

## Colossian 3 Series #9

*“Living the Good Life”*

We began the New Year by focusing on Paul’s letter to the Colossians chapter 3. There, Paul issues instruction to all those who God were made alive in Christ through faith in Him. He first addressed a new life focus.

*If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.*

Every Christian’s life should center on continually pursuing and pondering eternal realities rather than earthly things. Paul included three reasons why that should be our primary focus.

*For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. Colossians 3:1-4*

1. Old self died and we were made alive in Christ.
2. Presently our new life has special connection with Christ (at God’s right hand) in God.
3. At the future physical return of Christ, we will also gloriously appear with Him.

The first instruction is to continually pursue and ponder eternal realities. Our spiritual resurrection to new life requires a new way of living. The second instruction is to intentionally put off the old way of living and consider the members of our body as dead to the old ways. Before Christ, certain patterns, habits, emotional reactions, thoughts, reasoning became imbedded in the brain and body systems. The Bible calls this the flesh part of us. This old programing did not all go away at Salvation.

Just as we learned these things from the world, the flesh and the devil we need to learn imbed new habits energized by the Holy Spirit and initiated by our new core “inner man”. So now, we have a resurrected inner man, a soul that is being renewed and a body of flesh fighting for dominance. The battle between the new spirit and the old flesh is waged in the soul. The soul includes the mind will and emotions.

Last week we offered ten considerations involved in winning this battle.

1. **Remember there is NOW no condemnation. (Rom 8:1)**
2. **Submit your new self and the members of your body to God and His purposes**
3. **Draw near to God (James 4:9)**
4. **Resist the devil (James 4:8)**
5. **Refuse to allow the imbedded passions of the flesh manifest**
6. **Put on Jesus and His way of life.**
7. **Take every thought captive and renew your thinking to correspond with God’s ways.**
8. **Make no provision for the flesh in regards to its lusts.**
9. **Walk in the Spirit**
10. **Guard your heart**

It all has to do with reprograming our members to operate according to the Spirit rather than the old programing of the evil flesh. The means taking every thought and attitude captive and renewing our thinking in line with truth.

*The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul... Psalm 19:7*

*He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake. Psalm 23:3*

*Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices, and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him—  
Colossians 3:9-10*

David addressed some of the stuff operating in his soul. He talked to his soul.

*Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why have you become disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him for the help of His presence. O my God, my soul is in despair within me; Therefore I remember You... Psalm 42:5-6 (Also in Psalm 43:5)*

He asked God to remind his soul that God will save.

*Draw also the spear and the battle-axe to meet those who pursue me; Say to my soul, "I am your salvation."  
Psalm 35:3*

He instructed his soul to give praise to God.

*Bless the LORD, O my soul, And all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget none of His benefits; Psalm 103:1-2*

He humbled his soul.

*But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth; I humbled my soul with fasting, and my prayer kept returning to my bosom. Psalm 35:13*

Truth to the soul invigorates the living.

*For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF." But if you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another. But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. Galatians 5:14-16*

The desire of the flesh in this context is to bite and devour one another. The desire of the spirit is to love one another as yourself.

Pursue and ponder eternal realities.

Put off the old way of the old man.

Put on the new way of the new man.

*So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. Colossians 3:12-14*

Put off the old clothes (selfish behaviors) that identified you with the old self and put on the new clothes (selfless behaviors) that will identify you with Christ and the new self.

Paul told the Romans to...

*Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts. Romans 13:13-14*

Since we have put on the new self, put on the actions of the new self. Paul appealed to our high standing with God as motivation to live differently. It is like getting a new position in a new

company. You want to wear the uniform of the new company. You want to favorably represent the new company.

Paul appealed to three realities. Chosen, holy, dearly loved.

Paul linked these three things in his letter to the Ephesians.

*God **chose** us in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we would be **holy and blameless** before Him.*

***In love** He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself...Eph 1*

God unconditionally chose us.

God made us special (holy) set us apart as a special people.

God dear loves and still loves us (Perfect tense verb).

Peter urged the same mentality.

*But you are A **CHOSEN RACE**, A royal **PRIESTHOOD**, A **HOLY NATION**, A **PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION**, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; for you once were **NOT A PEOPLE**, but now you are **THE PEOPLE OF GOD**; you had **NOT RECEIVED MERCY**, but now you have **RECEIVED MERCY**. Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul. Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation. 1 Peter 2:9-12*

In view of your new identity...

In view of who you are in Christ...

In view of your new capacities as a new creation...

In view of God's eternal love...

...Sink into the new uniform. Wear God's clothes that reflect God's heart.

By living the new life you graphically and dramatically proclaim the excellencies of Him who called us out of utter darkness into His magnificent light. What are those excellencies?

What do these designer clothes look like? What kind of uniform should every Christian don before they go out of the house? Lists similar to this list appear all through the New Testament. It is not a complete list. Everything in the list stands in sharp opposition to the previous list of things Paul told us to "put off". Each one of these articles of clothing or attributes could fill a message in itself. The point is that they all reflect humble selfless love as compared to the flesh which reflects proud jealousy and selfish ambition. I encourage a deep look into each one in this week's going deeper suggestions.

