

**Text:** Colossians 3:12-15

**Title:** Appropriate Behavior for a Christian – ABC!

**Truth:** God wants you to change...to be a better Christian.

**Date/Location:** Sunday November 29, 2015 at FBC

## Introduction

We have firmly established that every Christian has died with Christ and risen to new life with him, *and* that every Christian's old man has been crucified and the new man has come, *and* that all behaviors that were characteristic of the old man must be put off. We come now to the very important "put on" section of Colossians 3. This is work. It is not something you are passive about. It is hard work. Sometimes it seems impossible. Think of a time when you have to make a lot of effort to get yourself dressed, say after a shoulder or back or leg injury. It's tough, but you still have to get "put on" those clothes!

### I. Who You Are in Christ, v. 12a

- A. Elect by God. When we come to this notion of "election," we must put aside all the human reasoning that attempts to jump immediately to free will and choice, with its man-centered emphasis. Rather, we must humbly submit to the truth that for us to have the kind of favor that we are talking about in 1:2-3:10, God had to give it to us. It's that simple. We didn't accomplish it ourselves. **God chose to give His favor to us, pure and simple.** That is a mercy that is beyond explanation. Why to me, and not to my neighbor? I don't know other than it was God's good and wise choice, *and* I don't know that God is refusing to extend that to my neighbor—it just might not be the *time* that God chooses to show mercy to my neighbor.
- B. Holy. There are two senses of the word 'holy' in Scripture. One simply means set apart for someone or something. In this case, Christians are set apart to God, and thus the second meaning comes in, that of moral purity or separateness from sin because God is that way. Obviously the Colossian Christians were not perfectly holy in their conduct at this point, otherwise there would be no need to admonish them to 'put on' good character. But they were set apart for God and as such were 'saints.'
- C. Beloved. This is a passive participle, meaning it is an action done toward the subject, not by the subject. Christians are loved by God. Certainly they love God also, but the point here is that God has chosen them, made them saints by setting them apart from the world and the old man, and has loved them with a kind of love that the world does not understand.

It is this kind of people who are the subject of the command "to put on."

### II. Character Traits to Put On, v. 12b-15 (and beyond...)

What is putting on? When it used in a non-metaphorical sense, that is, "literally," it means "to clothe" either one's self or someone else, as in Matthew 6:25, Matt

27:31, and Luke 15:22. Used metaphorically, it refers to taking on things like characteristics, virtues, and intentions. (When a word is used metaphorically, we are right to interpret it 'literally' according to the metaphor. That is, metaphorical speech can be interpreted plainly according to its intended meaning, just like all other speech.)

- A. Tender mercies. Actually this is made of two Greek words, which is where the KJV gets the archaic phrase "bowels of mercies." The two words are:
1. "Bowels" is a word that refers to the innermost organs. We might say, "have a heart!" It means to have a certain emotional feeling toward something; to be compassionate; loving; full of good affections. For examples, see Philippians 1:8 and Philemon 12 about Paul. God has this tender mercy (Luke 1:78). Negative examples are found in 2 Cor. 6:12 and 1 John 3:17.
  2. The word "mercies" refers to pity or concern over the misfortune of other people. We should not be laughing at the calamity of others. A negative example is found in Hebrews 10:28. The "mercies" of God in Romans 12:1 translates this same word. God is the father of mercies (2 Cor. 1:3). God has this moral characteristic, and we should too.
- B. Kindness. Upright. Good. Helpful. Generous. Beneficial. It is part of the Holy Spirit's fruit. Once again, God has this character trait as evidenced in Romans 2:4, 11:22, Ephesians 2:7, and Titus 3:4. So should we.
- C. Humility. Lowliness of mind. Philippians 2:3 (and 2:5-7). 1 Peter 5:5. Not like in Colossians 2:23 where there is merely an *appearance* of humility. See also Acts 20:19, Eph. 4:2.
- D. Meekness. This is also translated as gentleness, courtesy, humility, considerateness, and not in the bad sense of being a doormat. It indicates that you do not think of yourself as some important person. It is another of the Spirit's fruit (Gal. 5:23). This kind of response is called for in all kinds of situations. For instance: when someone needs to be restored from sin (Gal. 6:1); when you are testifying about the Lord to others (1 Peter 3:16); when being instructed in the Word of God (James 1:21); and when correcting someone who promotes false teaching (2 Tim. 2:25). We see this character trait in Jesus (2 Cor. 10:1), which should be in all Christians (Titus 3:1-2).
- E. Longsuffering. There are two senses in which this word is used. The first has to do with remaining peaceful until a hoped-for outcome happens. The second nuance has to do with the ability to endure when provoked. So the first is waiting for something to happen; the second is enduring when something bad or at least non-ideal is happening. Paul modeled it (patience, 2 Timothy 3:10); it is held up for us to imitate (Hebrews 6:12, James 5:10). It is yet another of the Spirit's fruit (Gal. 5:22) and part of God's character (Romans 2:4, 9:22; 1 Peter 3:20) and of Christ's (1 Timothy 1:16, 2 Peter 3:15). It is how the pastor is to teach (2 Timothy 4:2).

