

Putting on Christ's Attributes Relationally

Col 3:12-14

Pastor/Elder Phil Layton, GCBC: Dec. 13, 2020

A lady in our church wrote to me about how Colossians 3 changed her life:

Shortly after I accepted Christ as my Lord and Savior in 1977, I attended a women's retreat at Mount Hermon Christian Camp. A dear woman, Shelby, gave me her autographed copy of "Lord Change Me!" By Evelyn Christenson. I still have it. In chapter 3 Evelyn told women to go out by themselves and read Colossians 3. "I instructed them to read until God spoke [in the text], then stop and pray about what He was saying to them." One day soon after I was back home, I took my new NIV Bible, my paperback "Lord Change Me!" and went to Cameron Park Lake. In 1977 there was no chain link fence, and in the mornings, no people! (And no geese!) I sat under a tree, all alone, prayed for God to speak to me, and as a new Christian, read the book of Colossians for the first time. God spoke. And spoke. And I listened and I cried. A lot. And I learned especially about forgiveness. All I needed to put off and be forgiven; and the glorious replacements I should put on. And how I needed to understand and forgive others. How I should not pray for God to change others, but that He would change me. I'll never forget that. Paul introduced me to a whole new perspective through the power of the Holy Spirit in God's Word.

I pray that same power of the God's Spirit will speak to us in God's Word. "Lord change me" and you, to forgive, to put off sin and to put on Christ's glorious replacements and graces. This chapter can change your life. Col 3:12: **Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience,** ¹³ *bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.* ¹⁴ *And above all these, put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.*

The context of the "**put on**" comes after the "**put off**" in v. 8: *But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth.* ⁹ *Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being **renewed**...*

- This is **ongoing renewal**, which means replacing everything of the old self: Anger in heart -> compassionate heart wrath -> kindness, etc.
- It's one thing to put off hate / racism (v. 11), another to put on love (v. 14). FUGITIVE EXAMPLE – ORANGE JUMP SUIT -> NEW APPEARANCE
- This is gospel put off->put on. Unbelievers can exchange 1 sin for another, but it's like rearranging furniture on the Titanic before it crashes and sinks.

- This isn't rearranging a few things in your life for self-improvement and smoother sailing. The gospel is about repenting of self, denying self, dying to self, reversing course and reorienting your direction as a whole new self
- It's not about trying to get rid of bad habits for a better life before your boat crashes into an iceberg and goes down. It's about getting off that boat, putting on a lifejacket and getting in Christ the lifeboat who has room for all
- And if by faith you're onboard with Jesus as Captain of your soul on a new course, there are new rules for us who are "in Christ" and new expectations for what we're to throw overboard: cast off sins of v. 8-9 that can sink souls
- When bitterness is replaced with forgiveness, that's like wind in our sails
- We start with replacing sins of anger and passion with compassion in v. 12

#1 PUT ON COMPASSION (1st replacement in v. 12)

As God's chosen...holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion (NIV). As God's beloved, put on His loving compassion. As those God has chosen to put His sovereign compassion on, choose to put on His attributes.

He chose us to be *holy*, it means set apart, different, including compassion.

In Rom 9 God says '*I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.*' So then it depends not on human will... but on God, who has mercy... *he has mercy on whomever he wills...*' So must we, by the Father of compassion and God of all mercies¹

He chose us, not dependent on human choice, but based on God's mercy

v. 12 starts with the fact that we're God's chosen, an unconditional election choice of us to be holy and beloved, by sovereign grace. Eph 1: *he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy ...In love he predestined us for adoption...according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.*

Those are the terms here: *chosen, holy, beloved*. God chose us for salvation, not based on our choice or our will, but according to His choice and will that graciously calls us from our sinful will and choices. We're His elect by His compassion and we're to reflect that compassion by a choice of our will

We read often in the gospels Christ was moved with compassion

I think helpful to see v. 12 as putting on Christ's attributes in relationship.

One translation has '*clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy...*' (NLT).

Rom 13:14 says '*put on*' or '*clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus*' (NIV).

Another sister in Christ here shared a devotional on this by Andrew Murray:

'Just as he puts on clothes every day, a Christian needs to "clothe himself" with Christ each day... Clothe yourself with Christ! This must be done daily in your quiet times in fellowship with Him. But for that you need time.

