

*Colossians 3:12***PREFACE**

Let us assume, for the sake of argument, that we have each followed the injunctions of Paul, who began this chapter (v3) by reminding us that, as believers, we have died, and our “life is hidden with Christ in God.” Because of that (vv1-2) we are to “keep seeking the things above,” and “set [our] mind on the things above,” instead of “the things that are on earth.”

The apostle then proceeds to detail what this looks like. Just what is involved in changing our hearts from the things of earth to the things of heaven? The first step is to remove from our persons the impurities we have encountered and, to our shame, adopted as part of our life (v5):

- immorality
- impurity
- passion
- evil desire
- greed

In vv8-9 he adds to this list of impurities a list of sinful attitudes and speech:

- anger
- wrath
- malice
- slander
- abusive speech
- lying to one another

All of these are presented in the context of removing them from our life as one would slip out of worn, ugly, filthy clothes. Since we’ve done this, we’re left standing there naked (*not* a pretty site for some of us), and we are in desperate need of new, clean clothes. Paul has presented two lists of things that we should *remove* from our lives, so he proceeds, in vv12-17, to give us two lists of things we are to be sure are a *part of* our lives. He has told us what to *put off*; now he tells us what to *put on*.

Read Colossians 3:12-14.

So far as Paul is concerned, the starting point for putting on righteousness is the same starting point for removing that which is unrighteous:

*an understanding and apprehension of **who we are in Christ**.*

The first four verses of Chapter Three set the stage.

Read Colossians 3:1-4

- we are raised up with Christ (v1)
- we have died, and our life is hidden with Christ in God (v3)
- Christ is our life, and we will share in His glory (v4)

And he adds, in vv9-10, that *positionally* this has *already* been accomplished:

- we *have* laid aside the old self
- we *have* put on the new self

All of that he places in the context of putting off unrighteousness. The same applies in the context of putting on.

- we are chosen of God, [already] holy and beloved (v12)
- we are forgiven (v13)
- we are called to the peace of Christ (v15)

All of these express the basis—who we are in Christ—on which we can accomplish all that he (Paul)—and He (Christ Jesus)—desire for our walk.

v12

So, as those who have been chosen of God,

Read Ephesians 1:3-5.

holy and beloved,

As those chosen, elected, we are **holy** [*hagios* = sacred, ceremonially consecrated; from root (*hagos*) meaning “an awful thing.”] and **loved** [*agapao*]. Note: neither of these qualities have anything to do with us. We are holy and beloved because of God, only because we were chosen by Him to be followers of His Son. We are loved by God the Father because we have “put on,” as one would a new suit of clothes, Christ Himself. If we are clothed in Him—not just *by* Him, but *in* Him—we are to put on the *virtues* of Christ Jesus.

To this end, Paul offers a list of five virtues that stand in contrast to the five sins in v8—the evil practices of the “old self.” Here before us are the milestones of our trek into Christ-likeness. They are to be our goals along the upward glide-slope of our sanctification; as we attain and pass each one, we look upward to our perfect Example, seated at the right hand of the Father, and we thank Him, and praise Him, for it is true that any progress made by us in these virtues is solely by *Christ’s* doing, through the work of His Spirit dwelling within. For these are *holy* qualities.

heart of compassion^{nasb}, **tender mercies**^{nkjv}, **bowels of mercy**^{kjv}, **compassion**^{niv}, **compassionate hearts**^{esv} = *splanchna oiktirmos* (oyk-tir-mos’) = probably strengthened from splen (the “spleen”); an intestine (plural); figurative pity or sympathy : - bowels, **inward affection**, + tender mercy; **with** (oiktirmos) pity, mercy: “**love characterized by mercy**,” “**heartfelt compassion**,” “**tenderhearted mercy**.”

Our Example: Read Matthew 9:35-36.

