

Put Off The Old, Put On The New

By Everett Hardin

“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold all things have become new,” 2 Cor.5:17. Not everyone is a new creature. Not every good father, not every good mother is a new creature. Not every rich man nor every poor man is a new creature. If any man is *“in Christ”* he is a new creature. If one is not *“in Christ”* he is not a new creature regardless of whatever else he may be.

This being true it becomes very important that we learn what it means to be *“in Christ.”* To be *“in Christ”* is to be related to Him so that He is our Head, Savior, Lord, Mediator, Redeemer and High Priest. How do we get *“into Christ?”* Paul says, *“Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death,”* Rom. 6:4. So that person who has not been buried with the Lord in baptism is not in Christ (Col. 2:12).

By what is the new life in Christ characterized? The person in Christ has a new name (Acts 11:26). Until one is baptized *“into Christ”* he has no right to wear the name of Christ (I Cor. 1:13). Since we have been baptized *“into Christ”* we wear His name. The person *“in Christ”* enjoys a new relationship. Being *“a new creature”* he is a child of God (Gal. 3:26). The person *“in Christ”* has a new law, new standards of right and wrong (Col. 3:17). He is no longer to walk *“according to the course of this world,”* but is guided by the light of God’s word (Eph. 4:1,2). The person *“in Christ”* has new objects of affection. He is to love God with his whole heart, soul, mind, and strength (Matt. 22:37). He is not to love the things of the world (I John 2:15-16). The person *“in Christ”* has new interests to engage his attention and employ his energies. The church and its activities are to be the center of the new creatures’s thoughts, words, and deeds.

Putting Off The Old Life

“Mortify your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, and evil concupiscence and covetousness, which is idolatry,” Col. 3:5. So far as our relationship is concerned, we have died to sin, it must be subdued in our lives, and the members of our body must no longer serve sin.

Fornication refers to unlawful sexual intercourse. This sin ought not even to be named among saints (Eph. 5:3). **Uncleanness** is a general term which includes all forms of moral abuse (Rom. 1:24-27). **Inordinate affection** denotes a craving for some particular gratification. Lust and longing which leads to special sins. **Covetousness** denotes a disposition to have more, grasping greed, selfishness grown to a passion. It is called idolatry because that which one inordinately desires becomes his god.

Since they had died with Christ to the world, they were to put away *“anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth”* (Col. 3:8). These are to be *“put away”* because they are a part of the old manner of life, and we have put such things to death.

Put On The New Life

Paul identifies some basic spiritual characteristics of the *“new man”* in Christ. *“Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, long-suffering; Forbearing one another if any man have a quarrel against any; even as Christ forgave us, so also do ye. And above all things put on charity, which is the*

bond of perfection. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts,” Col. 3:12-15.

Paul says “**put on bowels of mercies.**” This is a heart of compassion, the disposition to pity those in destitute circumstances. Jesus said, “*Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy*” (Matt. 5:7). James shows that the person who fails to show mercy toward others will receive judgment without mercy (Jas. 2:13). In the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus showed that we have to show mercy if we want to inherit eternal life (Luke 10:37).

The next quality is **kindness**. This is the spirit and manner in which we care for the destitute. It demands that we consider the other person’s feelings and act rightly in dealing with them. Paul wrote, “*Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you,*” Eph. 4:32. We are commanded to become like God in this respect, “*for He is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil,*” Luke 6:35.

We are to be clothed with **humbleness of mind**. We are to be submissive to those about us, and condescend to those below us (Phil. 2:3). Paul said, “*Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility; for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble,*” I Pet. 5:5. So arrayed, we are to regard no service too lowly, no task too small for us to perform. God sheds His favor upon those who humble themselves in His sight. Note the Savior’s words, “*And whosoever shall humble himself shall be exalted,*” Matt. 23:12.

Meekness is the opposite of rudeness and self-assertion, a delicate consideration for the rights and feelings of others, especially necessary in administering rebuke or discipline. It carries the idea that God will vindicate. Moses was a striking example. “*Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the earth,*” Num. 12:3. The Psalmist said, “*The meek shall inherit the earth and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace,*” Psa. 37:11. Selfish, greedy people may possess a portion of the earth, but it is the meek, who will inherit the real blessings, and the kingdom of God.

Forbearing and Forgiving. The new life bears with the faults and failings of others without being irritable and unpleasant. We should be gentle and patient, not quick to assert our rights, or to avenge the wrongs others have committed against us. Jesus instructed Peter to forgive not “*until seven times; but until seventy times seven,*” Matt. 18:22. When the father forgave the prodigal he put him in the place he enjoyed before he went away (Luke 15).

“**Even as the Lord forgave us.**” The fact that the Lord forgives us obligates us to do so to others. “*For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses,*” Matt. 6:14-15. Our forgiveness is to be like the Lord’s. Freely—He does not hesitate or deny when we ask Him; entirely—He pardoned all our offenses: forever—He did it so as to remember our sins no more, and to treat us as if we had not sinned.

“**And above all things put on love,**” Col. 3:14. Note the supremacy of love— “*Above all things.*” (Cf. I Cor. 13:1-3). In Paul’s prayer for the Philippians he prayed, “*that your love may abound yet more and more*” (Phil. 1:9). Jesus gave a “*new commandment*” in John 13:24, that we love one another as He loved us. Virtues of the new life are held together, enlivened and beautified by the cord of love. Love for God and man is the principle which unites all the virtues and renders them consistent and permanent (Matt. 22:37-39). It is the bond of perfectness.

“**Let the peace of God rule in your hearts.,**” Col. 3:15. This peace is the condition of rest and contentment in the hearts of those who know that their Redeemer lives. It is this

conviction that the sins of the past have been forgiven, that the promises of the present are sure, and that the future cannot bring separation between Christ and His Own (Rom. 8:35). Concerning this peace the apostle says, "*And the peace of God which passeth understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ,*" Phil. 4:7.

"..and be ye thankful," Col. 3:15. We are obligated to God in so many ways and by so many kindnesses we can never thank Him enough. But we can cultivate the feeling of gratitude and give thanks on all occasions. "*Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,*" Eph. 5:20.

We put on the Christian characteristics by doing what Christ teaches. We never get them by simply admiring them in others, by wishing for them in our lives; we get them by doing them the best we can, doing them over and over, doing them better each time than we did the last time, until we develop them to the point where we can do them unconsciously, until they become a part of our nature.
