

Clothed with Christ

Bible Background • COLOSSIANS 3:1-17

Printed Text • COLOSSIANS 3:5-17 | Devotional Reading • PSALM 107:1-9

Aim for Change

By the end of the lesson, we will: **GAIN** an impression of principles of living in Christ; **IMAGINE** how, because we follow Christ, our life principles and behavior are different from the rest of society; and **EVALUATE** our treatment of others and make changes where necessary as demanded by a life lived in Christ.

In Focus

Most creatures in the animal kingdom shed something periodically. The most commonly known from among them are snakes. Most of us have gone to a museum and seen a snakeskin that has been shed and abandoned by the snake. It usually is hard and shaped like the snake. If the snake decided to go back into that skin, it would probably have a difficult time. Once the skin is discarded, it becomes hard and it does not fit anymore.

We can imagine a similar situation with a butterfly trying to return to its cocoon. It would likely damage its beautiful wings trying to get back into the hole of the cocoon. The butterfly no longer fits. Dogs and cats that shed usually leave their hair all over the place. It would be odd and foolish for a pet owner to gather up the hair and then attempt to paste it back on the dog or cat. That hair is dead, old, and it no longer belongs on the animal.

In our lesson today, Paul exhorts the church at Colossae to take off the old life and put on the new one in Christ. Just like the above examples, the old life no longer is appealing nor does it fit our new life in Christ.

Keep in Mind

“And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.”
(Colossians 3:14, KJV)

Focal Verses

KJV **Colossians 3:5** Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:

6 For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience:

7 In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them.

8 But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.

9 Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;

10 And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:

11 Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.

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.

The People, Places, and Times

Barbarians. The Greeks used this as a term for those they deemed uneducated; that is, those who did not speak Greek or follow a Greek pattern of living. In the Old Testament, the word indicated the inhabited world in contrast to the wilderness where the nomads roamed.

Scythian. A native of Scythia, the ultimate of barbarism, a savage. The Greeks despised the Jews; a barbarian scorned a Scythian. They were considered the lowest of the low.

Background

In the final two chapters of Colossians, Paul challenged the Colossians to make practical application of the doctrines he had been preaching. Paul believed Christians should not

just know the truth and be able to defend it, but that truth must be lived out in their daily lives as well. The pagan religions of Paul's day said little or nothing about personal morality. A worshiper could bow before an idol, put his offering on the altar, and go back to live the same old life of sin; what a person believed had no direct relationship with how he behaved. No one would attempt to correct the person for his behavior. The Christian faith brought a whole new concept into pagan society. Faith in Christ meant being united with Him. If Christians share His life, they must follow His example. If Christ lives in the believer, he or she cannot continue in sin. Thus, Paul concluded his letter to the Colossians with some specific instructions about Christian conduct.

At-A-Glance

1. New Life in Christ (Colossians 3:5–9)
2. Renewal Procedures (vv. 10–11)
3. Walking New (vv. 12–17)

In Depth

1. New Life in Christ (Colossians 3:5–9)

Paul speaks forthrightly about the demands of the new life and our urgent need to curb all the degrading tendencies of the old nature. The old life is dead. The believer has to let it die. We are not simply to suppress or control evil acts and attitudes; we are to wipe them out completely. Exterminate the old way of life. The action is to be undertaken decisively, with a sense of urgency. It suggests a vigorous, painful act of personal determination. Paul is calling for a slaying of evil passions, desires, and practices that root themselves in our bodies. Paul goes on to list sins. In the New International Version of Colossians 3:5, “impurity” is not just physical impurity but uncleanness in thought, word, and act. “Lust” essentially means a feeling or experience from an uncontrolled desire. “Greed” suggests a ruthless desire in pursuit of material things. This attitude is identified with idolatry because it puts self-interest and material things in the place of God.

Paul warned that God’s judgment would fall on the disobedient. He reminded the Colossians that this is the way they used to live. He said this ungodly life belongs to the past and that the Christian should be done with it. Paul firmly encourages getting “rid” of this past life (from v. 8, NIV). The phrase “but now” marks a new beginning. The Christian is to take off the filth of the past. Paul specifically names anger, rage (a sudden and passionate outburst of displeasure), malice, and slander (insulting talk against one’s fellow man or woman). Filthy language is “bad or

abusive speech, foul-mouthed abuse.” The sin of falsehood is singled out. Lying is given separate treatment and given a strong exhortation: “Do not lie” (from v. 9, NIV). The Christian is to have a totally new life change in which he or she has put off the old self with its practices, habits, or characteristics and put on the new. This is like the resurrection of Christ, who pulled off the graveclothes and then left them behind in the tomb. Christians now have a new life in Christ; the old deeds and desires must be put off.

