

**Put On The New  
Colossians 3: 5-11**

**First Presbyterian Church  
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Darin Travis**

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There are certain things that when we put them on, they change us. Last year I coached my son's 8- year-old basketball team. Due to a sudden no-show one week, I was asked to don a referee's jersey and whistle. Oh the power! Calling fouls and deciding which team had possession of the basketball was important stuff. Just ask the parents on the sidelines who felt their child's entire college prospect hinged upon my decision of a traveling violation.

There is some lightheartedness in officiating an 8-year-old sports league, but some clothes/articles when put on carry tremendous weight. I spoke with a few in our congregation about that which they put on. The honorable Judge Darrell White said that when he first wore the judge's robe it was **"awful"**. He clarified, not in the sense of bad or unpleasant, but in the awe-inspiring, reverential wonder inspiring sense of the word. He said that when he put on the robe, a transformation took place. There was a heavy weight of responsibility that instantly came with wearing the robe and sitting at the bench. On his very first day, he had to preside over the case of a former high school classmate from Baton Rouge High. His decision had major implications for the former big man on campus.

I asked Greg Phares, former Baton Rouge Chief of Police, who attends the 7:45 service, what it was like the first time he put on the badge. He said that he was extremely self-conscious of the fact that he had taken on additional responsibilities than the day before without the badge. He said that he also became more and more aware of the power, authority, and visibility that came with wearing it. Chief Phares said that a year into being an officer, when arresting a young man for shoplifting, he was abruptly made aware that he needed to use wisdom and discretion in how he used his power. He said that he became aware that this particular juvenile needed counseling more than he needed incarceration. How Officer Phares wielded the power of the badge determined how long the young man would be behind bars.

When put on, the robe and the badge give one awesome power, but it is not the cloth or metal itself that holds the power or gives the responsibility. As I spoke

with Judge White and Chief Phares, they both expressed that the power/responsibility bestowed on them came through the governing body of which the clothing represents. Failure to respect those authorities could result in those badges and garments being removed, thus the authority and power being lost.

In our passage today, the Apostle Paul speaks the language of putting off and putting on. It isn't a robe or badge, but he speaks about the putting off of our old self in regard to sin and putting on the new self in regard to Christ. His hearers needed to be exhorted to take this changing of apparel seriously that they might be free of any sin in their lives. Like the Colossians, *we need to be exhorted as well.* Too often we are content with a moderation of sin and afraid to truly die to it. We can also wonder if repentance is worth it or even possible.

Today we are going to see that: **because we have put on the new self in Christ, we must realize that the responsibility of doing so is awesome. And by awesome - I not only mean excellent and good, but as Webster describes the word: awesome in that it is magnificent, inspiring great admiration, apprehension, or fear.** We will look at three aspects: The first is: we must recognize that the Awesome Expectation for putting on the new self is Righteousness. Secondly, we must wrestle with the Awesome Expectation that the result of putting on the new self will be an ongoing Pursuit. And finally, we must rejoice that the Awesome Reward of putting on the new self is Fruit.

**First off, we must recognize that the Awesome Expectation for putting on the new self is Righteousness.**

In this short passage, Paul gives two main striking commandments. He begins with the opening words, "Put to death therefore what is earthly in you" and then proceeds to lay his gauntlet down of demands. Before we begin, we have to frame our whole conversation about these seven verses with the proper weight given to this word "therefore." This linking conjunction is carrying over the significance from verses 1-4. If you weren't here last week to hear our Senior Pastor Gerrit's powerful sermon about 1-4, let me summarize by saying, "therefore" is about the epic transformation of being raised w/ Christ, hidden w/ Christ, and appearing with Christ in glory. Allegiance to Christ, being in Christ, changes everything. The

Colossians are described in Chapter 1 as, “their faith in Christ and love for the saints” has been heard way past the borders of their town. Now in Chapter 3, the “therefore” is referring to what has already happened; the raised with Christ and the hidden with Christ are in the past tense.

