

Living in Jesus' Name
Colossians 3:5-17
Bruce Miller

When I married Tamara 23 years ago at age 22, I had to make some changes. My clothes did not meet her basic standards. I loved hand me downs whether they fit me or not. My shoe size is 8 ½, but I was wearing my deceased grandfather's size 10 shoes. I had no matching socks. I just put together those closest in color and shape. And I was never very good about washing clothes. Basically I was a pig. When we got married, I had to get rid of most of my college wardrobe. Tamara was right. The old clothes needed to go.

But some years ago Tamara did a terrible thing that made me really mad. I had these awesome, comfortable shoes that I loved. They were very worn in, so worn in that I had to buy new shoes, but I was not about to get rid of my favorite old shoes. One day I looked in the closet and could not find them anywhere. I asked Tamara if she had seen them. She had seen them. In fact she threw away my favorite old shoes. I did not respond well. My anger lasted for more than a few days. For a long time I kept telling her how bad she was for getting rid of my shoes. She swore never to do it again, so today my closet is filled with worn out old shoes.

We have a hard time getting free from old stuff in our lives that really needs to go. When you become a Christian, you become a new person. As a new person you have a new life. You need to get rid of the stuff from your old life and put on the clothes of your new life.

Once you trust in Jesus Christ as your savior and begin to follow Him, you need new clothes to fit your new life. Some of you are still dressed in the fashion of a pagan. Many of us are frustrated because we want to grow up spiritually, but we keep messing up. Paul prayed in Colossians chapter 1 that we would live a life pleasing to God. He said that we should become mature in Christ. How do we do that? How do we mature in Christ?

If you are not yet a Christian, if you have not yet trusted in Jesus Christ alone to save you, then this message will do you little good. In chapter 3 Paul is writing to Christians. Before you can apply the truth of chapter 3, you must trust in Jesus Christ. The only way to really start growing spiritually is to be born again.

When we are saved, God sets us free from the chains that were holding us. This Book reveals to us how to really live. Open your Bibles to Colossians chapter 3. Based on the fact that we have died with Christ and been raised with Him so that our life is Christ, Paul tells us how to mature in Christ. Please stand for the reading of God's Word. Colossians chapter 3, verses 5-17. ⁵ *Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.* ⁶ *Because of these, the wrath of God is coming.* ⁷ *You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived.* ⁸ *But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips.* ⁹ *Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices* ¹⁰ *and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.* ¹¹ *Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.* ¹² *Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.* ¹³ *Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.* ¹⁴ *And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.* ¹⁵ *Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.* ¹⁶ *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.* ¹⁷ *And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*

Today, I want you to get serious with God. You may be holding on to some old shoes that you need to get rid of. No one can throw them out for you. You have to do it. Pick one old sin you need to get rid of today. Leave it here. At the end of the service I am going to give you an opportunity to respond to the message by getting rid of old shoes.

Then there are new clothes you need to put on. You need to become who you are, a child of God who has died and risen with Jesus Christ who is now your life. You need to wear clothes that fit Jesus Christ. Paul gives us ten new articles to consider. Prayerfully pick one to put on today.

Paul's main point is that we should live like the new persons that we are in Christ by putting off old vices and putting on new virtues. We do not try to

live holy lives to win favor with God; rather we live for God because He has shown His favor to us. We are dead to sin and alive to God so let's live that way. Paul roots his moral commands in theological realities. So be who you are in Christ.

As new people in Christ, we must strip off old sinful clothes and put on Christlike clothing.

Strip off old sinful clothes

In verses five to eleven Paul bluntly names sins which we too often excuse or gloss over. Generally we are far too casual about our sin. Paul gets serious about sin, so must we. I am asking you to get serious with God today. What old sinful clothes will you strip off? Paul says that we must kill it and get rid of it. In the first list of five vices, Paul says,

Kill earthy, sexual sins

Paul's list focuses on sexual sins that destroy our lives.

Such as:

Let's walk through his list, prayerfully, asking if one of these is the one God most wants you to kill today.

First, kill sexual immorality, which is any form of illicit sexual activity, including adultery and premarital sexual activity.

Kill impurity, moral uncleanness, maybe there is no physical activity, but there is sexual craving in your mind. Kill it.