## **PUT ON A HEART OF COMPASSION**

The word used here refers to inward parts, bowels, or loins. It is used literally of Judas falling and his bowels gushing out. The reference is to inward deep feelings and affection. Paul shared his passion.

*For God is my witness, how I long for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. Philip. 1:8*

The prodigal son's father's response to the return of his son.

The internal response of the good Samaritan to the plight of the man left for dead.

In Matt 18 it is the master's response to the slave who owed more than he could pay.

As is evident in the digging deeper study, Jesus constantly demonstrate such compassion.

Jesus' compassion sweater looks good on anyone who wears it. Unfortunately, it is possible to close our heart toward others.

*But whoever has the world's goods, and beholds his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? 1 John 3:17*

How often are we gripped with compassion for the needy, the lost, the wayward, the unlovely. As followers of Jesus we not only need to be gripped with compassion but follow compassion with kindness.

## **PUT ON KINDNESS**

Whereas compassion is the emotional element, kindness is the action element. In relation to God this word describes something that goes beyond internal feelings but actions which touch the life of others. Jesus demonstrated and directed both aspects.

*But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. And do not judge and you will not be judged; and do not condemn, and you will not be condemned; pardon, and you will be pardoned. Give, and it will be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, they will pour into your lap. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return." Luke 6:27-38*

Perhaps we don't receive what we could because we don't give what we could.

## **PUT ON HUMILITY**

If pride is the central fashion statement in the old self's closet, humility is the central fashion statement in the new self's closet.

*Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Philip. 2:3-4.*

*You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE. Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety upon Him, because He cares for you. 1 Peter 5:5-7*

Jesus wore this humble hat with distinguished dignity. In fact He instructs us to learn it from Him. Humility is the ability to see ourselves as God sees us; not too high – not too low. Because of my worth through relationship with Jesus, I have nothing to prove, nothing to pursue and nothing to lose. I can truly serve others without selfish motive, jealous or selfish ambition.

## **PUT ON GENTLENESS**

Just like compassion and kindness, humility is the inward attitude and gentleness is the outward action. Gentleness flows out of humility. It is one of the signs that we are operating by the direction and empowerment of the Holy Spirit. From a humble heart comes a manner of dealing with people that communicates deep love and care that encourages response rather than resistance. Because we have no personal agenda, we can respond to people without anger, coercion, harshness, frustration, pressure, heavy hand. Gentleness is power under control. Jesus had the power and authority to squash the opposition. Yet, he chose to restrain His response and give His life to bring us to Himself and God.

Let's consider some other clothes from the King's closet.

## **PUT ON LONGSUFFERING**

Longsuffering comes from the marriage of two words. "anger" and "long or distant". It refers to the choice to withhold an angry response for a long period of time. It is the choice to hold back an angry reaction.

James clearly instructs us to be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to anger for man's anger does not accomplish God righteousness.

Paul specifies two fashion accessories that complement longsuffering. He adds two complementary present participles (ing words). A participle in the present tense indicates continuous action.

## **FOREBEARING**

Literally, this means to "hold oneself up against". Hold oneself up against difficult people. Put up with, bear with, endure, forbear. Some translate this "tolerate". I intentionally avoid this word because of its present day use and application. Tolerance in our culture means that I must view the beliefs of others with equal value. We must maintain the right of others to believe what they want, but we are not obligated to validate their beliefs.

In relation to people, God wants us to bear with one another out of love for them. This "bearing with" is not a decision to grit our teeth and put up with someone while resenting them or building up bitter feelings and resentment. Forbearance humbly and gently, bears with their weaknesses in the interest of demonstrating God's love. Rather than spewing out anger and irritation (longsuffering), we forbear the difficulties of others.

## **FORGIVING**

We have covered this subject repeatedly. The principle is simple, the practice not so much. It means to release from debt or repayment. Rather than react in anger and seethe in destructive bitterness we chose to forgive the offense. This verse leaves no wiggle room.

*forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. Colossians 3:13*

## **PUT ON LOVE**

The glorious overcoat in this wardrobe is love.

*Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. Colossians 3:14*

Paul saved what he considered the most important piece of clothing for last.

The whole list is summed up in "put on Christ" and "above all put on love"

*If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law according to the Scripture, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF," you are doing well. James 2:8*

*For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF." Galatians 5:14*

The whole Bible can be summed up in the commandment to love God and love people.

You don't need lists if you understand and practice love. The lists only serve to point out the fact that love is not flowing out of our core. Jesus promised that through the Holy Spirit, rivers of refreshing water would flow. He distributed His love in the inner man so that we would love others.

*Whoever has the world's goods, and beholds his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? 1 John 3:17*

The point is that God intended us to open our heart to others with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, longsuffering by forbearing and forgiven and genuine unconditional love.

Application?

Intentionally practice the behavior of God's kingdom -- compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, longsuffering by forbearing and forgiving like Jesus and genuine unconditional love like Jesus.

This is what it means to be like Jesus. This is our new nature. This is our destiny.