

Off With The Old, On With The New

Colossians 3:5-14

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Begin following with me in Colossians 3:1. Paul says, “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. 2 Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. 3 For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. 4 When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.”

It's that time of year when we're seeing lots of weeds spring up in the yard, you know, we had all this rain. I don't know about you, but I hate to pull weeds. How many of you love to pull weeds? One person. See me after church. I'm going to give you my address. Come pull weeds. If we're going to have a beautiful yard, we have to get rid of the weeds, right? If we're going to plant a beautiful garden, we have to get rid of the weeds.

Paul, in this section of Colossians, is telling us how to demonstrate Christ's preeminence. He started with declaring it in Colossians 1, defending it in Colossians 2, and he says we demonstrate it in our lives by the way we live, Colossians 3 and 4. Paul always follows doctrine with duty. I don't know if you understand that pattern, but in all of Paul's epistles or letters, he first lays down doctrine, then he gives us the duty or principles and practice. How we live the Christian life must be based on what we believe. What we believe determines how we behave. In that section of Colossians, and we're going to be getting a lot of marvelous teaching on marriage, and the home, and the family, and how to live the Christian life, but Paul tells us that we have to put off, and he uses the metaphor, and I'll come back to it in just a moment, the old life with all of its corruption and deeds—our words, our attitudes, our actions—like we would a piece of soiled clothing, and then to put on the grace clothes of the new life and to walk in Christ who has set us free.

I want you to note three things we saw last week. In verse 1, Paul told us that we are to seek heavenly things. In verse 2, he said we are to think heavenly things, “Set your affection,”—or our minds—“on things above.” In verses 3 and 4, he said we are to believe heavenly things that, “ye are dead,”—with Christ—“and your life is hid with Christ in God. 4 When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.” So, three things: Seek heavenly things, think heavenly things, and believe heavenly things, verses 3 and 4. You must think properly, you must believe properly, and now tonight we must act properly by taking off the old and putting on the new using the metaphor of taking off old soiled garments of the old life and putting on the new garments of the resurrected life or how to live the abundant life.

I want you to note these phrases. In verses 8 and 9 Paul says, “. . . put off . . . put off,” twice. Then, in verses 10, 12, and 14, he uses the phrase, “Put on.” So, put off and put on. He tells us what to take off of the old life, we've gotta get the weeds out, right?, and then what to put on of the new life that we have in Jesus Christ.

Now, I want you to see in verses 5-9, this is the first section, that we are to put off the old vices, the old sins of the past life. You're not to live the same way you lived before you were converted. If you have been born again, guess what? Your life should change. Amen? If you're saved you will know it because your life will surely show it. If you're truly born of the Spirit, your life is going to show evidence of a transformation of a new heart and a new life. If you say, "Well, I'm a Christian," but your life hasn't changed, there's been no heart transplant by the Spirit, then you have to question whether or not you've really been born of the Spirit, whether you're truly a child of God or you're just going to church. I said it a million times, but going to church does not make you a Christian any more than going into a McDonald's makes you a Big Mac, right? When a mouse goes into a cookie jar, it doesn't become a cookie. Going to church doesn't make you a believer. Being born of the Spirit is the only way you can become a true child of God, and it will manifest in the way that you live.

Let's read verses 5-9 and we'll come back and unpack this, "off with the old vices." Verse 5, "Mortify,"—which means put to death—"therefore your members which are upon the earth." Now, he lists them for us. This is one of those Pauline lists of sins that he so clearly lays out that are not to be a part of the Christian life. He says, "fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence,"—a reference to evil desires—"and covetousness, which is idolatry: 6 For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience,"—in the Greek it literally is coming upon—continual, present tense—"the children of disobedience,"—the unbelievers, God's wrath. God's wrath, by the way, is judicial; it's not temperamental. God doesn't just get ticked off and fire you and throw flames at you. God has a law that when it's broken He judicially judges the wicked.

Verse 7, "In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them." That was characteristic of your old life. Those sins are part of the BC, before Christ, days. Here's the present, verse 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."

Now, go back with me to verse 5. Paul starts with the word "mortify." That word means to put to death. We get our word necrose from that and the word necromancy. It means to kill, mortify, or to put to death. It's an imperative stressing a determinate decisive action. In Romans 6:4 it says, "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead . . . even so we also should walk in newness of life." Water baptism is a picture of the old life, buried and dead, coming up out of the water. You've risen with Christ to walk in newness of life. We are to take action by reckoning, Romans 6:11, the old man, " . . . to be dead indeed unto sin."

