

What Are You Wearing? - Colossians Ch 3 v 1-17

Carolyn Frame - CJ's City - Time: 20 mins

[Read Colossians Chapter 3 v 1-17 - page 833 of the blue Bibles]

[Pray and then begin]

I have one question for everyone here this morning? - WHAT ARE YOU WEARING?

What is it that you have on - now looking around there is a variety of things - jeans - dresses - skirts (etc. improvise re congregation).

But what is it you are really clothed in?

We are taking a short break from our study in Romans this week - but I wanted to continue along one of the themes Paul was addressing in Chapters 7 and 8 and to look at it in another of his letters and this time to the Christians in Colosse. What theme -

well - how we should be living as men and women who have died to our old life (through Jesus' death and resurrection) - and are now living new - changes lives - alive in Christ and with His Spirit living in and through us.

In his letter to the Church in Colosse Paul begins by writing (Ch 1 verse 2):

"To the holy and faithful brothers in Christ at Colosse"

Do you notice that - what is their address: *in Christ* at Colosse (expand what mean)

When we have asked Jesus to be the Lord and Saviour of our lives and allow Him to come and live in us/through us - we have a new address - a new post code as it were - its no longer "John in London" its "John *in Christ* in London", "Carolyn *in Christ* in London" - and as we've said before - this new status should bring with it a change in our lives. Just as when physically you move from

one post code to another (As you know I'm looking to move from NW6 to N1) there is a change - in my case hopefully West Hampstead to Hoxton - so in a way spiritually - when we make that decision to change how we live - to no longer live for "ME" - and to put God back in the place He deserves at the centre of our lives - so we have a spiritual change of post code as it were - and its no longer "ME" but "CHRIST IN ME" - or "ME IN CHRIST".

As we discussed when looking at Chapter 7 of Romans - without Christ - we are not living the life God intended for us - and again here in chapter 3 of Colossians - Paul reveals the true way to (as Ray Stedman put it in his message on this chapter) "be all that you can be".

And who here doesn't want to be "all that they can be"?!?

But in order to achieve that I'm going to ask you again - "what are you wearing?" - thankfully - I can see you all and without exception

(!) you are all wearing clothes - but that's our physical appearance -
spiritually what are we wearing?

How can we "be all that we can be"? Listen to Paul's opening words:

"Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory."

It's hard to tell at first glance - who are the Christians in this world. They are ordinary looking men and women, young people, boys and girls - just like you and me. BUT in reality as Paul tells us here - the truth is that being a Christian means we have an extra dimension to our lives - a hidden resource - and invisible reality - which the world does not have and cannot see. I'm not meaning

that Christ is up in heaven somewhere - but rather - as Paul says in verse 27 of chapter 1 "*...Christ in you, the hope of glory.*"

This is the extra dimension for the Christian - this is how we have life to the full and how we can be all we can be - through Christ in us. This is what puts a smile on a Christian's face - even though he or she is in trouble - this is the hope we should have and know - if we are truly living our life to be all we can be - letting Christ live in us. GOSPEL APPEAL

This is a wonderful picture here at the beginning of Chapter 3 for those who are in Christ - listen again to what Paul says:

- you have been RAISED WITH CHRIST. (verse 1)
- For you died and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.
(verse 3)
- When Christ, WHO IS YOUR LIFE, appears, you also will appear with Him in GLORY. (verse 4)

Wow - how amazing is that!?! When we make that change - when we ask Him into our lives - look at what that means for each one of us:- we have been raised with HIM. Our life is "hidden" in Him (it is no longer me - but Christ in me - I loved what Ralph said a couple of weeks back - that each day he said, Ralph has to die and Jesus has to live - and that's the truth - it is Jesus we need to let live in us - because we are hidden in Him - who can touch us - NO-ONE - we are SECURE - and have our security in HIM - Wow! Sorry this passage really excites me you have to forgive me for getting carried away.

And then - look at verse 4: When Christ - WHO IS YOUR LIFE - that's the truth - when we accept Him - when we realise our need for Him (as we looked a couple of weeks ago - we can't do any of it without Him) and when we realise that - HE BECOMES OUR LIFE - without Him we are dead - What does Romans 6:23 say:

"For the wages of sin is death, BUT the gift of God is eternal life [where/how] in Christ Jesus our Lord."

For those of us who have made that decision - What is the truth of this for us as we live this new life - Paul says it here in the beginning of Colossians Chapter 3: He says:-

1. **Set your hearts** on things above where Christ is seated at the right hand of God:- We can't go on with the same patterns of our heart - our affections should be directed to God and to Him and what He has done. It doesn't mean we don't care about the everyday things: our family, our friends, our work etc - BUT we also have the extra dimension - Christ is part of every situation and we need to remember that. That is both a challenge as we look at what we do - where our hearts push us - what our affections are on - but also an amazing promise. (Because no matter where we find ourselves/what we face - He is there - not alone)
2. **Set your minds** on things above not on earthly things:- this is our wills, our choices our decisions - a conscious decision

again. What do we dwell on etc - Christ is/should be part of all of that!

