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Colossians 3:1-17

Today we reflect on the verses in Colossians 3:1-17, a powerful Word and blueprint for living a Christ-like life.

Colossians 3:1-11 NLT

Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, set your sights on the realities of heaven, where Christ sits in the place of honour at God's right hand. Think about the things of heaven, not the things of earth. For you died to this life, and your real life is hidden with Christ in God. And when Christ, who is your life, is revealed to the whole world, you will share in all his glory.

So put to death the sinful, earthly things lurking within you. Have nothing to do with sexual immorality, impurity, lust, and evil desires.

Don't be greedy, for a greedy person is an idolater, worshiping the things of this world. Because of these sins, the anger of God is coming.

You used to do these things when your life was still part of this world. But now is the time to get rid of anger, rage, malicious behaviour, slander, and dirty language.

Don't lie to each other, for you have stripped off your old sinful nature and all its wicked deeds.

Put on your new nature, and be renewed as you learn to know your Creator and become like him. In this new life, it doesn't matter if you are a Jew or a Gentile, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbaric, uncivilized, slave, or free. Christ is all that matters, and he lives in all of us.

Here we are called to set our sights on the realities of heaven. Realities! To think of these realities knowing Christ is at the right hand of God.

It's a new life. We have died to the old life and our real life is hidden with Christ in God.

We are called to put on our new nature and be renewed by learning to know our Creator and become like him.

Putting on our new nature – just like putting on a new suit or outfit. This change of clothes metaphor appears throughout this chapter including the reference to “stripping off” your old nature and to “put on” your new nature and even continues later on in the chapter (see below).

The old clothing is described as greed (which makes us idolaters), anger, malicious behaviour, slander, dirty language and lying.

Self-reflection points:

- How often are you changing outfits each day? Between your Christ like outfit and your pre-Christ outfit each day. Being Christian doesn't mean we are fully immune from greed, anger, malicious behaviour, slander, dirty language and lying – after all it might be an outfit we wore for many years and is easy to jump back into.
- But here in this scripture we are called to set our sights on the realities of heaven, to quickly notice when we slip into the pre-Christ outfit and quickly jump out of it. Or better still see the signs that we might slip up and to not go there in first place.
- We are challenged to live a life where we stay in our Christ like outfit – a life without greed, anger, malicious behaviour, slander, dirty language or lying.

Prayer Point 1: Lord, I reflect on and repent for the times I have slipped into the old pre-Christ outfit. Holy Spirit, please guide and help me to notice when I'm slipping and to also increase the speed with which I jump back into my Christ-like outfit. I pray to be clothed in Christ every moment of the day.

Colossians 3:12 NLT

Since God chose you to be the holy people He loves, you must clothe yourselves with tender-hearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.

Here Paul is guiding us on what it means to have Christ live in us, what it means to live a Christ like life – again this is done through the metaphor of clothing:

“You must clothe yourselves with tender-hearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.”

This is often translated in other versions of the Bible to being:

- Gentle
- Kind
- Humble
- Meek
- Patient

Metaphorically, these are the 5 garments that Apostle Paul is telling us to wear to live a Christ like life.

So let's reflect on what each of these 5 garments look like.

1. Gentleness

A perfect example of gentleness is found in Proverbs 15:1:

“A gentle answer deflects anger, but harsh words make tempers flare.”

And then in Proverbs 15:4:

“Gentle words are a tree of life; a deceitful tongue crushes the spirit.”

Here the Bible tells us how we should speak to others. To speak gently is to speak life into them.

The best examples of gentleness in the Bible are of course with Jesus. One great example is in John 8:1-11 which speaks of the woman caught in adultery. She was brought to Jesus by the Pharisees who said:

“Teacher,” they said to Jesus, “this woman was caught in the act of adultery. The law of Moses says to stone her. What do you say?” They were trying to trap him into saying something they could use against him, but Jesus stooped down and wrote in the dust with his finger. They kept demanding an answer, so he stood up again and said, “All right, but let the one who has never sinned throw the first stone!” Then he stooped down again and wrote in the dust.