Notice the word "therefore." We are to make a real effort in our experience to apply what we believe, what we know is true, that we died with Christ, we're buried with Christ, we're, " . . . risen with Christ," as he said in verses 1-4.

What are we to put to death, verse 5? " . . . your members which are upon the earth." Now,

he's going to go on to explain what those members do by listing the sins. He's talking about our sinful nature manifested through our bodies. Now, understand this. The physical body is not sinful, but it can be used for sinful purposes. All the desires and drives and homeostasis, the drives that God has given you as a human being, they're natural. They're God given. But used outside of God's plan, purpose, design, and will, they can be perverted and become sinful and evil. Your body as a Christian is the temple of the Holy Spirit, so we're to use it to honor and to glorify God. Before we were converted, we were using our bodies for sinful, lustful purposes, and we were in rebellion against God. So, that's to change now that we're believers.

Remember when Lazarus was risen from the dead and still had the grave cloths on? Jesus said, "Loose him, and let him go." A lot of Christians are alive but still walking around with the grave clothes on. God wants to loose you and let you go.

What does it mean by, " . . . your members which are upon the earth?" Our sinful lifestyle. Jesus said it like this. He said, " . . . if thy hand . . . offend thee, cut them off. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out." This is not literally amputate your arm, your hand, or your eye, right? If that were true, we'd all be blind stumps. We wouldn't be able to do anything. What He's talking about is how important it is to deal radically and seriously with sin in your life. Don't allow sin to dominate your life. Don't yield to the old sinful flesh, it's just as important as though you were to cut it off. He said, " . . . it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed," and go into heaven than to be cast whole into hell. It's so much more important. So don't pamper it; don't play with it. Don't allow it in your life. Get very aggressive and serious and cut it out, pluck it off. Do whatever you need to do to eliminate these sinful things in your life. These actions don't come from our hands, our hands are functioning from our heart.

I heard the story years and years and years ago. In England, the punishment for pickpocketing was they would amputate your hand. So, a guy got caught pickpocketing and lost his right hand. He got caught a second time and lost his left hand. He got caught a third time. He was using his teeth to pickpocket. Can you imagine you're in a crowd and someone is biting you, "Whoa! Whoa! Slow down there, dude." It's because, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" You can lop off a hand or an eye and you're still going to lust or have sinful desires if your heart has not been changed or transformed.

Buckle your seatbelts. We'll try not to get too bogged down, but let's go back over this list of sins that are to be taken off. These are like soiled clothing that are to be discarded from our lives. I'll put them in some categories. Paul first names five sexual or sensual sins in verse 5 that Christians must put to death. There's not to be sexual immorality among the saints of God. The first is, verse 5, " . . . fornication." This is the most commonly used word for sexual immorality. It's the Greek word, *porneía*. The word *porneía* is where we get our word pornography from or pornographic. It's a general term for sexual immorality.

We live in a world, in a culture, much like the one Paul lived in, the Greco-Roman world, where there's no such thing as sexual immorality. It's like an open market where you can do whatever you want. There's nothing sinful about anything. It's just everything goes, kind of a deal. We've

seen the sexual revolution and the sad affect that it's had on our world in our culture today. It's a general term for sexual immorality.

Why do I emphasize that? Because I think it's so important that we understand sex is a divinely created gift from God, but it's only to be experienced or engaged in in the covenant relationship of marriage. Marriage is one man and one woman. It's a heterosexual covenant relationship of one spouse for life. God created the woman, Eve, and the man, Adam, brought the two together and it says, "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother . . . And they twain shall be one flesh," and "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." Do not be intimidated, fooled, or deceived by the world's standards and the influence of the world around you. Marriage is a divine institution. Sexual intimacy is designed by God for procreation and for pleasure and for the closeness of a husband and a wife.

Premarital sex is out of God's will. It is sin. It must be discarded. Extramarital sex is sin and must be discarded. Homosexual sex is sin and must be discarded and abandoned. We, as the church, have lowered its standards unfortunately, and they're not standing on the Word of God, which God's Word does not change with culture.

Write down 1 Thessalonians 4:3. It says, "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification,"—that's that you be set apart and holy—"that ye should abstain from fornication,"—sexual immorality. It's not okay. "But we love each other," or "We can't wait," or "We have a great chemistry," or "My wife doesn't meet my needs, so I'm going somewhere else for my sexual pleasure." There is no excuse or no reason for disregarding or disobeying God's law. If you're here tonight and you're living in sexual immorality, and you're a Christian, you need to take it off. You need to repent. You need to cut it off or pluck it out. You need to do it before it destroys you and you end up in hell, " . . . the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience." Write down Hebrews 13:4 where it says, "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge." So, put aside sexual immorality.

