

In Perfect Harmony (Colossians 3:12-15)

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Introduction

1. Believers in union with Christ are obligated to put to death the deeds of sinful flesh (vv. 5-7). As a result of that union, each believer is now obligated to put to death the deeds of sinful flesh (vv. 5-7).
 - a. Five sins listed in verse 5 demonstrate sin's progression—
 - 1) *Fornication* (sex outside marriage) is the first and outwardly practiced sin.
 - 2) *Covetousness* is the last and comes from inward cravings that to produce the expression of sin.
 - 3) The heart of covetousness is *idolatry*, which is self-worship.
 - b. Practicing these sins—
 - 1) Subjects one to God's wrath (v. 6)
 - 2) Evidences no life change (v. 7; Eph. 4:17-24)
 - 3) Reveals a spurious claim (Eph. 5:5, 6)
2. We are also to "put off" the sins of self-life (v. 8). Real believers still struggle with the "remains" of the old nature, self, with its deeply ingrained habits of response; therefore Paul lists another five sins to deal with in verse 8.
 - a. These sins involve our *relationships*.
 - b. Anger (*orge*, also used of God's wrath) heads the list, being most prevalent, expresses itself in—
 - 1) Outbursts of temper ("wrath")
 - 2) Desire to hurt and be vindictive ("malice")
 - 3) Verbal assassination ("slander")
 - 4) Base or vile talk ("obscene talk")
3. "Do not lie to one another" (v. 9). They are to be "put away" or "cast off." He gives us two reasons to do so.
 - a. This is a caution against denial that these sins exist in a believer. Do not cover them up. Deal with them.
 - b. Two reasons we must "put them off"—
 - 1) Positionally, we are dead to them (Rom. 6:6; Eph. 4:22).
 - 2) Practically, we are a new creation in Christ—"the new man," which is the individual and corporate expression of a new race of which Christ, as the second Adam, is the head.
 - c. The new race is being progressively "renewed" in knowledge (to understand the will and purpose of God) after the image of the Creator (note 1:15).

- d. Within this new humanity, there are no class distinctions (v. 11). No one is either superior or inferior to anyone else because “Christ is all, and in all” (See also Gal. 3:28).
- 4. This unity in Christ is to distinguish the church; therefore, we are to “put on” that which characterizes Christ and His new race (vv. 12-17).

This is what we want to consider here (vv. 12-14).

In the next message, we will show how we are to practice the new man in the body, the church (vv. 15-17).

I. The New Man Identified

1. The new man is identified by his conformity to Christ (v. 12a).
 - a. His election of God (*chosen ones*)
 - b. His being set apart for God (*holy*)
 - c. His being loved by God (*beloved*)
2. This is the great motive for the new man to be like Christ. The process of becoming like Christ involves putting on the apparel of the new man.

II. The New Man’s Apparel

1. The new man’s apparel consists of five virtues that characterize Christ (v. 12b). Three are fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22).
 - a. An inner yearning to be merciful and show pity (*compassionate hearts or bowels*), it identifies with the *steadfast loving kindness* of the Lord (Luke 1:78; Psa. 25:6).
 - b. An integrity of soul (*goodness*) that allows one to show kindness others (Gal. 5:22; note Rom. 3:12: worthless, lacking wholeness)
 - c. A kind of thinking that disregards oneself in dealing with others (*humility of mind*), it is a selfless modesty toward others (Phil. 2:3).
 - d. A disposition of mildness that disregards one’s own strengths and abilities (*meekness*), it is a pleasantness that refuses to compare oneself to others (Gal. 5:23).
 - e. An ability to put up with difficult people, bearing with them however long is necessary (*patience*, or better, *long-suffering*; 1:11; James 5:10)
2. Not one of these virtues is a *doing* thing. They are *beings* things. We are to be like Christ.
3. These virtues are expressed in our living. Paul uses two participles to show this (v. 13).
 - a. Forbearing—holding back reaction from another’s provocation—to avoid conflict. However when a quarrel does arise, then one is to forgive.
 - b. Forgiving—a special verb meaning to ‘grace them,’ or ‘to cancel a debt by grace,’ even as the Lord has forgiven us
4. The Christian wardrobe is to be completed by putting on love (*agape*) as a final accessory (v. 14). This supreme virtue binds everything together in perfect unity.