

# Colossians – Lesson 8

## Put On the New Self – Part 2

### Read Colossians 3:12-17

1. Briefly describe the “*new self*” that Paul writes of in 3:1-10. How is this “*new self*” connected to the *incarnation* of Jesus, as described in 1:19-20?

The “*new self*” is the new nature that we who trust in Christ *have* (past tense!) “*put on*”: it is the *regenerate* heart and mind within us that now possesses the power to *be holy*, to crucify the lingering effects of sin in our mortal nature and to live in accordance with the law of God, to trust in Christ, and to be sanctified. Paul connects this to the nature of Jesus *in the flesh*: just as the Son of God “*robed*” himself in flesh and lived amongst humans, so we have been “*robed*” with the righteousness of Christ and live amongst *fallen* humans. Just as Christ was *incarnate*, so we are the “*incarnation*” of the new heart, to live as *he did* in the world. It is “*renewed*” through the process of sanctification, of “*putting to death*” that which lingers.

2. (a) From 3:12-13, what *five-word phrase* does Paul employ to describe believers? Why is this significant in relation to putting on the “*new self*”?

Paul describes believers as “*God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved.*” To be chosen is to be selected by God, in his sovereign purpose, to receive his grace and mercy, obtained by the finished obedience of Christ. To be holy is to be set apart from the effects of sin and to be considered by God to be righteous in his site, made possible by the imputation of Christ’s righteousness earned through his sinless life. To be beloved, then, is to be loved by God as one of his own, adopted by him as sons and daughters, eternally a part of his divine family. Thus, this phrase is a *description* of the new self: those who are chosen by God are holy and beloved to him, which is what it means to “*wear*” the new self.

(b) Again, what does Paul mean when he says that believers are to “*put on*” certain attributes?

To “*put on*” is to wear, literally to robe oneself with. To put on a nature is to adorn oneself with that nature, to take on the characteristics thereof. Thus, when Paul says that believers are to “*put on*” a set of attributes it means that they are to *purposely* begin to act in accordance with those attributes; they are to “*wear*” them in such a way that it is *obvious* that these things *characterize* their lives.

3. (a) List and define, from 3:12-13, the various *attributes* that Paul believes are inherent in the “*new self.*”

Paul lists a number of attributes that he believes are inherent within the new self: 1) compassionate hearts (i.e., possessing a sense of compassion towards others); 2) kindness (i.e., treating others with kindness in one-to-one relationships); 3) humility (i.e., bearing a sense of humbleness before others, not walking in pride over others); 4) meekness (i.e., reflecting a character of gentleness, not aggressiveness, towards others); 5) patience (i.e., naturally and reflexively patient with others in personal relationships and expectations); 6) bearing with one another (i.e., bearing sins with gentleness and patience); and 7) forgiving each other (i.e., quickly forgiving grievances of a personal nature; see 3b below).

(b) What is the *reason* Christians are to forgive one another? Why does Paul make such a “*big deal*” about this *particular* attribute in believers?

Christians are to forgive others *reflexively* out of a sense of the forgiveness that they have received from Christ. Just as the Christian has been *completely* forgiven by God of his sins, thus the Christian is to forgive others *out of a deep sense of gratitude* for having been forgiven himself. This is a *major* reality in believers because the new nature within us *demand*s such a reply to sins: if God has forgiven us of an *infinite debt* against himself, certainly we ought to forgive others for *trivial debts* owed to us by others. It reflects the *new self* to do so.

(c) From 3:14, what does Paul assert “*binds together*” all of the above? What do you think Paul means in suggesting that this will produce “*perfect harmony*?”

Paul sees *love* binding together all of the above traits of the believer; to be all of these things is the *measure* and *definition* of love itself. Love is a *commitment* to others, as best expressed by the love of God for the elect, a *people to whom he is committed*. Thus, those who *love* do so by expressing compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, etc. towards others; to love is to be all of these things *out of a commitment both to them and to the One who has saved us* by his compassion, kindness, etc. When the elect exhibit these traits in everyday life, especially towards one another in the church, the result is a *perfect harmony*. Just as believers are *vertically* in harmony with God, they become *horizontally* harmonious towards fellow believers.

