

Colossians 3:9-17
Putting on the New Man - 3

1

Introduction

Christians must dress themselves spiritually in accordance with their new identity. They have died with Christ and risen to new life. Salvation produces a two-sided obligation for believers. Negatively, they must throw off the garment of the old, sinful lifestyle. Positively, they must put on the lifestyle of the new man. To do that, they must understand the **position**, **progress**, **partnership**, **performance**, **perfection**, and **priorities** of the new man.

2

Colossians 3:12-17

Therefore, as *the* elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; ¹³ bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also *must do*. ¹⁴ But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. ¹⁵ And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be 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 whatever you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

3

The Performance of the New Man

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In the preceding verses we have seen what the believer needs to put off, both individually and corporately as the church. God has done so much for us, now we will look at what God expects from the believer. We must live holy and differently in this world. Godly behavior is the outward manifestation of our inward transformation. This change in behavior gives evidence to ourselves, and the world that inward transformation has taken place.

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Paul addresses his readers as the “**elect of God**”. The concept of election has divided the church for the last 2000 years. There are good theologians on both sides of the issue. The problem is when man attempts to fill in the gaps of God’s Word with his own ideas and interpretations. At some point we need to let God be God. The idea of election is God’s choosing. This is a Biblical fact. However, one must ask for what is one chosen and what is the basis of that choosing? This is where people get in trouble. In this passage we could interpret that God has elected us to be holy and loved, or that those who God has elected are to be holy and loved.

I hope we can agree that no one would come to Christ on their own for they are spiritually dead and their spirit is cut off from God. If a person is to be saved, God’s Spirit must bring conviction of sin and give them the faith to believe. However, man has his part also. Though man cannot save himself, he must accept or reject God’s gift of salvation.

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Because of our salvation, believers are **holy and beloved**. **Holy** means “set apart,” or “separate.” God chose believers out of the mainstream of mankind to be different from the world. Israel was chosen by God to be His light and witness to the world. For the most part, they rejected their calling. In the same way, when believers fail to act differently from the world, they violate their calling.

That believers are **beloved** of God means they are objects of His special love. The love that exists between the Father, Son, and Spirit is the very love that is now placed upon the believer.

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Put on is a word that means “to put on clothes,” or “envelope in.” It carries the idea that one must make the conscious effort to put off the things of the “old man” and put on the behavior and attitudes of the “new man”.

Tender mercies is the first character trait that is to mark the new man. It is also translated “**heart of compassion**”. It is two words in the Greek.

Tender speaks of the inward parts of the body and can be understood figuratively as the seat of one’s emotions. **Mercy** means “pity, sympathy, or compassion.” Taken together, the phrase could be translated as “have a deep, gut-level feeling of compassion.” Like Jesus, believers must not be indifferent to suffering, but should be concerned to meet people’s needs.

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Kindness is closely related to mercy and compassion. The Greek term refers to the grace that pervades the whole person, mellowing all that might be harsh. The kind person is as concerned about his neighbor’s good as he is about his own. God is kind, even to ungrateful and evil people (Luke 6:35). In fact, it was His kindness that led us to repentance (Rom. 2:4; cf. Titus 3:4). Kindness was shown by the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37), whose example we should follow in loving our neighbor.

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Humility is to see ourselves as we are. We were cut off from God by our sin, and we still stumble and fall. We were unable to save ourselves or even change our lives without God's help. **Humility** is to recognize our position. We are not God or the center of the universe. Life does not revolve around us. Rather we are the servants of the Most High God. We must recognize God's sovereignty in our lives. We must recognize our brokenness and our former sinful self. **Humility** anchors us so we do not act or treat others unfairly.

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Meekness is not weakness or spinelessness, but rather the willingness to suffer injury instead of inflicting it. The gentle person knows he is a sinner among sinners and is willing to suffer the burdens that the sin of others may impose on him. It is "power under control." **Meekness** is often translated as gentleness and can only be produced by the Holy Spirit (cf. Gal. 5:22–23) and should mark the Christian's behavior at all times, even when restoring a sinning brother (Gal. 6:1), or defending the faith against attacks from unbelievers (2 Tim. 2:25; 1 Pet. 3:15).

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Longsuffering is patience. The patient person does not get angry at others. Patience is the opposite of resentment and revenge. It was a characteristic of Jesus Christ. Paul wrote to Timothy, “For this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life” (1 Tim. 1:16). God is in control, and the events and people He allows in our lives are for His plan and purpose. We can endure the events of life through His strength and by focusing on pleasing Him.

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Bearing with one another means “to endure, to hold out in spite of persecution, threats, injury, indifference, or complaints and not retaliate.” It characterized Paul, who told the Corinthians, “when we are reviled, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure” (1 Cor. 4:12). It did not characterize the Corinthians, who were actually taking each other to court. Believers are family and should treat one another with kindness and grace. This includes forgiveness, as well as tolerance. Instead of demanding perfection in others, we need to be willing to endure other believers' quirks and oddities. And, when they fail, we need to be ready to forgive and help them heal.

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Believers are to be marked not only by **bearing with one another**, but also by **forgiving each other**. The Greek literally means “forgiving yourselves.” The church as a whole is to be a gracious, mutually forgiving fellowship. By including the phrase **even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do**, Paul makes Christ the model of forgiveness. Because He has forgiven us, we also must forgive others (Eph. 4:32; cf. Matt. 18:21–35). The phrase **if anyone has a complaint against another** refers to times when someone is at fault because of sin, error, or debt. The Lord Jesus is our pattern for forgiveness, because He forgave all our sins, errors, and debts. This does not mean we ignore sin, but help our brothers and sisters to overcome. I do not hold their failures against them.

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So What ...

To many people who claim to be Christians want to live life on their own terms. They try to add a little Jesus so He will do what they want. These might be saved, but their external garments are still that of the “old man.”

We need to take these commands seriously. We do not know how much time we have in this world. Let us each take off the old and put on the things of Christ which is the new man.

When we get to heaven, we will not regret the things we gave up for Christ, however we might regret the things that we did not. Let us each encourage one another as we run this race together!

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