The second sin on the list, verse 5, is uncleanness. Again, this is in the category of sexual sin. It speaks of moral impurity in all forms. It covers all filthy, suggestive thoughts and humor. It's not okay to use filthy humor with sexual innuendos. In J.B. Phillips translation, he renders that dirty-mindedness. Some men's minds are like racehorses, they run best in the dirt, and that's always where they go. Some people's minds are perverted sexually, and we're to get our minds on things which are above not on things of the earth. Remember we saw that in verse 2. It involves pornography and movies that are sexually explicit and damaging to you.

The third on the list, verse 5, " . . . inordinate affection," in the King James translation. It means a depraved passion. An "inordinate affection" is a depraved passion. It's the desire to use another for one's own selfish sensual gratifications. It covers both heterosexual and homosexual sin and the acts. There's a movement in the church today, unfortunately, that says that it's not a sin to have same-sex attractions as long as you don't act upon them. This has really infiltrated the church. The Bible is very clear. Jesus said, "If you look lustfully or longingly

after someone, you commit adultery even in your heart.” That’s for both heterosexual or homosexual, it doesn’t matter. Our hearts are evil. We need to get our thoughts pure and set on things which are above. That’s why the next phrase, verse 5, is “ . . . evil concupiscence,”—or evil desires, evil and wicked desires. You say, “Well, the desire is not a sin,” and pretty much what they’re implying is, “I was made this way.” That’s not true. “God made me this way, so it’s okay as long as I don’t act upon it.” That’s not true.

It’s not okay to think sinful, wicked, evil thoughts. The Bible says, “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” We’re not to entertain them. We’re not to let them lodge in our brains. Martin Luther said you can’t stop a bird from flying over your head, but you can stop them from landing on your head and making a nest. You say, “What does that mean?” That means you can’t stop sinful thoughts from coming to you, but you can resist them, reject them, and not entertain them. If you sow a thought, you will reap an act. If you sow an act, you will reap a habit. If you sow a habit, you will reap a character. If you sow a character, you will reap a destiny. It all starts with your thoughts. This is why Paul said in Romans 12, “And be not conformed to this world: but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” And, how are our minds renewed? By the Word of God and prayer.

So, you have, “ . . . fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence,”—evil desires. In my King James Bible it actually says, “ . . . evil concupiscence,” which is evil, sinful desires—a desire used out of the will of God and God’s purpose and plan. It’s only in the covenant relationship of marriage, and the faithfulness of a husband and a wife to one another, that that can be experienced.

Notice the last, but not the least, and I believe it belongs in the category of sexual sin, “ . . . covetousness.” When we think of covetousness, the first thing that comes to mind is materialism—possessions. “I covet your house. I covet your car. I covet something that belongs to you.” In the Decalogue, Exodus 20:17, we have the tenth commandment, “Thou shalt not covet . . .” That is the most searching and convicting of all the commandments. Paul the apostle said, “That’s the commandment that slew me, and I died, ‘Thou shalt not covet.’”

Here’s a little test for you Bible students tonight. What’s the first thing on the list in that statement of Exodus that you should not covet? You guys need to read your Bibles. “ . . . thy neighbour’s wife.” Wow, not his Porsche, not his donkey, not his house, not his watch, not his bank account . . . his wife. Why did God put that number one on the list? Because He wanted it to be the sanctity of marriage. You never go outside your marriage relationship in this way. “Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s wife,” is first on the list. King David sinned with Bathsheba, and as I used the illustration Sunday, the sword came into his house and into his life and his family, and he suffered severely because of that. These sexual sins should not be found in the family of God or in the church of God.

Paul gives us two reasons, before we move in this section, to put these sins to death. First, it brings God’s wrath. Look at verse 6. He says, “For which things’ sake.” He just listed in verse 5 what he is referring to in verse 6 where he says, “For which things’ sake the wrath of God

cometh on the children of disobedience.” The first reason you don’t do this is because God’s wrath will be poured upon you. The Bible says, “For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.” Here’s the second reason, verse 7, that is, it’s part of our old life. God’s wrath will be upon us, and it’s part of the old life, not part of the new life. It’s part of the old, sinful lifestyle that we are to take off.