When the accusers heard this, they slipped away one by one, beginning with the oldest, until only Jesus was left in the middle of the crowd with the woman. Then Jesus stood up again and said to the woman, “Where are your accusers? Didn't even one of them condemn you?”

“No, Lord,” she said. And Jesus said, “Neither do I. Go and sin no more.”

How would you have responded to the Pharisees attempt to entrap you? Would you have just stooped down writing in the dust or would you have snapped back? Perhaps defend yourself or be indignant.

Jesus chose a gentle phrase and it changed the whole situation to good:

“All right, but let the one who has never sinned throw the first stone!”

In doing so we see how a gentle word can have a major impact. There's strength in choosing to be gentle with our words.

Self-reflection points:

- When was the last time you put on your old garment of harshness? Perhaps spoke harshly to your wife, partner or children.
- How would the situation have been different had you had on your garment of gentleness?

Prayer Point 2: We pray Lord for your discernment and to check we are wearing the garment of gentleness before we speak – especially with our spouse and loved ones.

2. Kindness

In Colossians, we see that kindness isn't just a recommended way of acting. It's a mandatory garment we must wear to live a Christ like life.

Christ exemplified this in his many acts and miracles He performed including in the healing of the leper in Matthew 8:1-4:

Large crowds followed Jesus as he came down the mountainside. Suddenly, a man with leprosy approached him and knelt before him. "Lord," the man said, "if you are willing, you can heal me and make me clean." Jesus reached out and touched him. "I am willing," he said. "Be healed!" And instantly the leprosy disappeared.

As you know in Jesus' time lepers were considered outcasts and as being "unclean" and "untouchable." But Jesus look pity on him and touched him and healed him. He saw the man, not as a leper, but as a sick person who needed his help. His kindness went beyond social stereotypes.

Self-reflection points:

- In our busy lives, when was the last time I took time to help someone in need and to understand where they're coming from and understand their circumstances?
- Are you always wearing your garment of kindness?

Prayer Point 3: Father, we pray for your help that we can develop genuine compassion and take the time needed to know and understand those in need. Please open our eyes to how kind we really are with our family and others and give us opportunities to hone in our kindness.

3. Humility

In 1 Samuel 24 we read that David could have killed Saul in the cave in the wilderness in Engedi. Despite being pursued by Saul (who wanted him killed), David only cuts off a piece of Saul's robe. Even this afflicted David's conscience because Saul was the Lord's anointed.

1 Samuel 24:10-12

'This very day you can see with your own eyes it isn't true. For the Lord placed you at my mercy back there in the cave. Some of my men told me to kill you, but I spared you. For I said, 'I will never harm the king—he is the Lord's anointed one.' Look, my father, at what I have in my hand. It is a piece of the hem of your robe! I cut it off, but I didn't kill you. This proves that I am not trying to harm you and that I have not sinned against you, even though you have been hunting for me to kill me. "May the Lord judge between us. Perhaps the Lord will punish you for what you are trying to do to me, but I will never harm you.'

David could have ended Saul's pursuit and taken the kingdom for himself. Instead David was humble. He called Saul his "Lord and king" and paid him homage.

This humility required David to be brave as he could easily have been killed. It required real strength of character. A strength that eventually led to David becoming king of Israel in God's perfect timing.

Self-reflection points:

- When was the last time you were challenged at home or work and you let your ego lead your response?
- Are you wearing your garment of humility today?

Prayer Point 4: Lord, we pray for the strength of character to be humble and reflect when challenged. To think twice before we allow our ego to reply. To wear our garment of humility every day.

4. Meekness

The word "meek" doesn't exactly conjure up images of strength and courage.

Today's use of the word tends to describe a person who is submissive, mild-mannered, quiet and likely to do what other people say.