2. Renewal Procedures (vv. 10–11)

Paul talked about becoming a new creature in Christ and taking off the old self, but how can that be done? Bad habits and ungodly conduct is not simply going to fall away like dirty clothes. Paul used the word “knowledge” to explain how a person changes (v. 10, KJV)—not through knowledge of more rules and laws, but the knowledge of Christ. Our minds must be renewed. As believers grow in knowledge of the Word of God, when we learn, read, and study His Word, God’s Spirit changes us. God transforms Christians by washing old thoughts, desires, and intentions out of our minds and replacing them with new ones.

In verse 11, Paul gives examples of this kind of mind change when he speaks about human distinctions and differences. In Christ, there are no nationalities (neither Greek nor Jew), religious differences (circumcised or uncircumcised), and no cultural differences (Barbarian or Scythian). The Greeks considered all non-Greeks to be barbarians and the Scythians to be the lowest barbarians of all. Yet, in Jesus Christ, a person’s cultural status has no advantage or disadvantage. Nor is economic or political status helpful (“bond nor free”). Slaves should try to get their freedom, but if they do not, that does not make them any less in Christ’s sight. All of these kinds of distinctions belong to the old person and the old way of thinking.

3. Walking New (vv. 12–17)

Christians are chosen, set apart, and loved by God. These are privileges God gave to His people in the Old Testament that are made available to Christians as well. Because God gave these blessings to His people, Paul encourages them to walk in compassion (a tenderness expressed toward the suffering), in kindness, goodness, graciousness (a sweet disposition), in humility (thinking humbly of oneself), in gentleness (delicate consideration for the rights and feelings of others), and in patience (self-restraint that allows one to bear injury and insult without resorting to retaliation). It also means bearing with and forgiving one another (“putting up” with things we don’t like). The final word is “love” (from v. 14, NIV). Love is unconditional giving and caring that goes beyond the call of duty.

Peace is another characteristic that Paul exhorts the believer to put on. Not just peace with each other but peace of mind, unruffled by difficulties and confusion. As usual, Paul weaves an attitude of thanksgiving in this section of the letter. Thankfulness to God and to our brothers and sisters promotes inward and outward peace. The Colossians are told to allow the word of God, the Gospel, and the messages about Christ to be a rich treasure for them that becomes so deeply implanted that it controls thinking, attitudes, and actions. When God’s Word is deep down in our hearts, Christ’s presence causes us to conduct ourselves in a wise manner, influenced by God’s insight and instruction. Paul writes that God’s Word dwelling in our hearts will also cause us to sing psalms from the Old Testament and hymns and spiritual songs based on the New Testament truths. Paul concludes with “Do all in the name of the Lord Jesus” (from v. 17, KJV). We are to always act as Christ’s representatives. Christ is to live through God’s children, those who have trusted in Him for their salvation and are eternally thankful.

Search the Scriptures

1. “Mortify ... your _____ ...; fornication, _____, inordinate affection, evil _____, and covetousness, which is _____” (Colossians 3:5).

2. “_____ not one to another” (v. 9).

3. “_____ one another, and _____ one another ... even as _____ forgave you” (v. 13).

4. “And whatsoever you do ..., do _____ in the _____ of the _____” (v. 17).

Discuss the Meaning

1. How do we constantly “seek things above” when we have to live and participate in daily activities here on Earth?

2. How do we get rid of old habits and lifestyles and put on new ones?

3. Why are forgiveness and love two key elements in a life that pleases God?

4. How can an attitude of thanksgiving help us in our relationship with God and with people?

Liberating Lesson

In our society today, for many people, lying is common. Far too many people believe that if the truth is going to hurt, make you uncomfortable, ruin your reputation, get you in trouble, or cause you to pay money, then lying is OK. We justify lying or find creative ways to do it by calling it something else. In popular culture—TV, movies, politics, etc.—how does lying manifest itself and how do we participate? In the midst of this kind of society, the Christian is exhorted to tell the truth. Lying in any form is considered part of our old life and needs to be discarded.

Application for Activation

Complete two lists with characteristics each from your old life and from the new as

described in Colossians 3:5–17. Remember, you cannot change yourself or your ways. Pray and ask God to change you in His own timing and in His own way to see positive changes in your life.

Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

Sources:

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Unger, Merrill F. *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary*. Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1988.

Say It Correctly

Concupiscence. kon-KYOO-pi-sens.
Scythian. SITH-e-en.

Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY

Setting Aside Doubt
(Matthew 14:22–33)

TUESDAY

Getting Rid of the Old Ways
(Romans 6:12–19)

WEDNESDAY

Living in Love
(1 John 3:10–17)

THURSDAY

Forgiving as You Were Forgiven
(Matthew 18:21–35)

FRIDAY

Living in Peace
(John 14:25–29)

SATURDAY

Living in Gratitude
(Psalm 107:1–9)

SUNDAY

Living as God's Chosen Ones
(Colossians 3:5–17)