The position they have in Christ is already a completed task. It’s wrapped up. To put it succinctly, it’s like heading into the big game in two weekends with the secret knowledge brought from a sports analyst of the future that we will not only win in two weeks, but that we crushed Bama in the upcoming National Championship on January 7<sup>th</sup>. - not a pep talk of “boys, you’re going to win.” But a, “boys, this happened, I watched it with my own eyes. The final score, January 7<sup>th</sup>, 2019 - Alabama 31, LSU 35.” Now, in two weeks our boys would still need to lace up their cleats, throw the ball, get tackled, and be forced to kick at times on 4<sup>th</sup> and 1, but everything about how they played the game would be impacted if they already knew they were going to win and win again in January. The “therefore” of verse 5 puts the command of “put to death” in perspective. They have been raised with Christ, have already died w/ Christ, they will appear with Christ in glory - its guaranteed - the championship has already been won! The “therefore” is key!

At first glance, some miss this word. Some outside the faith perceive what Christianity is all about dying to all the pleasures that this earth has to offer and then waiting for some etherial after-life. This couldn’t be further from the truth of what Paul is intending. Paul has a Jewish worldview that knew what Genesis 1 said. When God created the heavens and the Earth, He repeatedly exclaimed after each day of creation - it is good, it is good, it is good. The Earth in its original material state was good. It was man’s rebellion against God that darkened man’s soul and the radiant beauty of creation. When Paul says put to death what is **earthly** in you, he isn’t saying put to death the things of you that God created originally as good. Passion can be good - King David in Psalm 69 says that passion for God’s house consumes him, sexuality is good and given by God. It was God who created man male and female and told them to multiply on the Earth. The connotation of verse 5 is that we are to put to death that which in you is a perversion of God’s goodness. At its core, sin is a perversion of the goodness of God. Perversion of the nature of God doesn’t bring life, it brings death; therefore,

**Paul says that we must put to death the patterns and practices in us that are a perversion of God's goodness.**

The challenge for us is that sometimes we are content with a moderate level of sin in our lives. Paul lists off 5 vices to press in, following each command. The first 5 to put to death: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, are all in the nature of **sensuous** idolatry. We want something that is not God, outside of us, to fill us and make us complete. Working in campus ministry for 20 years, I regularly had conversations with men about sexual immorality. So common are the patterns of perversion to the goodness of God, that students aren't aware that there is another worldview. Did you know that there are 4.2 million pornographic websites and that statistics show that pornography plays a significant role in over 50% of all divorces? Paul wants us to know, vs 3 - "you died ...vs 5 - therefore put to death." Or, to use the language often applied to this general theological concept: "become what you are." Because **we have put on the garment of the new self in Christ, the Awesome Expectation is actual Righteous living!** Flee from covetousness, materialism, etc. The championship has already been won, now play like it.

**The second thing we see from this passage is that because we have put on the new self in Christ, we must wrestle with the Awesome Expectation that the result of putting on the new self will be an Ongoing Pursuit.**

Though the "therefore" from verse 5 means that the championship is won, the imperatives "Put to death", and "Get rid of" are active. Lacing up the cleats and running the ball are things that we must do every day. Paul says that living the Christian life is one of "putting to death" and "getting rid of." We seek to "get rid of" bad habits, such as biting nails, eating too much junk food late at night. We seek to "put to death" things like weeds in our gardens, a mouse in the garage. When I first moved to Baton Rouge, I went hunting on a property in St. Francisville. The owner told me, "if you ever see a wild hog, shoot it on the spot." Nuisance animals that damage property and are a threat to human life need to be "put to death". The trouble is that weeds, mice, an addiction to ice cream, and the like - these things aren't easy to kill. In a similar way, sensuous idolatry does not die easily in the life of a believer.

Though Paul has taught that the the Colossians have been raised, have been hidden in Christ, and have put on the new self, he also has to challenge them using present tense verbs. Who they are in Christ is secure, but choosing to live a life that reflects that truth is a daily pursuit.

In John 6, when Jesus gave the sermon on the mount, a crowd gathered. Saying, “What must we do, to be doing the works of God?” In other words, what do we need to do to live this kingdom of God life? Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.”<sup>1</sup> Notice Jesus did not list off 5 vices of idolatry to turn away from. Jesus said the key, the work, is **to believe**.