Notice Paul now names three attitude sins. He goes from sexual sins to attitude sins that we must put off, verse 8. The first is anger, the second is wrath, and the third is malice. Anger is a settled feeling of anger. It’s that constant stewing of anger. There’s a lot of angry people in this world today. They’re just angry at everything. We’re not to live with that anger.

Then, wrath is rage or the outburst of anger. You have this seething anger in your heart, and it breaks forth into an outburst of anger. Malice, verse 8, is what you want to do to the person you’re angry with—you want to hurt them or bring ill will upon them. You could actually just chalk this up for California road rage, if you wanted to. It’s really hard not to get angry with people on the road—anger, wrath, malice. Some people live constantly, they’re just this seething anger and it erupts in malice. They want to hurt somebody and do them harm. As a believer, you’re not to be controlled by anger, wrath, or malice.

Thirdly, Paul then names three sins of speech. There are sexual sins, attitude sins, and then sins of our words or our speech—blasphemy, filthy communication, verse 8, and then lying, verse 9. Blasphemy is railing or slander either toward God or toward man. So, we can blaspheme God by saying things that are derogatory toward God or we can say things that are blasphemous toward men who are made in the image and likeness of God. Then, verse 8, “. . . filthy communication out of your mouth.” Do you know what that refers to? Shameful speaking. Weymouth translates that foul-mouth abuse.

I just cannot believe how prevalent filthy, swearing cuss words are in our culture. It’s like everywhere you go out in the world around you you’re subject to all this filthy speech. Do you know what the Bible says? It says, “. . . for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.” When you have had a transformation of your heart, it will change your speech. If you get born again, you’re going to discover your words change. Where cuss words used to come out of your mouth, you’re not going to swear or cuss anymore. People ought to be able to say, “You know, what is it about you that’s different? You don’t cuss, you don’t swear, and you’re not with malice and anger and hatred toward others. What is it?” “I’m a Christian. I have Christ in my heart. He’s changed my life.”

What a marvelous thing it is to be born again and all of the sudden discover, “My life has changed.” You’re maybe on the job framing a house. I remember I used to help frame a little bit with my friend who was a framer. I remember getting saved. I’m hammering a nail, and I hit the wrong nail. Where before a bad word would come out of my mouth, “Praise Jesus! Thank You, Lord!” Immediately I thought, Wow! That’s awesome! I’ve been born again! I’m saved! He changed the words that come out of my mouth that honor and glorify Him. So, no, “. . . filthy

communication out of your mouth.” It’s not okay for Christians to use filthy language or abusive language.

Thirdly is lying, verse 9, “Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds.” It speaks of “truthing it” or telling the truth. The Bible says that we should be “truthing it” in love. We can lie by exaggeration. Did you know that? It’s one of the most common ways people lie—exaggeration. We can lie by substitution—telling a different story than the true one. We can lie by addition—adding things to the story that weren’t there. We can lie by subtraction—when we can speak the truth and bring clarity and we hold it back and we don’t speak, we’re lying. It’s called the sin of omission. You don’t commit a sin, you omit one, and in doing that you’ve sinned by not speaking the truth in love. If anything, a Christian is to be “truthing it”—to be speaking the truth, as Paul says to the Ephesians. If Jesus is the way, the truth, the life, and we’re following Him, our lives should be marked by truth.

By the way, our relationships, especially in marriage and in all other relationships, have to be based on truth. When you find out that someone you trusted has lied to you, it’s a very fragile thing, you lose their trust and many times cannot fully regain that. I tell married couples all the time, “Never lie to one another. Never lie to anyone. Be a truth teller.” As a believer, it’s so very important. So, lying grieves the Holy Spirit. Notice in verse 9 Paul says, “Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds.”

What is the “old man”? The “old man” is your sinful nature. Theologians call it the Adamic nature because it’s what we inherited from Adam. When Adam sinned, we all inherited a sinful, Adamic nature. So, the “old man,” the old sinful nature, is to be as I said, Romans 6, put out of business or rendered inoperative.

Write down Ephesians 4:25 where Paul says, “Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another.” We’re members one of another, why should we lie to each other? In Exodus 20:16, the ninth commandment, “Thou shalt not bear false witness,”—lie. Thou shalt not lie; thou shalt not covet.