So what does this all look like? When your husband says something insensitive, you don't blow up at him. When your wife's asking turns to nagging, check your tongue and temper. When things aren't going the way you want them to, respond kindly instead of harshly. That harsh edge of the flesh doesn't come out but is suppressed.

F. Bearing with one another. The idea is to put up with one another. There will be a lot of opportunity to do that in this life. Sometimes you have to put up with people you believe have wronged you; other times you have to put up with people you know are wrong; sometimes you are putting up with people that you don't understand because you are less mature than they are, or more mature; and so forth.

G. Forgiving one another.

1. If anyone has a complaint – it will happen, not if! The only reason these instructions are needed is because we live world where every human being is a sinner! Since we do live in such a world, we have to have these qualities, otherwise we will not be able to live together in peace for any length of time.

2. Comparative: as Christ forgave you, in the same manner you too should do. We can say it until we are blue in the face—if you do not forgive, then you demonstrate that you have never been forgiven—but this doesn't seem to sink in to some people's hearts. Look, if you have been wronged, receive the apology, forgive, tell the person you are putting it behind and it is not an issue anymore, and move on! You can't hold grudges. Read Matthew 18:23-33.

H. Above all, love. Love covers, love handles problems. Love for God and love for neighbor is admonished. It is the great commandment. There is a priority to love, but not to the omission of other characteristics like truth. Love it is a shorthand for all the other characteristics that the Bible has listed here in this context.

The “bond of perfection” means that love ties up or collects all these characteristics into a mature or complete whole (Heb. 6:1 uses the word in the sense of *maturity*.) Love is the total picture (Rom. 13:8, 10; James 2:8). Love is the uniting principle for the church, for the family, and the marriage. A similar bond, that of peace (Eph. 4:3), unifies the church, and that is mentioned next in Colossians.

I. Let peace of God rule in your life. John 14:27: Christ gave peace to His disciples during a time of great turmoil, and He does and can do the same today for his followers. His peace must control our lives, influence our thinking; be in our deciding. We were called to this. The one body into which we were called is the church, the body of Christ. This body cannot exist without peace—but note the fragmentation of it today.

J. Thankfulness. The command is “be thankful.” Period. No ifs, ands, buts, excuses, fine print, long-winded explanations by which we say “BUT,” or any of the rest of our lightweight excuses.

Note that we are called to be thankful FOR and thankful TO, not just thankful FOR. Pause and think about that statement. It is not proper to be thankful. It is better to be thankful FOR things and blessings and people and relationships and so forth. But it is most Christian to be thankful TO God.

### III. Conclusion: Character Transformation

- A. The idea of “just as I am” only goes so far. The Lord receives sinners, to be sure, but He doesn’t permit them to stay ensconced in their sin, never to improve or grow more holy. He actually receives *repentant* sinners. If the “output” of the person’s life is unchanged over the course of time, then no faith, no transformation, no regeneration, and no salvation is evidenced.
- B. God is in the business of changing you from “who you are” to “who He wants you to be.” It is natural for the believer to desire to be involved in this process and to want to replace old dead behavior with new living and righteous behavior. It is unnatural for a professing believer to not want to be involved in the process, and it is an even worse sign for him or her to refuse to be involved in the process.
- C. By way of application:

<b>Before salvation, if you were</b>	<b>Then after salvation you should be</b>
Flighty	Stable
Impatient	Patient
Brash	Kind
Arrogant	Humble
Angry	Tender
Unforgiving	Forgiving
Hateful	Loving
Liar	Truthful
Foul-mouthed	Of pure speech
Loud-mouthed	Quiet
Drunk	Sober
Undisciplined	Disciplined
Worried	Content, calm, trusting God
Bossy, domineering	Friendly, amenable
Nosy or “busybody”	Minding your own business
Idolatrous	Worshipping God alone
Thief	Working hard and giving
Rebellious	Submissive to authority