

A KINGDOM OF PRIESTS Part 7

We've been speaking to you about being *priests of God*. Recently our attention has been focused around dressing in the “garments” of priests. As you know, these garments represent the different *virtues* that are needed to carry out our duty as priests. It's one thing to know that these garments represent different virtues. It's another thing to “put on” these virtues—not just once—REPEATEDLY until they become a *habit*!

Speaking of habits, did you know that a *habit* is not just a pattern of behavior, it's also a garment worn by priests? Yes, a “habit” is both a behavior pattern AND a religious garment. Apparently, we *put on* religious garments whenever we *form* new habits!

Thus, the question is NOT, “How do we put on these garments?” The question is, “How do we form new HABITS? How do we learn to do these things ALL the time and not SOME of the time?” Well, forming new habits requires that we FIRST...

IDENTIFY AND REMOVE OLD HABITS

Ephesians 4:24

24 And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

We like to start here, but Paul actually begins back in verse 22!

Ephesians 4:22

22 That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;

Notice, before we can “put on” new habits, we must “put off” the old ones!

Forming new habits ALSO requires...

TRAINING AND PRACTICE

New habits aren't form the first time to perform an action. To form a new habit, you must repeat the same action over and over. This helps to “rewire” (renew) your mind!

Ephesians 4:23

23 And be renewed in the spirit of your mind;

Paul is speaking here about a ‘spiritual’ renewal of the mind. The Spirit must renew (completely remake) your mind. In the meantime, your actions may feel “forced” at first. But, give it time. With practice, things will feel more natural.

FINALLY, forming new habits requires that you endure...

TESTING AND TRIALS

Before new habits can become part of your character (who you are), they must be put to the test. Meaning, we must learn to respond UNDER PRESSURE!

Romans 5:3–4 Modern English Version

³ Not only so, but we also boast in tribulation, knowing that tribulation produces patience, ⁴ patience produces character, and character produces hope.

Let’s apply this model to the virtues (garments) we’ve already explored. The very first garment the priests were instructed to put on was...

THE COAT

We said to you that this “coat” represents *God’s righteousness*. But, before we can **put on** *God’s righteousness*, we must **put off** *self-righteousness*. Self-righteousness represents the “old” way of responding to *feelings of guilt* and God’s demand for righteousness.

Romans 10:2, 3

² For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. ³ For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.

It takes TRAINING to learn to submit to God’s righteousness and not to respond with our own righteousness. This is particularly difficult when we are TESTED and make mistakes!

Hebrews 10:22–23

²² Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. ²³ Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)

The next garment we’re instructed to put on is...

THE ROBE

This “robe” represents being clothed *with the Spirit*. But, before we can **put on** the *Spirit*, we have to **put off** walking according to the power of our *flesh*. Doing things in the power of our flesh represents the “old” way of *serving God*. It takes TRAINING to learn to serve the Lord in the Spirit and not in the flesh.

This is particularly difficult the more knowledge (or ability) you have!

2 Corinthians 12:7–9

7 And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. 8 For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. 9 And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.

The next garment the priests were commanded to put on was...

THE EPHOD

The “ephod” represents *love*. However, before we can **put on** *love*, we have to **put off** *self-interest* and *ambition*. This is the “old” way of responding to *rivalry*.

Philippians 2:2–4

2 Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. 3 Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. 4 Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

Rivalry (competition) is what happens when people who are closely matched!

Philippians 2:5–7

5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: 6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: 7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:

It takes TRAINING to respond to your *match* with love (i.e. by putting them first). This virtue is particularly difficult when putting others first threatens your own recognition OR survival. (Hint: “Temptation of Jesus” in the wilderness!)

Next, we’re commanded to put on...

THE BREASTPLATE

The “breastplate” represents *intercession* and *concern for others*. But, before we can **put on** *concern*, we must **put off** *indifference*. Indifference represents the “old” way of responding to *people*, particularly those in need of salvation.

1 Timothy 2:1–4

1 I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; 2 For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. 3 For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; 4 Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.

The reason Paul commanded that prayer be made for *all* men, especially kings, is because Christians weren’t all that fond of the king! This virtue is particularly difficult when we have to intercede for people who persecute us.

The priests were also commanded to put on...

THE GIRDLE

This “girdle” represents *a readiness of mind*. However, before we can **put on** this *readiness of mind*, we have to **put off** *distractions*. Being distracted with things (particularly earthly things) is the “old” way of responding to God’s *call* and the *demands of ministry*.

Matthew 16:21–23

21 From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. 22 Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee. 23 But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.

Learning to “put off” distractions takes TRAINING. We have to train ourselves to “savor the things of God” and submit every possession, relationship and plan to the will of God. This is particularly difficult when these things are threatened.

Lastly, the priests were instructed to put on...

THE MITRE

The “mitre” represents *bearing with people’s weaknesses*. But, before we can **put on** or *bear with people’s weaknesses*, we must **put off** *condemnation* and *rejection*. Condemnation and rejection represents the “old” way of responding to people’s *weaknesses* or *sins*. It takes TRAINING to learn to bear with people’s infirmities or weaknesses.

Romans 15:1–2, 5

¹ We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. ² Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification. ⁵ Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus:

This virtue is particularly difficult whenever there are *consequences* attached to bearing with people’s weaknesses.

Romans 15:3

³ For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.