word corporately like tonight, on Sundays, individually, as we repent of the sin that is present but no longer our master, as we explore what it looks like to seek the glory of God in our finances, in our scheduling, in our hospitality, in our work, and in our rest, we'll succeed and we'll fail. But God will do exactly what He promises to do. He purchased the new self for us in Jesus and now we live toward that day that the mind of Christ will be the only mind that we know. If you'll pray with me we'll conclude.

*Lord, this passage is sweet like the honeycomb. We thank You for letters like Colossians that we have from our brother, Paul, that encourage us, Lord, that give us these imperatives, that give us an explanation of how we are to now live in these new clothes of righteousness. Lord, we thank You for the work that Jesus did, that He accomplished, bringing us over from the other side of the battle that we were losing and bringing us into a kingdom that will never end where we will be with You forever, worshiping Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. I pray that You would go before us, preparing our hearts and our minds for this time of prayer. We lift up all these things to You in the name of Your Son, Jesus. Amen.*

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