

# You Were Raised Right

Studies in the Book of Colossians

Text

Colossians 3:5-17

Topic

The apostle Paul compares putting on Christ to putting on clothing

Title

*“The Fashion of the Christ”*

Does anyone remember that Donald Trump has a line of clothing?

I’m not talking about all the stuff that has his slogan, *Make America Great*, on it.

Trump has a line of clothing - notably dress shirts and ties. You might remember that he was in the annual Christmas commercial for Macy’s that promoted their celebrity lines of merchandise. The one I pulled up on YouTube featured Martha Stewart, Usher, Sean Combs, Emeril Lagasse,

Jessica Simpson, and Trump, all busy decorating a Macy's store for the holidays.

Speaking of neckties: I happen to prefer Jerry Garcia to Trump. It's not a political statement; it's a fashion statement.

If you watch any awards shows, you know that they always ask each of the stars on the red carpet one question: “**Who** are you wearing?” Typical answers are Versace, Armani, and Vera Wang.

After reading our verses in Colossians we will want to ask ourselves, “Who am I wearing?” The apostle Paul will use clothing as an illustration. In verses nine and ten, he will instruct us to “put off the old man,” and to “put on the new man,” as if they were wardrobe decisions.

1. We'll first read about putting off the “old man” line of clothing. I call it the Adam line.
2. Then we'll read about putting on the clothing of the “new man.” It's the Jesus line of clothing.

I'll organize my comments around two points: #1 Make Sure You Are Not Wearing Adam, and #2 Make Sure You Are Wearing Jesus.

## #1 Make Sure You're Not Wearing Adam

(v5-11)

I've heard; I've been told; that there is something online called, *The People of WalMart*. It's a website of user submitted photos of people ridiculously, hilariously, inappropriately dressed while shopping at their local superstore.

Those people made a wardrobe decision before they went out walking in the world.

**So do we as Christians.** In our case, spiritually speaking, we decide "who" to wear - Adam, or Jesus.

Colossians 3:5 Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

Your “members which are on the earth” - that’s your unredeemed physical body. Paul was describing not just the physical body, but what he will call your “old man” in verse nine. We commonly refer to it as the “flesh.”

You are born with a sin nature. After you are saved, there is something that resides in your unredeemed physical body that yearns to sin. We read in Galatians 5:17, “the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh.”

“Put to death” is the word *mortify*. The best definition of the word in this context is ‘to regard as impotent.’

Paul is reminding you that you can *always* regard the old man, the flesh, as impotent. It has no power over you unless you yield to it. It’s your choice.

One author put it like this: “The will of the believer must respond negatively to the impulses of the [old man] to use the physical parts of the human body for illicit purposes” (Wayne Gromacki).

Paul listed some things in the wardrobe of your flesh:

- “Fornication” is a catch-all word for any sexual immorality. It would describe anything outside of the boundaries God has set in His Word for human sexuality, which is for one biological man and one biological woman to become one in a monogamous, heterosexual covenant of companionship called marriage.
- “Uncleanness” is lust marked by entertaining improper sexual thoughts.
- “Passion” is the desire to use another person to satisfy your own lusts. While people try to argue that things like prostitution and pornography are ‘victimless crimes,’ God points out that the passion of the heart to use and abuse others is itself horrible.
- “Evil desire” is the physical craving that results from these things.

These sensual thoughts and traits are just as prevalent in the “old man” today as they ever were. Most advertising appeals to the sensual. *Those ad guys aren’t dumb.* Neither are the companies paying them billions of dollars to get our business.

“Covetousness” is more than just wanting more. It is wanting what others have. It is labelled “idolatry” because ultimately it is a dissatisfaction with what God has given you. The more you desire what God has not given you the more it crowds-out your love for the Lord Himself.

Colossians 3:6 Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience,

Not “these things” alone; they are merely symptoms of the disease, which is sin.

“Wrath” isn’t uncontrolled anger. It is God’s measured response in dealing with sin. God told Adam and Eve that they would bring death upon themselves and their offspring if they chose badly.

The descendants of Adam are “the sons of disobedience” and will earn the wages of sin, which is death - physical death followed by conscious eternal torment in Hell.

Colossians 3:7 in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them.

The Colossians had a personal testimony that included these behaviors. So do many of you.

Testimonies can be effective tools, but generally we want to forget what we have been saved *from* and rejoice in what we've been saved *to*.

Colossians 3:8 But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth.