These are all the sins that we’re to put off, the old vices of the former life. But in verses 10-14 Paul tells us to put on. We don’t just negatively take off, but we put on. So much of Christianity sometimes is, “Take off those sins,” and preachers will beat people up with those things, “Get rid of them,” but they don’t tell them what to do in their place, what to put on. If you’re going to take off the old garments that are soiled, you’d want to put on new garments that are provided for you. Amen? Let’s read it, verse 10. “And have put on the new man,” so you take off the old man and put on the new man, “which is renewed,”—in the Greek it’s actually being renewed, a process of sanctification—“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.” He’s talking about in the family of God, the Church, we’re all one.

Verse 12, “Put on therefore, as the,”—and look at these three terms, we’ll come back to them,

he describes believers—"elect of God, holy and beloved." You're chosen by God, you're set apart by God, and you're loved by God. "Put on . . . bowels of mercies,"—or tender mercies and compassion—"kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; 13 Forbearing one another,"—or being patient or caring for one another, being forbearing with one another—"and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel,"—or complaint—"against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. 14 And above all,"—which means on top of everything, over everything—"these things put on charity,"—love—"which is the bond of perfectness." Love is the belt that holds that garment together.

Now, the moment you were born again, I want you to see these three things that happen. You received a new nature, look at the first, verse 10. The moment you were born again, verse 10, you received a new nature so, " . . . put on the new man." You are a new creation in Christ. You have a new nature. That doesn't mean the old nature can't raise its ugly head and control you, you must yield to the new nature. You must reckon the old to be dead, and you must yield to the new—read the Bible, study the Word of God, rely upon the Holy Spirit, pray, and ask God to fill you, control you, so that you manifest the fruit of the Spirit which comes from the new nature that God has given to you. Our part is to put off the old man and to put on the new by submission to the new nature which brings spiritual victory.

Write down Galatians 5:16 where Paul says, "This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh," which is the old man—the flesh, the Adamic nature, the old man. If you walk in the Spirit, you will not be controlled by the flesh. This is what's called sanctification, verse 10, being " . . . renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him." God's work of sanctifying you is to make you more like Jesus. That's what God's goal is in sanctifying you through suffering, through trials, through prayer, through Bible study, through the believers in fellowship provoking each other to love and good works. It's all part of the sanctifying process. We have a new nature that Christ is in us.

Secondly, we have a new family that we are a part of as believers. This is in verse 11, "Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all." He's talking about, "Now, I have a new nature as a Christian, and I have a new family." Tonight, as you look around the sanctuary, those that have been born again, they're your brothers and sisters in Christ. We need to encourage one another, pray for one another, and strengthen one another. We are born into God's family the Church. We have God as our Father.

And, in God's family, the Church, there are no racial distinctions. Did you hear what I said? There are no racial distinctions in the Church. God doesn't love one race over another, God doesn't prefer one race over another, one race over another is not more spiritual or not more blessed by God. There is no such thing in God's economy. That's listed in this phrase, " . . . Greek nor Jew," and they are also described as, "circumcision nor uncircumcision," which is religion. In Christ, we're all one—no racial distinctions.

I believe that the Church should reflect that kind of diversity. When we get to heaven there'll be

every kindred, nation, tongue, tribe and people. What a marvelous thing that will be. In the Church there's no cultural distinction. This is seen in the phrase, “. . . Barbarian, Scythian.”

What is a Barbarian? In Bible days, they spoke universally the Greek language, and it's a beautiful language, a full language. Anyone who didn't speak Greek in the Roman world was considered a Barbarian, so they were considered uncouth. They weren't cultured. If you didn't speak Greek, you were a barbarian. It's literally, you were bar bar—you just spoke gibberish. It's an uncultured person.

What's a Scythian? A Scythian is actually, believe it or not, those who are Caucasian who come from the region north of what is known as the Caucasus Mountains. They are in their first origin, way pre-Viking, but they were ruthless, very vicious, savage people. It's kind of interesting for people that think that their Caucasianness is something to be bragged about—you have a very horrible past, you were a Scythian, which is a lowest of the low. Barbarians were low, Scythians were lower. They're just lowlifers, but there's no distinction there.

Social distinctions don't exist. There's not, “. . . bond nor free.” In the Roman world a large proportion of them were slaves. Many of the first Christians were slaves. When they came to church, a master would sit right next to a slave, and in standing before God they were on equal ground. All the ground is level at the foot of the cross, so slaves and masters worshiped together. Read the book of Philemon and understand Onesimus who was a slave, being accepted by Philemon as a brother and not as a slave. So, no social distinction.