Just as clothing protects you from the wind and sun, Jesus will... When you come to Him in prayer, He will share more and more of Himself with you... Think about this—just as you have to put on clothes when you go out into the world, you have to clothe yourself with Jesus... to [abide] in Him and walk with Him all day long. This cannot happen in a hurry or superficially²

Illustration: What we put on and wear at Christmas – put on clothes that fit. These clothes are fitting for the new person in Christ. A spiritual dress code. I need family members' help to pick matching clothes to wear to church. This morning you went to your closet to pick out what to wear for Sunday (or if at home watching by livestream maybe just slippers with jammies!). Let's walk through this with that image in mind, how to dress for church. Put on the undershirt first in v. 12 – '*put on then...compassionate hearts...*'

This is what's underneath the rest of what we're to put on, or it starts inside. It takes effort to identify with, *com*=with, *passion*=feeling or even suffering. Try to put yourselves in others shoes, walk with them, come alongside them and ask God to help you sympathize and empathize in what they're feeling.

BULLETIN HANDOUT: PRAYING FOR SHEPHERDS & TEACHERS

- Good to pray for all of us, 3rd bullet is pray for compassion: that we would be sympathetic to and sensitive to needs, and have the spiritual discernment to deal with real issues rather than symptoms, and that we would strive to speak the truth in love.

Ps 103 says God crowns you with lovinkindness and compassion³

#2 PUT ON KINDNESS (like an over shirt, this is outward to others)

Prov 3:3 says kindness is something we put on and bind around our neck.⁴ Kindness in story of Ruth—think of widows or those alone needing kindness
APPLICATIONS TO CONSIDER IN THIS CHRISTMAS SEASON?

The end of Eph 4 lists the same sins as Col 3:8 to put off and then first attributes to put on are '*be kind to one another, tenderhearted...*' (v. 31-32).

Ephesians goes on to say we do that as imitators of God, like he said in Eph 2: we were spiritually dead and deserving of God's wrath *but God, being rich in mercy, because of his great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead...made us alive... by grace you have been saved... and raise us up...that in ages to come he'll show us the riches of his grace in kindness*

Therefore, Eph 4 says walk worthy, put off wrath – instead put on kindness. That doesn't come naturally for most of us, criticism is more natural, but to be kind is supernatural. It's a fruit of the Spirit in Gal 5 He produces in us.

When we're filled with the Spirit instead of filled with self we can be kind. But you have to look past yourself and the sinner in front of you, 1 Pet 2:3 says put aside malice and sinful speaking and you grow '*if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord*' (NAS). Taste and see that the Lord Jesus is good and kind. It's the word for what leaves a good taste in the mouth (Lk 5:39). Kindness can leave a good taste in other's mouths by what comes from ours

Pr 12: *An anxious heart weighs a man down, but a kind word cheers him up*⁵

-there's a lot of anxiousness and fear this year, a kind word goes a long way.

Pr 16: *Kind words are like honey-sweet to the soul and healthy for the body*⁶

-there's been a lot of talk this year about health, how about in how we talk?

The Pr 31 woman has kindness on her tongue (v. 26). Do you mom? Dad?

The teaching of kindness on our tongue as parents is a gift to our kids like a Christmas present. Pr 1 says kids who apply your parent's teaching it's like a '*garland for your head*' (v. 8-9), or '*a graceful wreath to your head, and ornaments about your neck*' (NASB). People see that as beautiful in a home, Christmas wreaths or garlands and ornaments light up a home. When a child follows parental teaching (esp. kindness) it's a light that's beautiful to see.

Other Proverbs: '*A kindhearted woman gains respect...A kind man benefits himself...blessed is he who is kind to the needy...whoever is kind to the needy honors God...He who is kind to the poor lends to the LORD, and he will reward him for what he has done.*' (NIV).⁷ What are some acts of kindness you can show this December? Needs you can meet? Pray, pursue. Another Proverb says life and honor is found in pursuing kindness (21:21).

*Ps 103 says God crowns you with lovinkindness and compassion*⁸

3rd grace to put on in Col 3, middle of v. 12: HUMILITY, MEEKNESS

A Puritan George Swinnock wrote: 'Pride is the shirt of the soul, put on first and put off last.' And it's hard to put off. Jonathan Edwards said our pride 'takes many forms and shapes and encompasses the heart like...layers...you pull off one layer, there is another underneath.' Put on humility, meekness.

Meek isn't weak, it's self-control, gentleness, lowliness

Again, think of beautiful Christmas tree ornaments. In 1 Pet 3 '*the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit...is in the sight of God of great price*' (v. 5 KJV).

1 Pet 5: *clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."* Humble yourselves...⁹

In this context, I go back to the humbling truth at the start of Col 3:12, that God chose me, and I know that's not because of me or what He knew I'd do or choose, it's in spite of me. Eph 2 says I was dead in sin, all I did is stink. *But God* made me alive, by grace I'm saved through faith--and that's not of myself--even my faith is part of the gift of God, so that no one may boast.

In Ps 149 God '*adorns the humble with salvation / will beautify the meek.*'¹⁰

James 1 says put off sin as filthy clothes, *with meekness receive the word...*

Think of humility and meekness like putting on 2 socks, they're lowly, like feet after they're washed, you put on socks, put on humility and meekness.