Kill lust, sexual passion, and illicit urges. Experiencing temptation is not sinful, but sin begins in the mind. When a lustful idea first presents itself to your mind, kill it. If you mentally dwell on the image you are sinning.

Kill evil desires, wanting something sinful to satisfy your own desires. We commonly desire the forbidden. All of us have perverted thoughts run across our mind. Temptation is not sin, but when we embrace our lurid imagination and fantasize about sex, it is sin. Kill evil desires.

Kill greed, coveting, the relentless urge to get more for yourself. “Greed” in this context may be sexual, wanting what you do not have. We crave another person or experience that we think we are missing out on.

Any of these vices can be idolatry. When filling desires is more important than God, you have made your desire into an idol. Who are you serving? Sex is a very popular idol today. It is a false god. We sacrifice our lives, our honor and our health to an idol.

GIGO – garbage in, garbage out. One person said, ...It is conceivable that on a given evening of TV watching, one may see more sensual sights than one’s grandparents did in their lifetimes. In our home we have a block on our TV for any program with a “N” for nudity. Proverbs 6:27 says, *“Can a man scoop fire into his lap without his clothes being burned?”* Many Christians are heaping fire onto themselves and are being profoundly scarred. We need to be like Job, who said, *“I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a girl”* (Job 31:1)

Let me be very frank. I am angry and grieved. Quit wrecking your families. On a recent Sunday, a man came to me in great pain saying, “my wife did not come home last night.” The same Sunday, a lady racked with tears said, “my husband is hitting the bars later and later. Last night we had to tell the kids, ‘daddy’s leaving.’” I am so angry and grieved about sexual sin. What are you thinking! Pastor Mike Stewart told me 7 of the last 10 couples he saw for premarital counseling were already living together. This week I heard about two ladies in our church family who have had affairs, cheated on their husbands. Ladies you may be here today. Kill your sexual immorality. It may not bother you that I’m angry. That’s fine. You have someone else to worry about. Paul says, kill sexual sins because they make God angry.

Because they make God angry

We make a grave mistake if we conceive of God as some chummy heavenly being who smiles on all we do and only asks that we do our best. Paul says, “because of these the wrath of God is coming.”

God’s wrath is not like sinful human anger or the cartoon pictures of pagan gods with their lightening bolts. God’s wrath is never vindictive, malicious or out of control. But is real and it is fierce. Most of us do not fear God

enough. Recent preaching has so focused on the love of God that we have neglected the wrath of God which is other side of His love. If God were not angry at injustice, cruelty and perversion, He would not be good. His wrath rises out of His wounded love and His holy character.

Sin brings wrath, never blessing. God's wrath is a present reality and a future certainty. God is not some nice, old granddaddy. Hebrews says it is terrifying to fall into the hands of the living God. Our sin angers God and rightfully so. Kill your sexual sin because it angers our holy God who loves us enough to send His Son to die for us.

Paul says, what are you thinking falling back into sexual sin? This is the stuff you used to do in the life you once lived. It was killing you then, why go back to what you were ashamed of? What good was it doing you? Has it not cost you enough already? You burned your hand when you touched the hot stove. Do you want to go lay your hand on it again? That's your old life. Kill it.

Maybe one of these is your old shoe or maybe yours in is in his second list of five. Paul turns from sexual sins to angry, verbal sins.

Get rid of angry, verbal sins

As with sexual sins, so with sins of anger we are destroying our marriages, families and churches. Let's look at Paul's list praying that God will show you what old shoe you most need to get rid of.

Such as:

Get rid of anger. Some anger is appropriate. Obviously God gets angry but He does not sin. Sinful anger is a continuous attitude of hatred, bottled up resentment or smoldering bitterness, caused by unforgiveness. Sometimes this is the cold shoulder, the silent treatment or constant sniping. Get rid of anger. It does not fit the new person God has made you.

Get rid of rage. Rage is when anger explodes. It is the short fuse with a big bomb. You lash out, yelling words you wish you had never said, but can't take back. Most men I talk to deal with anger or rage. Don't just "deal with it," get rid of it. I am asking you to get serious with God today.

Get rid of malice which is acting on your anger. It is deliberate harm to another person.

