

**Christ Community Covenant Church**  
**Colossians: Reconciled! "A new set of clothes!"**  
**Pastor Dave Scherrer - July 12, 2015**

Colossians. I hope you are enjoying this letter. You remember that this is an occasional letter. What does that mean? What is the occasion of this letter, do you remember?

There are two forms of lies that might have been floated around during the early times of the Colossae church. First there is the idea that Jesus is good but he is not really the only answer, perhaps not even the best answer. Instead the *Gnostics* (from the Greek word Gnosis for knowledge) promoted that you can seek a special knowledge or mystery that will take you further into God. We have these same lies floating around today. You can often recognize these 21<sup>st</sup> century gnostic/mystic expressions because they usually add a special revelation; another book that you have to read besides the Bible. Mormons, Jehovah Witnesses, Christian Science, Scientology, many others, all have extra books that hold additional information or special knowledge. Often times they reduce the nature of Christ to a created being, not equate to God Himself and they create fringe doctrine that take us away from Christ. These lies never seem to go away they just take different forms.

Second there is the heresy that you have to behave in a certain way or perform specific rituals in order to be sure of your salvation. This is a particularly Jewish idea in the first century. In not too many years Paul will write the letter to the church of Galatia that is specifically written to confront the lies of the *Judaizers* who felt that Jesus was not enough - you also had to be circumcised and hold to special diets and feasts and ceremonies. It is an easy lie to get into. Even today there are churches that accept Jesus as Savior but seem to add certain rituals and behavioral expectations into the equation. You have hold to certain diets and perhaps abstain from certain food or drink. You may have to read a certain kind of translation of the Bible or participate (or not participate) in certain holidays.

This is why I ask you to bring your own Bible with you to church. You need to become an expert in the truth if you want to be safe from the lies of the evil one who will steal your peace of mind and heart. If you doubt your salvation now because you still are wondering if you are good enough or whether you have done things right you can lay that sad suspicion aside right now once and for all with a simple confession. If you declare to God with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved (Romans 10).

#### Prayer

This prayer is the first act of putting aside the old man as we talked about last week. As we read our passage we see that the act of putting off the old self is a kind of cosmic leveling of the playing field of humanity:

#### **Putting off the old and putting on the new levels the playing field**

When we put off the old self, off goes a lot of old and mean-spirited attitudes. Especially attitudes like thinking that for any reason you might be better than another person. It is an easy habit to fall into. A child, or a woman (or man for that matter to be fair to our current culture), a foreigner or the less educated. Someone who doesn't like sports or maybe someone who does. The mentally or physically disadvantaged or the chronically ill. Someone who is a Republican or a Democrat. We can find thousands of reasons to look down on someone. We sing "Red and yellow, black and white; They are precious in His sight." I hope we mean it!

#### **Colossians 3:9b-11**

You have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.

This passage in the later letter of Galatians adds a specific reference to gender bias:

**Galatians 3:28**

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Scripture not only tells us to consider each other as equals, Jesus takes it a step further and says that if we want to be great we must be a servant first. We must consider others not just equal, but even more important than ourselves. So let continue looking at the idea of looking at putting off the old self and look closely at putting on the new self:

**Put off the old self and put on the new self**

Last week here we were putting to death the old self. That is kinda a tough mental picture, putting something to death! As we read on the imagery kind of changes so that putting on the new self is more like putting on new clothes.

*What is it about a new set of clothes?*

I take longer steps in cowboy boots. I feel old when I wear a suit. I feel young(er) and more hip-happening when I wear my Crocs. I feel particularly at home with myself when I wear jeans and my Converse shoes. Almost always I come home from work and the first thing I do is change my clothes. There used to be a saying %be clothes make a man.+And I was once told that by someone that he could tell everything he needed to know about a man by the shoes that he wore. Clothes have always seemed to be an important part of our self-image (perhaps for too much) so Paul uses that tendency to draw a spiritual picture.