Think of the Lord Most High humbly washing the feet of proud disciples.

What a mystery! Meekness and majesty...Lord of infinity stooping so tenderly
...Lord of eternity dwells in humanity, kneels in humility and washes our feet¹¹

He carried a wash basin like a slave and carried His cross to die for our sin.

Mt 21: '*Behold your King is coming, humble, and mounted on a donkey*' (KJV '*meek*').

He says '*learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart...*'¹² Put off your burdens and sin you're weary of and put on His humble yoke. That's a big lesson to learn this

Christmas, humble meekness and lowliness

The song O Little Town of Bethlehem says 'in this world of sin
Where meek souls will receive Him still, the dear Christ enters in.'¹³

'in a **lowly** manger the **humble** Christ was born and God sent us salvation...'¹⁴

Or in O Holy Night: 'Behold the babe in yonder manger **lowly**

Tis God's own Son come down in human form...**With humble hearts**

we bow in adoration before this Child... sinners guilty and forlorn. Fall on your knees'¹⁵

If you have not yet come meekly and humbly to Him as Lord and Savior, bow in humble adoration, fall on your knees and behold your King Jesus. A meek soul will receive Him still, if you turn from your sin in faith to trust in Christ alone to save, what He did on the cross alone as a sinner's only hope.

Last words of Spurgeon's last sermon: 'if you wear the livery of Christ, you will find him so meek and lowly of heart that you will find rest unto your souls. He is the most magnanimous of captains. There never was his like among the choicest of princes. He is always to be found in the thickest part of the battle...The heaviest end of the cross lies ever on his shoulders. If he bids us carry a burden, he carries it also. If there is anything that is gracious, generous, kind, and tender, yea lavish and superabundant in love, you always find it in him...enlist under the banner of Jesus even this day!'¹⁶

And pray for humility and meekness. Prayer bookmark #1 on list: Humility - that we would be constantly fighting personal pride and cultivating humility, and striving to spread a high view of God and low view of self.

#4 What to put on over our socks? Shoes of patience and forbearance

Last word in Col 3:12: '*...and patience,* ¹³ *bearing with one another...*'

We need to walk in this each day, putting on patience, bearing with others. Again we need to put ourselves in Christ's shoes, or in His sandals, bearing with Peter's dumb statements, patient with James and John's arrogance, and longsuffering with those who had so little faith. We're to walk as Jesus did.

Prayer request in the middle of your bookmark: Patience and wisdom – that we would have much of God’s wisdom to guide our every step in leading this precious flock and that we would have patience with those who disagree

There’s a lot to disagree about this year and how we gather, just this week! With ever-changing government mandates, masks, or meeting preferences, and making assumptions or judgments about others based on appearances, we need much of this. Eph 6 says we need the grace of the gospel of peace like shoes of a soldier shod or ready. There’s preparation, lacing them up to stand together, united against an enemy who tries to divide against each other

Rom 15:5 ‘*May God, who gives this patience...help you live in complete harmony with each other, as is fitting for followers of Christ Jesus*’ (NLT).

This idea of what’s fitting for us to wear and walk in we see back in Col 1.

If you look at Col 1:9 says Paul heard about them and continually prayed for them, and v. 10 says it was that they walk in way that’s worthy and fitting, now look at v. 11. He prays for their ‘*being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all **endurance and patience** with joy*’

So this is something we need to pray for and it takes God’s mighty strength for us to be patient and have endurance to bear with others. Col 3:13 in one translation says ‘Make allowance for each others’ faults’ (or ‘accepting’).¹⁷

This is where Paul goes from preaching to meddling! He’s getting personal! God knows I can have patience in some pastoral situations but not at home. He knows we all can find some family or church members hard to bear with

Pr 19:11: *A man’s wisdom gives him **patience**; it is to his **glory to overlook an offense*** (NIV). To *bear with* in Col 3:11 is idea of holding self in check, to bear with other people’s offenses or their offensiveness, faults, failures, even their personalities, and things about them that just irritate and bug you!

God puts those people in your family and church family to grow you! Some people can sometimes make you question the promise ‘God won’t give you more than you can bear’! I still have a long way to go with my own family at times, and my impatience and irritability says more about me than them.

But I’m so thankful my Father in heaven patiently graciously bears with me.

Shai Linne praises God that ‘You would choose to pursue us and move to woo us

So after waiting with patience as we would run from You

You activated our faith so that we would come to You

Your law exposed our sin so that we would know the danger

And take refuge in the Holy Savior who’s slow to anger

And as our teary eyes beheld the cross of our King

We understood the true meaning of long-suffering

...You are the Lord of patience...Who can record your graces...