“Put off” formally introduces us to the clothing illustration. You can put off these thoughts and traits just as you would filthy, stained clothing.

“All these” indicates anything that is characteristic of the old man. A few more wardrobe choices follow:

- “Anger” refers to the inward attitude of wanting to lash out at someone.
- “Wrath” is an actual outburst that acts upon your anger.
- “Malice” is having ill will towards another person. It is wishing the worst for them.
- “Blasphemy” can be against man or God. It reveals itself against man as slander and gossip

and backbiting. It would certainly include any abusive speech towards another person.

- “Filthy language” encompasses foul speech, coarse or rude humor, profanity, and obscenities.

Colossians 3:9 Do not lie to one another...

A “lie” is any misrepresentation of the truth. Your tone of voice, your gestures, the look on your face, can all alter the meaning of your words.

Colossians 3:9 ... since you have put off the old man with his deeds,

Colossians 3:10 and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,

When he said “you have put off the old man,” and you “have put on the new man,” Paul was referring to things that were done for you by the Lord the moment you were saved. The “old man” was rendered impotent and you received a new nature, a divine nature, the “new man.”

Now, on a practical basis, you are able to be “renewed in knowledge.”

It describes the process of daily, progressive change - called sanctification.

The ultimate goal for you is to be transformed “to the image of Him who created him.” God formed man in His image. That image was deformed at the fall when Adam and Eve sinned. Through salvation and sanctification it is being “renewed” until ultimately we are glorified and in Heaven.

In the mean time Jesus is your standard. He is the epitome of what it means to be human. He is Who you want to look like.

Colossians 3:11 where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.

“Greeks” was another word for Gentiles, and “Jews” referred, of course, to God’s chosen nation.

There are obviously Gentiles and Jews; and God, in the Bible, keeps them distinct in terms of His prophetic plan. So what are we to make of this and the comparisons that follow?

One way to look at this list is to see it as promising equal access. Jesus is just as available to Gentiles as He is Jews.

“Circumcised or uncircumcised” refers to religious distinctions. Jesus is the only way to God; but, again, He is available to all.

“Barbarian, Scythian” refers to cultures. While there are wide and sometimes wild cultural differences among the people groups of the earth, Jesus is the universal Savior of them all.

“Slave nor free” relates broadly to overall social status. It may not be easy for a rich man to trust in Jesus, but the Lord will save any who does.

“Christ is all and in all.” No matter who you are or where you are, Jesus saves.

Those of you who are older and can look back at pictures of yourselves from previous decades. Do you really want to put back on some of those outfits? Those hairdos? Can you say, “Leisure suit?” “Angel Flights?” *What were we thinking.*

That is Paul's point only on a far more spiritual basis. Don't allow your flesh to dictate your wardrobe.

## #2 Make Sure You Are Wearing Jesus

(v12-16)

Mark Twain once said, "Clothes make the man. Naked people have little or no influence on society."

You are to put off the Adam line, but you're not left naked. The Jesus line of clothes is introduced.

Colossians 3:12 Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved...

We understand election to be the sovereign act of God in grace whereby He chose in Christ for salvation all those whom He foreknew would accept Him.

Jesus' death on the Cross is sufficient to save any and all men. The Holy Spirit is in the world to apply His death on the Cross to human hearts.

As God's grace takes the initiative to free the human will, you can choose to receive or to reject God's gift of eternal life. Thus, salvation is all of God, by grace through faith, and not at all of works.

Those who receive the gift are those God foreknew would accept Him - they are "elect" in Him.

They are also "holy." It's the same word translated earlier in the letter as "saints." It describes every Christian as permanently set apart to God as His unique possession.

A Christian is also "beloved." It means that God has fixed His love upon you. God the Father loves you as much as He loves His own beloved Son, Jesus Christ.

When my eyes open each day and I contemplate walking with the Lord I ought to remember that I am elect, holy, and beloved. I am saved; I am secure; and I can be certain God loves me as much as He loves Jesus.

I want to be dressed appropriately.

Colossians 3:12 Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering;

Getting dressed for a daily walk with Jesus starts with putting on “tender mercies.” This is concern for the needs of others. It is putting others first. It is what Jesus did in eternity past when He determined to come to earth as a man to save us.

The next item, “kindness,” is putting those tender mercies into action. At some point your compassion must reveal itself in actual help to those in need. While it may include physical and material help, the greatest need in a person’s life is a personal relationship with Jesus.