This is not the mercy of the intellect, but the deep, visceral mercy of the gut.

kindness = *chrestotes* = from <G5543> (chrestos); **usefulness**, i.e. **moral excellence** (in character or demeanor) : - gentleness, good (-ness), kindness; “**God’s own goodness**,” **excellence**, **uprightness**.

The first definition for this word is “usefulness”; it comes from *chrestos*, which means “employed.” The connection to kindness may not be obvious, so let’s trace this back—first by looking at a negative context.

Read Romans 3:12.

“...become worthless/unprofitable...no one who does **good**.”

So the idea is “profitableness,” moving from that into “wholesomeness” (Vincent) to “moral excellence” to “God’s goodness.”

Our Example: Read Matthew 11:28-30.

When Jesus offers us an “easy” (*chrestos*) yoke, He is not saying that His burden will be a piece of cake, but that it will be *good*, comfortable, *profitable*—kind.

humility, humbleness of mind^{kjv} = *tapeinophrosynē* = from a compound of <G5011> (*tapeinos*) and the base of <G5424> (*phren*); **humiliation of mind, i.e. modesty** :- humbleness of mind, humility (of mind), lowliness (of mind). [The KJV is the most literal translation.]

Our Example: Read Philippians 2:5-8.

And from this same passage—vv3-4—we read how this humility is to play out in our own lives.

Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.

gentleness^{nasb,niv}, **meekness**^{kjvs,esv} = *prautes* (*prah-oo'-tace*) = from <G4239> (*prau` s*); **mildness**, i.e. (by implication) humility :- meekness. [similar to “humility,” *prautes* is defined as “the quality of not being overly impressed by a sense of one’s self-importance” (as quoted by Moo).]

Let us not be unduly influenced by how this fallen world defines “meekness.” Society would wish for Christians to be “gentle” and “meek” as *they* define those terms, so we would not be such an obstacle to their agenda. But we are to live by the Lord Jesus’ dictionary—not theirs.

Our Example: Read John 13:5, 12-15.

But we can’t stop there; if, as Jesus states in the earlier passage from Matthew 11, He is “gentle and humble in heart,” then we must let that be defined by the *entirety* of His earthly life. F. F. Bruce writes,

[The apostle] Paul entreats his Corinthian friends “by the gentleness and forbearance of Christ,” but if the language which follows that entreaty [in 2 Corinthians 10] is an expression of gentleness and forbearance, one wonders what he would have said had he been unrestrained by those graces. Yet those graces are evident in his affectionate concern for his converts—a concern matched by his indignation against those who were leading them astray.

And there is the key to Christ’s “meekness.” To those who were His—even those still struggling with belief in Him—Jesus was extraordinarily kind and gentle, putting their well-being before His own. But to those who were intent on leading those followers astray, Jesus could exhibit the unyielding ferocity of a lioness protecting her cubs.

Just moments before Jesus declared He was “gentle and humble in heart,”
[Matthew 11] He said this regarding the cities that had rejected Him.

“And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You will descend to Hades; for if the miracles had occurred in Sodom which occurred in you, it would have remained to this day. Nevertheless I say to you that it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for you.” (Matthew 11:23-24)

Notwithstanding His righteous anger against those who reject His salvation, or actively lead astray those who do not, the Lord Jesus is, like His Father, remarkably patient, as we see in the last quality in our list.

patience, longsuffering^{kjvs} = *makrothymia* (mak-roth-oo-mee'-ah) = from the same as <G3116> (makrothumos); longanimity, i.e. (objective) **forbearance** or (subjective) fortitude :- **longsuffering**, patience; **forbearance toward others**.

Our Example: Read 1 Peter 2:21-23.

And right there is the key to finding and developing patience, forbearance in ourselves:

[He] kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously

As v21 states, we “have been called” to learn from the example of Christ Jesus, and to fashion our life on His. We do this—no matter the individual quality—by entrusting ourselves to “Him who judges righteously”—God our Father.