Get rid of slander, expressing your malice in words. Slander is hurting another person with gossip, spreading rumors, saying harmful things. “I really shouldn’t say this, but ...” then don’t. It destroys relationships.

Get rid of filthy language, crude talk, abrasive speech, cursing, throwing out expletives. There are things you should never say to your spouse or to your children.

Sins of anger and the tongue destroy marriages, families, life groups and churches. Get rid of it. It does not fit you anymore.

Then Paul adds, do not lie. Lying is often related to sexual sin and to anger. God hates lying and loves truth. Be free by getting rid of what is chaining you down.

We are to live in accord with who we have been made to be. We are new creations in Christ. We must live that way. When we live pure lives, controlling our sexual urges and when we live peaceful lives, controlling our anger, we show the world the truth of the Gospel. When we engage in sexual immorality or rage or lying, we defame the name of Jesus Christ. Incarnation is critical to proclamation. We must live the Gospel that we share. We must live as new people because that is who we are. Be who you are in Christ. Paul says we must get rid of these old clothes

Because you have taken off your old humanity and put on your new humanity

The NIV translation “self” is too individualistic. Paul’s phrases here are both individual and corporate. The words, “knowledge,” “image” and “Creator” point back to Genesis 1. Adam represents rebellion and the old humanity. Jesus Christ is the new Adam who represents the new humanity. We were in Adam in our sin, but now by salvation we are in Christ in His righteousness. The point is that we have become new people so we should live that way.

In Christ, traditional barriers are shattered. As verse 11 teaches us, the new humanity in Christ destroys racial barriers (“Greek or Jew”), religious barriers (“circumcised or uncircumcised”), cultural barriers (“barbarians,

Scythian”), and social barriers (“slave or free”). God doesn’t play favorites and neither should we.

Often anger and slander are expressed across old barriers which is why we have categories like hate crimes. When you are prejudiced against another race or economic status, you are sinning. The gospel breaks down man-made walls and classifications. We are all in Christ. He is the measure by which everything is to be understood.

And so in verse 12, Paul moves from what we need to strip off to what we need to put on.

Put on Christlike clothing

We are God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, so we should live as who we are. The way we can mature in Christ is by putting on the life that is His. Put on such virtues as, the following five

Such as:

Put on compassion, genuine sensitivity and heartfelt sympathy for the needs of others. Personally, as a driven leader-type person, I am praying to grow in compassion.

Put on kindness that takes the initiative in responding generously to others’ needs. Kindness is the opposite of rudeness and harshness.

Put on humility, a true picture of our position before the Lord. Be ready to forgo our own rights. Drop the incessant quest to rise in the pecking order. Quit playing the game of one-upmanship. Put on humility in the place of prideful ambition.

Put on gentleness, consideration of others, willing to give up what you want for them, the opposite of resentment, revenge and rage.

Put on patience, long-suffering, refusing to retaliate. The opposite of anger-related sins, graciously enduring what you do not like.

These five virtues lay the basis for two major new items: forgiveness and love.

Forgiveness: as the Lord forgives us

Put on forgiveness. The standard is high. We are to forgive as the Lord forgives us. Perhaps you are familiar with the recent Amish schoolhouse slayings that occurred on October 2nd. Many are calling it the "Amish 9/11". Yet that was not the most shocking news to come out of Lancaster County over the past two weeks. No, that would be the revelation that the Amish community, which has buried five of its little girls, is reaching out to the widow and children of the killer. They have not only forgiven the murderer, they have embraced his wife and children! The Amish understand that love and forgiveness are stronger forces than death and destruction. They understand that forgiveness breaks the hideous cycle of violence: that forgiveness transforms both the forgiver and the forgiven. The grateful widow said that the love shown for her family is providing incredible healing and restoration. If we could see with Jesus' eyes, we would know that suffering love and forgiveness is what saves and heals our deepest wounds. Put on forgiveness. Then put on love.

Love: the ultimate for unity

Love is the ultimate garment for unity that binds all the rest of our attire together. Love is the supreme Christian grace. As a church we are focused on three loves: to love God, one another and our neighbors.

From these two major articles, Paul shifts to his final three. These three show us how to follow Christ's pattern for our lives.