While you are looking upon others with tender mercies and helping them with kindness, you are to be thinking of yourself with “humility.” The expression, “but for grace, there go I,” perfectly captures the concept of true, biblical humility.

If you’re going to try to serve others, you’re going to be treated like a servant. You’re going to get messy.

Treated like a servant, you tend to either passively withdraw or aggressively attack. “Meekness” rejects those fleshly responses and keeps you on task.

Thus the next thing Paul listed, “longsuffering.” It is putting up with people who try your patience.

Colossians 3:13 bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.

“Bearing with one another” is the practical side of longsuffering. You don’t just suffer long, shaking your head and talking under your breath. No, you actually bear with them and encourage them.

Paul was a realist. He understood the difficulties people presented. He knew that there would be offenses between Christians. The word “complaint” means *something worthy of blame*. It is a real offense.

What should you do when a real offense occurs?  
“Forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another...”

If you are offended or wronged, then the solution is not retaliation; it is not slander; it is not separation. It is to seek biblical forgiveness. It begins by keeping the matter as private as possible and going to the offender with the desire to be reconciled for the Lord's sake.

“Christ forgave you.” You and I have been forgiven much by God. We can forgive the comparatively little that is done against us.

There is one final wardrobe item that holds everything together and in place.

Colossians 3:14 But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection.

Literally Paul said “put on **the** love.” It is love that is uniquely possible because it is implanted in you by God. It is God's love flowing through you to others.

In Paul's day the men wore what was called a girdle. We would call it a belt. Think of love as a belt - a utility belt. I can reach into it for any of the characteristics listed whenever I need them.

And there are tons of other characteristics that are to be found as I explore God's love.

Love is "the bond of perfection." It binds us together on earth as we are being perfected by God for Heaven.

Colossians 3:15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body...

Remember, we're looking at this as if "the peace of God" were something you were wearing, that could be seen by others. How can I wear the peace of God in such a turbulent world?

The word "rule" can be translated *umpire*. What does an umpire do? He makes the call.

You are out walking in the world and you find yourself in some difficulty. Your circumstances are turbulent. You can react with agitation or fear or stress or worry or any of a number of fleshly traits.

Or you can appeal to the umpire to make the right call:

- His call might be to *end* your suffering.
- More often, His call is to give you grace to *endure* your suffering.

Either way - it's His "call," and you can therefore be at peace.

We were "called in one body." My personal "peace" or lack of it affects everyone else. If I am stressed, worried, annoyed, fearful, etc., etc., then the whole body of Christ I am part of feels the effects. Letting "peace... rule" in my heart is healthy for others.

Colossians 3:15 ...and be thankful.

It literally reads, *and thankful continually become*. It sounds like thankfulness is something to be discovered when everything in me doesn't see a reason to be.

How? Anyone who has suffered great loss knows. Be heavenly minded. Look forward to what awaits you.

Colossians 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

We immediately think of the “word of Christ” as the Bible.

**The Colossians had no Bible**, other than some limited access to the Old Testament and whatever letters from the apostles that were being circulated. It was more of a reminder of what God had already accomplished in them through the Gospel. However much or little word they had, they should let it “dwell” in them.

I think we can put it this way: It’s one thing for a believer to be in the word; Paul was talking about the word being *in you* - making a difference, e.g., in your spiritual wardrobe choices.

The word “richly” describes a treasure to be highly prized and appreciated. Elsewhere we read that God has put His treasure - the Gospel - in our frail earthen vessels.

“In all wisdom” reminds us that while the Gospel seems foolish to the nonbeliever, it is the wisdom of God to save whosoever will believe.

We’re to teach and admonish one another:

- “Teaching” is the presentation of truth.
- “Admonishing” is the specific application of truth by warning or correcting others who are deviating from it.

I find what Paul said next curious. He put all this in the context of “psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.”

You’d think he’d have said that “teaching” and “admonishing” was to be accomplished by expository teaching. Instead he described what sounds more like a musical.

That’s because Paul wasn’t describing a church service; he was describing the church **servicing**.

The “elect,” “holy,” “beloved” members who comprise the church on the earth should go about edifying one another, and evangelizing the lost, **as if we were in a musical.**

It doesn't mean we actually sing to one another; or even that we occasionally break out in song.

It means we should realize we're a part of a gracious musical masterpiece, orchestrated by our Lord, but being enacted on the earth by His body - by you and I.

Many of you are seeing *The Lion King*. It features fantastic costuming.

Not as fantastic as ours as we put on the new man.