Let's look at our passage. Paul is asking us to put on the character, the **doxa** of God, as though it were a kind of regal robe or priestly vestments that shows off our new status as chosen of God and Holy in Christ

**Colossians 3:12-17**

Put on then, **as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved**, compassionate hearts, kindness, **humility, meekness**, and patience, <sup>13</sup> 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. <sup>14</sup> And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in **perfect harmony**. <sup>15</sup> And let the **peace of Christ rule in your hearts**, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be **thankful**.

<sup>16</sup> **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 your hearts to God**. <sup>17</sup> 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.

You can think of this list as a kind of armor instead of a suit of clothes. Perhaps you remember the passage in Ephesians where we are told to put on the full spiritual armor of God (*with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, <sup>15</sup> and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. <sup>16</sup> In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. <sup>17</sup> Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.*)

This passage a bit is different. We are told to put on the character of Christ, the attitudes of Christ. We are told to put on love. And in this we need to remember that to put on the love of Christ *is an act of our will* not an emotional state of affect.

**“The rule for us all is perfectly simple. Do not waste time bothering whether you love your neighbor; act as if you did. As soon as we do this we find one of the great secrets. When you are behaving as if you loved someone, you will presently come to love him.”**

**~ C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity***

**“Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus . . .”**

**Philippians 2:5-8**

Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,<sup>6</sup> who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,<sup>7</sup> but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, *and* being made in the likeness of men.<sup>8</sup> Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Let's break this passage down into three components:

**Humility, Unity and Peace**

The first is the virtue of **Humility (vs 12-13)**.

*Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, **humility, meekness, and patience,**<sup>13</sup> 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.*

**“True humility is not thinking less of yourself; it is thinking of yourself less.”**

**~ C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity***

The second bookend is love resulting in unity - **Unity (v14)**

***And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.***

Harmony is an interesting word choice. Melody is everyone singing the same notes. That is not the imagery that represents the Body of Christ. We have many voices singing different tones, disagreeing and discussing and praying for discernment, but always seeking to make a beautiful song before the Lord - harmony making each tone stronger and more expressive.

*The result of putting on these attributes is there is peace, **letting the peace of God rule in our hearts.** It must start with our setting our minds on things above. Remember, this passage assumes that we are to carry out the admonition in Colossians 3:1-2 to seek the things above first.*

Again, how wonderful it would be for churches and families if all professing Christians would adorn themselves with such qualities as "the character of Christ" and "the peace of God"!

This chapter can be summarized with this admonition:

**"Seek The Heavenly"** (3:1-4)

**"Slay The Earthly"** (3:5-9)

**"Strengthen The Christly"** (3:10-11)

Finally let's talk about the idea of putting on a thankful heart:

**The Cloak of Thanksgiving (v15-16)**

And be **thankful.**<sup>16</sup> ***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 your hearts to God.***

***Illustration: Mike Buy's thanksgiving and farewell tour***  
**Prayer**

**Benediction:**

**1 Thessalonians 5:18**

Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

**Discussion Questions:**

Re-read Colossians 3:5-13

These lists are character traits of two different kinds of life, one characterized by the old self and the second by the new self. Which list does it seem to you is the focus of the church? Should we be more about putting off the old or putting on the new? How so?

When we put on the new self, what keeps these traits from sticking so to speak? Traits like patience and endurance and love and peace. They seem to be hard fought for character traits. Why is that?

Which one of the traits in verses 9-13 are the most difficult for you to put on?

Dave spoke of humility as a character trait of Christ. Where do you see humility being expressed in Christ? How can we express humility in our lives?

Where do you see peace being expressed in Christ? How can we express peace in our lives?

Does unity seem to be an important thing to Christ? How does Jesus express unity in the Triune Godhead? How are we to show unity in the Body of Christ?

Dave's last point was the idea of thanksgiving and he told the story of a friend of His who was dying of cancer. He went on a forgiveness and thanksgiving tour with this family. Dave mentioned that we are all on our own thanksgiving and farewell tour as well, though we don't know exactly when our final day on earth is. What do you think of that analogy for our lives?

How might living with true thanksgiving in our hearts make us more Christ like?