(d) What is “*the peace of Christ*” (3:15)? How does it “*rule in [our] hearts*?” What *completes* this set of attributes in the heart and life of a follower of Christ?

Peace is not just a cessation of hostility, but a genuine change of *relationship*, a new connection between God and man borne out of the *total* remission of sin that comes through the finished work of Christ. Believers no longer have *anything* separating them from a holy God, for Christ has accomplished a *completed* redemption that draws the elect together with God as *their heavenly Father*. The “*peace of Christ*”, then, is that new relationship accomplished by him that becomes a part of our very *substance*. It “*rules in our hearts*” because it *defines us*; we understand that we are in complete harmony with our heavenly Father, thus we no longer fear him as our Judge. It allows us the *absolute freedom* to live without condemnation (Romans 8:1), knowing that our *current* and *future* life is utterly and permanently connected to God. Being *thankful* is what completes this set of attributes in us; the believers is filled with thankfulness to God for what Christ has completed, and lives out his life *in* that gratitude.

4. (a) How does Paul expect “*the word of Christ*” to dwell within us, as those who trust in Christ (3:16)? What does this require, both of *us individually*, and of the *church*?

The word of Christ (i.e., the fullness of the revelation that comes to us in Christ by his Word) dwells within us as we “*teach*” and “*admonish*” one another with it. As we teach each other what has been revealed, we grow in our understanding and we *admonish* one another to strengthen that growth, *urging* one another on to greater and greater maturity. Thus, the believer is expecting to learn the Word of God and strengthen others to do the same.

(b) When and why do Christians sing “*psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs*?” What might each of these *types* of hymnody imply about “*admonishing*” one another or being thankful?

Singing the various types of music listed here by Paul is a *means* by which we express the values mentioned above, specifically, in giving thanks for all that we have received in Christ. In a very real sense, hymnody is *both* a means to inculcate various doctrines into our minds and hearts, and a way to express worship and thankfulness to God for the peace we have with him in Christ. They are also ways to *admonish* one another as we *testify* to the truths of the gospel, challenging ourselves *and others* to know these truths *in even greater measure*. In other words, a good hymnody in a church expresses deep theological truths in a manner that makes them more “*real*” to us as singers and to those listening to us as we sing.

5. How do believers do everything “*in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ*” (3:17)?

The name of the Lord Jesus Christ is (according to his own assertion; Matthew 28:18-20) an expression of his *exalted position as the King of kings*, ruling over all things and accomplishing his divine will in the world. It is what sets him apart as *utterly unique and powerful*; everything is subject to his divine will and he sends his Spirit into the world to finish his mission. Thus, believers do everything in his name, in that they recognize his divine authority in their *submission* to his will; they treat him as King, and his name becomes their own. Christians serve Christ *under his authority*, being the means of his will in the world. They pray in his name, recognizing that it is *only* the position of Christ to which the Father grants requests. They serve in his name, doing his will in the world by the power of his Spirit. And, they worship in his name, bowing before him as the object of all affection and honor.

6. Looking back over 3:1-17, summarize Paul’s assumptions about the *nature* of a believer, in contrast to what he or she was *before* conversion. Why should this “*new self*” be absolutely *obvious* to the world?

Paul assumes that Christians are *radically different people* than what they were before conversion: they are *characterized* by the attributes of compassion, kindness, humility, etc.; they are *reflexively quick* to forgive others, given the forgiveness they have received in Christ; they live under a *radical peace* having been freed from the judgment and oppression of sin; they are deeply *thankful* for all that God has given to them; they *pursue* a rich and deep knowledge of the Word of Christ; they are *filled* with hymns of thankfulness as they sing praises unto their God; and they do all things under the glorious and powerful name of Christ, recognizing his *absolute authority* over all things. All of this should be *utterly obvious* to the rest of the world since it is so *completely different* from how unregenerate men think and live.