We have a new nature; we have a new family, the Church, the body of Christ; lastly, verses 12-14, we have a new lifestyle. When you received a new nature and you were placed in a new family, then you became a new person which manifests in a new life. Now, we can't tarry on these, again, but let's look at them. These people are called the believers, “elect of God,” verse 12, and that's God's grace choosing you, we didn't choose Him. Secondly, we are “holy,” which means that we are set apart or we're sanctified positionally in Christ. Thirdly, we are “beloved.” So, we're chosen, set apart, and loved. You might also add, verse 13, we are forgiven.

How should we then live and treat others? Here's the list, verse 12. Follow me in your Bible. We should put on tenderness of heart. The King James says, “. . . bowels of mercies.” That's because they figured that the stomach, the intestines in the stomach, were the place of emotions or feelings, tender hearts and compassion. Then, “. . . kindness.” This is to

characterize Christians—sweetness of disposition. There's that word I used again Sunday morning, which is to be the dominant characteristic of their life. They're to have a sweet kindness. They're to be merciful and kind.

Thirdly, “. . . humbleness of mind.” God's people are to be marked by humility even as Jesus was meek and lowly and humble in heart, we should be humble. Humility is not thinking less of yourself, it's just not thinking of yourself. It's not putting yourself down, it's just not thinking about yourself. It's living and thinking of others.

Fourthly, “. . . meekness.” Meekness is not weakness. Meekness is power under control. A great word for that is gentleness. Meekness is power/strength under control. It’s a gentle spirit. It’s a spirit of quiet submission.

Fifthly, “. . . longsuffering.” It is patience under provocation. It’s being long-fused. The Bible says, 1 Corinthians 13, love is longsuffering—longsuffering with people. It literally means wrath put far away. It’s not easy to be patient with people that bother you.

Sixthly, notice verse 13, “Forbearing one another.” It’s being tolerant of others who irritate you. That’s so difficult, right?, tolerant of people who irritate you. Then, verse 13, “. . . forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel,”—complaint—“against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye,”—do to them. Paul repeats this in Ephesians 4:32, “And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.” When you forgive somebody, you don’t use it against them in the future, you don’t talk about it to others, and you don’t dwell on it yourself.

Last, but not least, verse 14, put on love. I love it. “And above all,”—that phrase means on top of everything. This is why with this garment imagery it’s pictured as the belt that holds everything together. In the oriental robe, they didn’t have Velcro, zippers, or buttons. They just had an open robe. It’s kind of like a hospital garment. Those things are scary, right? Who wants to walk around in a hospital garment? If you could put a belt around it and keep it together, it might not be that bad. They had to put on a belt. Their loins had to be girded. They had to be belted or everything would just fall apart. So, the believer has to bring in that belt of love. Have you ever gotten dressed and forgot your belt? You can’t keep your pants up, and you feel like you’re not fully dressed. That love, and again, it’s agape love. So, love over all of it, put over the belt of love. Put on agape love. It’s the perfect bond. It holds everything together. It makes a true Christian recognizable. Jesus said, “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another.”

Let me wrap this up by way of application. All these garments must be worn in community with others. What do I mean by that? What good does it do to be longsuffering, to be forgiving, to be kind, if there is no one around you? When you read that list, if you’re thinking, I could do this if I were on an island all by myself. If there weren’t so many people in my house that bug me! or for me people on airplanes sitting by me who talk real loud when I’m very tired and wanna go to sleep. Pray for me. You might be watching the news, “Pastor kicked off airplane. Blows up because people were talking too loud.” Man, if I could just be on an island all by myself, I’d be the most loving person ever. Love would just flow from me. It’s like a Peanuts cartoon I once saw. He said, “I love people, it’s humanity I can’t stand.”

All of these virtues are to be worn in the fellowship of believers, in the community of the Church where we rub each other wrong and we need to forgive each other, love each other, and pray for each other. You know, one of the worst things that people can do when you’re in a church and someone offends you is to go find another church, and then find another church, and find another church, and then find another church. You can’t ever find a church where no one is

going to offend you because we all offend each other. You end up with no church at all, sitting home all by yourself, and it's a sad thing. Remember, we're in the body of Christ.

The second thing I would say is that all these garments were perfectly worn by Jesus Christ. So, likeness to Christ is the goal. He was humble. He was forgiving. He was kind. He was loving. I want to be like Jesus Christ.

Thirdly, all these garments are the fruit of the Spirit. They come with our new birth. They bring us a new nature. You must be born again. You cannot produce these virtues without the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit in your life. Amen?