True spiritual growth in the life of a believer happens by believing the truth of the Gospel; first for salvation, but then moment by moment choosing to believe what God says is true, is actually true. The sin we are wrestling with is usually only the surface level sin. There is often sin beneath the sin that must be illuminated by the light of God’s truth. A friend of mine said to me this week, “I realized that with all of the business functions I’ve been having lately that I was having drinks after work 5 of the 7 nights of the week.” He knew this could be a problem for him. He said therefore the most recent function he went to he just had club soda and water. What enables a man to truly make a change like that. Telling oneself, “I need to stop drinking so much” can curb desire for a while, but true change happens when one deals with the sin beneath the sin. Realizing before the Lord that “I drink because I’m lonely”, or “I’m angry that things haven’t worked out they way I wanted them to!” allows God’s truth to peer in. “You’re lonely?” - Jesus said, “Never will I leave you, never will I forsake you.” “Things haven’t worked out the way you think they should have?” Jesus says, “I am working all things together for good for those who are called according to my purpose.” We must expose the false beliefs of our hearts by replacing the sin beneath the sin with the truth of God’s word – this Ongoing Pursuit is to be the Awesome Expectation.

Finally, we must rejoice that the Awesome Reward of putting on the new self is Fruit. Paul says in verse 9, “Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices <sup>10</sup> and have put on the new self, which is being

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<sup>1</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. (2016). (Jn 6:28–29). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.*

renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.” We are presently, in an ongoing sense, currently being renewed. Have you thought lately about how awesome that is? Prior to moving here to Baton Rouge, my family lived in Detroit, Michigan where Barat and I bought a basically abandoned and boarded up 120 old Victorian home that was in really bad shape. Some of the only original woodwork left in the house was the main stairway. I went through sheet after sheet of sandpaper removing old lacquer and peeling paint to scrape down to the original oak. As I renewed that staircase and really the whole house, if it could have talked I think it would have said, “thank you.” Underneath all of the boarded up windows and large sections of flooring that had deteriorated, was a beautiful house that wanted to be lived in and enjoyed.

The Lord is in the process of renewing us. We don’t have to have it all together yet. He is the one who is most committed to bringing to completion the good work that He has begun in us. But we do get to say thank you and rejoice that He is still working on us and hasn’t given up.

I disciple and mentored a fraternity president during my time at LSU. God changed his life his senior year and he began to make serious changes to his life, especially in how he treated/respected woman. After about two years after he graduated he called me in the middle of the night one evening. He said, “Darin, I was out on a date with a girl. After dinner and drinks she wanted to come home with me. I just wanted to let you know that I didn’t let her.” The conversation he and I had after he said that was worshipful. God had changed his life and he was wanting to tell me and tell God that he was thankful! It was a poignant night where he tangibly realized that God was renewing him. The fruit resulted in glory and praise being given to God.

Another reward of putting on the new self is the fruit of changed relationships with those around us. Paul says, “Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.”<sup>2</sup> Putting on the new self empowers us to not have to be defined by being “Greek or Jew” – i.e. racial barriers may be destroyed. Putting on the new self empowers us to not have to be defined by being “circumcised or uncircumcised” – i.e. religious barriers may be destroyed. Putting on the new self empowers us to not have to be

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<sup>2</sup> [\*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version\*](#). (2016). (Col 3:9–11). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

defined by being “barbarian, or Scythian” – i.e. cultural barriers may be destroyed. Putting on the new self empowers us to not have to be defined by being “slave or free” - social barriers may be destroyed.

In conclusion, being clothed in the new self of Christ changes everything. Our position of being raised in Christ, hidden in Christ, and in the future appearing with Christ is a finished act. Once one truly puts on the new self in Christ, it will not be removed. Unlike an officer’s badge or a judge’s robe, Christ will never take the robe of the new self in Him off of us. Obeying his commands takes renewing our mind of the truth and as we do we experiencing God at work. God is committed to renewing you to the image of Him, now that is something to give Him praise for!