

October 12, 2008

A New Wardrobe: Love

Colossians 3:1-14 (NLT)

3 Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, set your sights on the realities of heaven, where Christ sits in the place of honor at God's right hand. **2** Think about the things of heaven, not the things of earth. **3** For you died to this life, and your real life is hidden with Christ in God. **4** And when Christ, who is your ^{*} life, is revealed to the whole world, you will share in all his glory.

5 So put to death the sinful, earthly things lurking within you. Have nothing to do with sexual immorality, impurity, lust, and evil desires. Don't be greedy, for a greedy person is an idolater, worshiping the things of this world. **6** Because of these sins, the anger of God is coming. ^{*} **7** You used to do these things when your life was still part of this world. **8** But now is the time to get rid of anger, rage, malicious behavior, slander, and dirty language. **9** Don't lie to each other, for you have stripped off your old sinful nature and all its wicked deeds. **10** Put on your new nature, and be renewed as you learn to know your Creator and become like him. **11** In this new life, it doesn't matter if you are a Jew or a Gentile, ^{*} circumcised or uncircumcised, barbaric, uncivilized, ^{*} slave, or free. Christ is all that matters, and he lives in all of us.

12 Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. **13** Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. **14** Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony.

Well, it's official the Fall clothes finally came out this week. It's not so bad out today but during the week I needed a jacket...and a sweatshirt...and a long sleeved shirt under that! You don't want to be dressed inappropriately for the weather...unless you're a football fan who wears no shirt at all in the middle of the Winter. You also don't want to be inappropriately dressed. For example if you were a soldier you would be required to dress in uniform. People would know you are in the military by your uniform. Have you ever seen all the gear our soldiers wear on the battlefield...it would be dangerous not to. They would not go into battle without that protective gear and weapons that they need. And, you would not come inappropriately dressed for an occasion ...you wouldn't show up to paint a house in a tuxedo nor show up at a wedding in clothes you'd wear to paint a house. Of course, you ought to remove old dirty clothes, clean yourself up, and then put on clean clothes.

Well, God has a wardrobe He has picked out for you. It has His label on it. It says, fashioned exclusively by Jesus Christ for you. We have been looking at this wardrobe which we are to clothe ourselves with. God wants us to "dress" a certain way. If you are a Christian you should look the part, not literally (necessarily) by the way you dress, but how you live. We are identified as Christians when we "put on" the Lord Jesus

Christ. However, we first need to remove our “old clothes” and replace them with our new ones.

In verse 1 it says that since you have been raised with Christ...that is said with certainty. In other words, Paul says with certainty, “you have been raised with Christ!” Your old life died with Christ on the cross and you were raised to new life with the risen Christ. So don’t think about earthly things, think about God’s Kingdom and dress in the uniform of God’s Kingdom. Consider yourself dead to your old ways, and mindful that your new life is hidden with Christ in God, so that when Christ returns you will share in His glory.

God has cleaned you up, so take off the old clothes and replace them with new ones. Or get rid of old habits, and strive to make God’s priorities your daily practice. Think about things of heaven not earth, for heaven is our real home. That will take devoting time alone with God daily. Pray, reflect on Scripture, fast, take time for silence and solitude. Do the things that will keep you in close communication with God and strengthened by His Spirit. This will help you to look at life from God’s perspective and to seek what He desires.

In verse 5 Paul starts off with some obvious behaviors lurking within us that we must not have anything to do with. You see as Christians some aspects of our life would fall under the “already” and some under the “not yet.” This is an important concept to understand. We “already” belong to God. We “already” have died with Christ and have been raised with Christ, but we are, “not yet” in heaven, and therefore we are still susceptible to temptation. But since we are Christians, and have been raised to new life with Christ we must not live as we did before. It will take conscious, daily decisions to remove old, deadly, dangerous, sinful behaviors. Paul says (v5), have nothing to do with: **Your Old Wardrobe**

Sexual immorality (*porneia*). We derive our term "pornography" from this Greek word. Any form of illicit sexual relationship. The term serves to spotlight forbidden sexual behavior between people or indirect participation as an audience. In contrast to the loose morals of the ancient Greek world, believers ought to show self-discipline and obedience to God in this area.

Impurity. Moral uncleanness. Perhaps no sexual act has taken place, but the person exhibits a crudeness or insensitivity in sexual matters. Like the other characteristics mentioned on this list, impurity points to activities before knowing Christ and should have no place in a believer's life.

Lust. Evil sexual passion that leads to excessive sexual immorality and perversion.