Yet in Matthew 5:5 KJV Jesus says in the third Beatitude on the Sermon on the Mount, "Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth."

Also, by today's use of the word meek, we would hardly think of Moses as meek. Moses, who had the special honour of intimately conversing with God on Mount Sinai – meek? No way. However he is described in Numbers 12:3 as being "very meek, more than all people who were on the face of the earth."

However, the reference to meek in the Bible has a different stronger meaning and origin. The Greek word translated "meek" as *prais* and refers to mildness, gentleness of spirit, or humility. Meekness is humility toward God and toward others. It is having the right or the power to do something but refraining for the benefit of someone else.

In Numbers 12 we hear that Moses' own brother and sister, Aaron and Miriam attacked Moses and wanted him demoted. They slandered him before all of Israel and before the Lord.

Moses responded by being quiet. He did not strike back or defend himself. Instead he let God defend him.

While he could have used his power and authority to defend himself, he instead chose to trust in God.

As we know, God then punished Miriam. But Moses asked for leniency and mercy. This was a brave move to ask for God to have mercy despite Miriam's indiscretions.

Like Moses demonstrated, meekness is bold, not shy to call out a wrong and trusting in God.

Self-reflection points:

- Think about the authority you have at home and at work. When was the last time you held off using this authority for the benefit of that person?
- Did you leave it to God to work through the issue for you?
- Are you wearing your meek garment today?

Prayer Point 5: Lord, we pray for the courage to think twice before exercising the authority we are given where it could benefit another. We trust you Lord to defend us as we wear our garment of meekness.

5. Patience

One of the most incredible examples of patience is demonstrated by Jesus in his final night of prayer.

In Luke 22:39-46 we hear:

'Then, accompanied by the disciples, Jesus left the upstairs room and went as usual to the Mount of Olives. There he told them, "Pray that you will not give in to temptation." He walked away, about a stone's throw, and knelt down and prayed, "Father, if you are willing, please take this cup of suffering away from me. Yet I want your will to be done, not mine." Then an angel from heaven appeared and strengthened him. He prayed more fervently, and he was in such agony of spirit that his sweat fell to the ground like great drops of blood. At last he stood up again and returned to the disciples, only to find them asleep, exhausted from grief. "Why are you sleeping?" he asked them. "Get up and pray, so that you will not give in to temptation."'

Jesus was facing imminent betrayal by Judas and his crucifixion. He was in such agony that his sweat fell like great drops of blood. Yet all He asked of his disciples was that they stay up and pray. Yet they could not. When he found them sleeping, He simply asked them why they were asleep and again repeated what He had said before which for them to get up and "pray that you will not give in to temptation".

Juan testimony - was so impatient couldn't line up. Home build. Delays. Still a work in progress but there's growth and blessings.

Self-reflection points:

- When did I last revert back to the garment of impatience with my spouse? With my kids?
- What happened when you were last impatient?
- How did it impact the atmosphere at home?
- Are you wearing your garment of patience today?

Prayer Point 6: Dear Lord Jesus, thank you for teaching us the true meaning of patience. We pray for your example to guide us in every moment we feel anxiety or agitation rear its head. We pray for your patience to flow through us onto our family and loved ones.

The final part of the this chapter of Colossians to share is:

Colossians 3:13-17 NLT

Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony. And let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of one body you are called to live in peace. And always be thankful. Let the message about Christ, in all its richness, fill your lives. Teach and counsel each other with all the wisdom he gives. Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to God with thankful hearts. And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father.

Each of the 5 garments for living a Christ like life require that we be brave and bold in their application.

They may seem passive by current understanding of words such as "meekness" or "humility" but as we saw in the above examples, they require strength to apply.

Strength that we find by uniting with God each day as we choose to wear the 5 garments of a Christ like life.

What a blessing they are.

As the above scripture calls out, whatever we do or say, we do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father.

Let's ensure we wear the 5 garments at all times to be worthy of being called His representatives on earth.

God bless.