And now that we’re in Christ, the thing that is amazing to us

Is that You still continue to display Your patience to us
 Through all our stumbles and falls and our idolatry
 Through all our grumbling and all of our hypocrisy
 Our self-righteousness, with brothers and sisters we're hostile
 Our unforgiveness--all because we're... missing the gospel¹⁸

That's the last one in v. 13 *forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.* That's NKJV, the ESV v. 14 says '*And above all these put on love...*' or NIV '*over all these virtues put on love.*' Loving forgiveness is what goes on over all.

That takes us to

#5. Put on forgiveness by gospel love (put on coveralls)

Some professional workers put coveralls over everything else as they work, to protect the clothes underneath from what they're working with. Some are like body length jackets. There's also professional complainers and we all need to work against that. Forgiveness by gospel love must be put on daily to cover all complaints we have or others hit us with. Put on compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, bearing with others—but complaints will stain you if you don't put over all forgiveness motivated by gospel love.

*Peter says 'fervent love for one another...will cover a multitude of sin'*¹⁹

3x the Bible compares gospel forgiveness to covering sin.²⁰ Solomon wisely says '*love covers all wrongs,*' and '*He who covers over an offense promotes love, but whoever repeats the matter separates close friends.*'²¹ Complaints to others or about others instead of talking to them, repeating matters opens wounds instead of covering them. Complaining separates friends, and I've seen that this month. This year I think has been an epidemic of complaining.

There is a cure for it: put on forgiveness and gospel love

EDC has about 200,000 people, 8 have died with the virus and other factors, 8 divided by 200,000 equals 99.99996% this hasn't been deadly for (but CA government tells all churches 0% indoors). It's down to 'singing in the rain.'

We need to keep praising God, and hearing His truth, I think now more than ever. If sick or high risk, by video for now, but here's what needs to shut down: complaints. A deadly danger for 100% is unforgiveness, bitterness.

If you have compromised spiritual health don't open your mouth and spread it to others. Love covers and that includes covering your own mouth so you don't infect others with complaining. That's deadly to the body of Christ.

T.H.I.N.K. before you speak! Is it: T – Truth in love?
 H – Helpful?
 I – Imparting grace?
 N – Necessary at that moment?
 K – Kind in how you say it?

That's all from Eph 4, if you've violated that with someone, confess to them and ask forgiveness. What if you have a complaint about someone, or a beef you're stewing in? Col 3:13 says you must forgive as Jesus forgave you and put on love over all. That starts in the heart but reconciliation and relations take conversations. You may need to speak with him or her but first put on 1 Cor 13: *love is patient, kind, not easily angered or self-seeking, not taking into account a wrong suffered, protects, bears all things, believes the best.*

Pray for the Spirit's help as you put on love over all the virtues in v. 12-14.

The fruit of the Spirit starts with love then patience, kindness, goodness, etc.

Ultimately v. 13 ends with putting on Christ's attributes relationally, just as He forgave us. His love over all on the cross cried '*Father, forgive them...*'

And He says in Mk 11:25 *whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him...*²² [that's in your heart, between you and God, Lk 6 tells us what that looks like between you and one who hasn't repented]

*'...Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you [or 'mistreat you'—He says it marks] sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil. Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful... forgive, and you will be forgiven'*²³

There's more questions about forgiveness I'll come back to in part 2 of this, but that's enough application already for today. May the Lord help us to put on His attributes relationally in His church and our family this month. Amen

¹ Romans 9:15-18, 2 Cor 1:3 NIV.

² Andrew Murray, *Daily in His Presence* (Multnomah, 2004), June 24.

³ v. 5 NASB.

⁴ NAS: "Do not let kindness and truth leave you; Bind them around your neck..." NLT: "Never let loyalty and kindness leave you! Tie them around your neck as a reminder."

⁵ 12:25 NIV.

⁶ 16:24 NLT.

⁷ 11:16-17, 14:21, 31, 19:17 NIV.

⁸ v. 5 NASB.

⁹ v. 5 NIV.

¹⁰ v. 4 ESV / KJV.

¹¹ Graham Kendrick, "Meekness and Majesty."

¹² 21:5, 11:29 KJV.

¹³ "O Little Town of Bethlehem."

¹⁴ "God Tell in on a Mountain."

¹⁵ "O Holy Night."

¹⁶ SOURCE?

¹⁷ NLT and HCSB.

¹⁸ Shai Linne, "The Lord of Patience," Attributes of God album (2011).

¹⁹ 1 Peter 4:8 NKJV.

²⁰ Romans 4:7, Psalm 85:2, 32:1.

²¹ Proverbs 10:12, 17:9 NIV.

²² NKJV.

²³ v. 27-37 ESV.