Evil desire. Wanting something that is sinister and vile in order to satisfy one's desires. Paul admonished believers to get rid of the evil desires that could easily control them and which had been part of their lives before Christ.

Greed (which is idolatry). Relentless urge to get more for oneself. In this context, Paul may have been focusing on greed for satisfying evil desires and for sexual immorality. He could be saying that all of these are idolatry because like greed the focus is on worshiping the things of this world, filling desires rather than a focus on God. (from The Life Application Commentary Series Copyright © 1997, 1998, 1999 and 2000 by the Livingstone Corporation. Produced with permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. All rights reserved.)

Paul says (v6-8), Because of these sins, the anger of God is coming. You used to do these things when your life was still part of this world. But now is the time to get rid of:

Anger. A continuous attitude of hatred that remains bottled up within. This could refer to what is under the surface, while "rage" (below) refers to what bursts out. Anger would destroy the harmony and unity Paul called for among the believers.

Rage. Outbursts of anger or quick temper for selfish reasons. This could mean continual and uncontrolled behavior.

Malicious Behavior. Doing evil despite the good that has been received. This word is a general term referring to an evil force that destroys relationships. It can mean anything from trouble to wickedness. It is a deliberate attempt to harm another person.

Slander. Destroying another person's good reputation by lies, gossip, spreading rumors, etc. Malice often manifests itself through slander. From the Greek word (*blasphemia*) we get our word "blasphemy," a term used to describe speaking against God. The Greeks used the word for defamation of character. Again, this destroys human relationships.

Dirty language. Crude talk, abrasive language, swearing / cursing. Paul admonished the believers that such language must be caught and stopped before it escapes their mouths.

(from The Life Application Commentary Series Copyright © 1997, 1998, 1999 and 2000 by the Livingstone Corporation. Produced with permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. All rights reserved.)

Then Paul adds in verse 9...

Lying. "Don't lie to each other..." Jesus is the "Truth" so we must practice the truth in every area of our life.

You see all these were part of our old way, before we knew Christ. These were our old dirty clothes, but now we must put on our new clothes, our new nature (verse 9b -10) "...you have stripped off your old sinful nature and all its wicked deeds. Put on your new nature, and be renewed as you learn to know your Creator and become like Him." *How do we accomplish getting rid of the old – putting off the old, and putting on the new? Verse 10 tells us...as we learn to know our Creator and become like Him.* All Christians are in the Continuing Education Program.

Renewal is constantly needed in the believer's battle against sin and the old self. We must always be continually growing in our personal knowledge of Christ. The goal of the knowledge is Christlikeness. The more believers know of Christ and His ways, the more they are being changed to be like Him. Because this process is lifelong, we must never stop learning and obeying. There is no justification for drifting along, but there is an incentive to find the rich treasures of growing in Him. It takes practice, ongoing review, patience, and concentration to keep in line with God's will.

What does it mean to "put on the new self"? It means that your conduct should match your faith. If you are a Christian, you should act like it. To be a Christian means more than just making good resolutions and having good intentions; it means taking the right actions. This is a straightforward step that is as simple as putting on your clothes. You must rid yourself of all evil practices and immorality. Then you can commit yourself to what Christ teaches. If you have made such a commitment to Christ, are you remaining true to it? What old clothes do you need to strip off?

(from The Life Application Commentary Series Copyright © 1997, 1998, 1999 and 2000 by the Livingstone Corporation. Produced with permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. All rights reserved.)

Remember, the Bible not only tells us to remove the old “clothing”, it tells us to replace that clothing with your new clothes, your new wardrobe. And even tells us what that new wardrobe consists of. Don’t just put off the old ways that we have mentioned today, but put on the new way of living.

Your New Wardrobe

In verse 12 we are told that since God chose you and chose you to be a holy people, the holy people He loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience...forgive anyone who offends you...and above all, clothe yourselves with love. You can’t continually love others without continually forgiving others. You can’t have any of these traits without love. Love is like a belt which holds everything together. You can’t be sincerely compassionate, kind, humble, gentle, or patient without love. Love makes it perfect mercy, perfect kindness, perfect humility, perfect gentleness, and perfect patience. If you work on putting on these characteristics, you will put to death your old way of living.

You can’t be sexual immoral, impure, lust, have evil desires, be greedy, show anger, rage, malicious behavior, slander, use dirty language, or lie when you love God and live as God’s chosen, holy people He loves, clothing yourselves with His love manifested in your tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, and when, in love, you make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you, remembering, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. So wear love. It's your basic, all-purpose garment. Never be without it (from THE MESSAGE).