Follow Christ's pattern for our lives

Christ's pattern involves His peace, His Word and His Name. First we are to

Let Christ's Peace rule --As we are one body

Sports fans are rightly embarrassed at the recent football melee in Miami. That is the opposite of the peace that is to characterize Christ's church. The word "rule" comes from athletics and can mean let Christ be the umpire of your heart in conflicts with others. Our unity in Christ should settle issues so that we are a community of peace letting Christ rule our family. When Christ rules in our hearts, His peace will rule in our fellowship.

From time to time I hear that you have a problem with me or with your church. That's fine. I see lots to improve. But it bugs me to hear through someone else that you have a problem with me or the church. Come talk with me. Don't just sit and do nothing. Come roll up your sleeves and let's get to work on it. Don't slander your church or me. Be part of the solution or leave. Don't sit and sour the rest of us. The peace and unity of Christ is too important. Secondly,

Let Christ's Word dwell richly - As we exhort wisely and sing gratefully

Dwelling richly in Christ's Word is a vital way to mature spiritually. We are a Bible-based church, built and directed by the Word of God.

Are you in the Word of God? Is it in you? Are you dwelling in it richly? Notice teaching and admonishing is what we all do for each other; not what a preacher does. A vital way we grow to maturity in Christ is by teaching and admonishing each other. We can only do this if we know each other. We can only do this if we meet together regularly. This is why we have Life Groups. This is why our Life Groups focus on studying the Bible. This is why we share with each other in facilitated dynamic discussions rather than only listening to a teacher lecture. We grow as we exhort each other wisely.

When the Word of God dwells richly within you, you want to sing. Our worship leader, Scott Hodgin has told me that he has seen more vibrant singing since the Colossian series began. In one of our only windows into the worship of the early church we see that they sang all kinds of songs. The singing was not only in worship services but also in small groups and in private. Notice to whom they sang. To God. Singing is a way of letting the Word of Christ dwell in you richly as you express truthful lyrics in song. Notice singing was congregational. Worship in song is not a spectator sport; it is not a performance of a few, but to be the participation of us all. Worship is not a concert but a sing-a-long. The people up front are not singing for you, they are leading you to sing to God. Let Christ's Word dwell in you through singing with gratitude in your heart to God.

Paul brings this whole passage to a grand conclusion in his third pattern. Not only are we to let Christ's peace rule and Christ's Word dwell, but we are also to Let Christ's

Let Christ' Name direct all you say and do – As we give thanks to the Father

Not only should our singing honor Christ, but so should our whole lives. As followers of Christ, all we say or do is in the name of the Lord Jesus. To act in someone's name is to represent them and be empowered to do so, such as having a power of attorney to sign for them. To mature in Christ, ask of all you say and do, am I representing Christ well? Would Jesus put His Name on this? His reputation is at stake in the conduct of His followers.

Finally, we are to live our lives giving thanks to the Father through Jesus. Verse 15 says to be thankful. Verse 16 says to sing with gratitude and verse 17 says we are to be giving thanks. Gratitude is a prime characteristic of a mature Christian. Mature Christ followers are thankful people, aware of all that God has done for them.

When you know who God has made you to be in Christ, you want to live like the person He as made you to be. I asked you to get serious with God. What is God convicting you to get rid of, what is He prompting you to put on? What is one "old" article of "clothing" that you need to get rid of? What is one "new" article of "clothing" you need to put on? I told you I had those old comfy shoes that I loved. It was hard to let go of them. Let go of the old shoes. Leave them here.

When we hold on to our familiar ways, those sins keep us enslaved -- in chains that hold us down and keep us from true life. Take some time over the next few minutes to ask God-- 'what is holding me back from truly being free in You?'

God wants you to be free. I am giving you the opportunity to get rid that old stuff today. I want you to be free. I want you to get serious about growing spiritually. Strip off the old clothes and put on Christlike clothing. Follow Christ's pattern for your life. Be who God has made you to be in Christ. Deal with God right now. Come forward; get on your knees; deal with God. If you have not trusted in Christ, do so. We have people up front who can connect you with ministries and people to help you take next steps with your addictions. I want you to be free from sin, free to sing to God. We have kneelers up front. Come forward and kneel before the cross; get rid of your old stuff so you can be free in Christ.

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