Notice that this is a daily thing, an hourly things even - we are to continually to do this - as we have said before our walk with Christ is just that it's a walk - each day we have to take one step after another - and Paul goes on to expand on how we do this - how we can bring about this change in our lives.

We know that Christ has done it for us - He died in our place and He took the punishment of death that should have been yours and mine - no-one else could do it - we couldn't do it - He did it - but we have to remember that when we make the decision to follow Him - there is a responsibility on us - we need to make changes - we should WANT to make changes - how do we do it - OBVIOUSLY ONLY IN HIS STRENGTH - but there are essentially two things we need to do:- firstly we should "PUT OFF" verses 5-11 and secondly we should "PUT ON" 12-17.

Read with me again verses 5 - 11. [READ]

The message to "put off" and "put on" is repeated in other places throughout the New Testament. But note importantly the order in which they come - firstly we are to "put off" before we "put on".

[Illustration]

If I am having a drink of Ribena say and I - oh..... [pick up carton and squeeze it all over my top]. Look at that - I've messed up my top. Before I put on a clean one - I need to take off the dirty one because otherwise all I am doing is covering it over - and eventually this will seep through and dirty the clean clothes I put on over the top.

And it's the same thing here Paul is talking about. In order to be all we can be - we need to ask ourselves first of all: **WHAT AM I WEARING?**

Before I can put on the new life - I need to take off the old self - with its practices, its habits - so that I can put on the new.

And Paul puts in plainly in these verses.

PUT TO DEATH therefore: what:- whatever belongs to the earthly nature - as we've seen before these things are not of God.

- sexual immorality (God created sex but He also set the rules within which it was to be enjoyed and the Bible is clear that that is within the confines of marriage - anything else - is not of God.)
- impurity, lust, evil desires and greed which is idolatry. Again there is I am sure a challenge to us all in this.

Paul again repeats why - well - verse 6 - its clear: BECAUSE OF THESE, THE WRATH OF GOD IS COMING - verses 7-8 - Paul reminds us that we used to walk in these ways in the life we once lived BUT NOW WE ARE IN CHRIST - It should be different - WE ARE NO LONGER THE SAME - WE ARE CHANGED BECAUSE OF WHAT HE HAS DONE - we therefore need to "RID" ourselves

of these things - brace yourselves - you may have thought you got through the first list unscathed but here goes on the next:-

- anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from our lips.

Again this is such a challenge. Every time I read this passage of Scripture I know I have so much to do. I am also reminded that this is a constant thing - something I must continually work on - continually put off. I have been forgiven - and saved through Jesus death and resurrection - YES - but remember Romans Chapter 7 - we are in a battle between our new life with Christ and the desires of the flesh - so daily I have to say sorry - I have to repent - I have to ask for His help and His forgiveness - AND THE AMAZING THING IS - HE IS ALWAYS THERE! To help, to forgive, to strengthen (no matter how many times) - He's just waiting for me to ask.

Paul goes on (verse 9):

- Do not lie to each other - why? Because we should be different - we have taken off our old selves - with its

practices.

And then look at verse 10 - we have put on the new which is *being renewed* [a continual ongoing process] and how is my new self being renewed - in knowledge in the image of its Creator.

There again in the challenge for us - we need to be growing in our knowledge of Him, our love for Him and when we do we should see the change in us - in each other as we become more and more like Him. Learn more = fall more in love - and to change. (pets and owners / husbands and wives look alike - proximity of relationship - need to be living so proximate with Christ we start to look more and more like Him.) In every situation we need to stop and ask ourselves - WWJD - (wrist bands) - what would Jesus do.

Remember we are not hypocrites when we find ourselves tempted to do these things (practices) - but we are hypocrites when we give in to them - so what do we do?

- When I feel myself getting angry - stop - WWJD?
- When I feel myself being tempted with lustful thoughts - stop - WWJD?
- When I am about to swear in frustration or pain - stop - WWJD?

Verse 11 taken out of context sounds like a great statement of unity - which of course it is - but in context - Paul is also reminding us that we have no excuses based on culture, race or class for wrong conduct. I can't say I'm just blunt because everyone in my family is blunt, or I'm tight and stingy because I'm from a particular place or whatever it is - Paul reminds us that:

"Christ is all, and is in all."

Therefore - whoever we are - wherever we are from - whatever our upbringing, background, culture, we all - when we have asked Christ into our lives - have what it takes to say no to wrong - AND

to say yes to God - so as we will go on to see - our lives can be filled with love, peace and joy.

So - let me ask you again: What are you wearing?

When I have studied this passage in the past I adopted a practice I think I'll continue and that is to challenge myself (and anyone else who will listen) is there anything you need to take off? To put off? From what we have just read - has God spoken to your heart - if so - don't brush it aside - right here and now - TODAY - lets come to Him and ask Him to help us put it off - whatever it is of the old self that is dragging you down - holding you back from being all you can be - lets name it and pray for it.

Under your chairs you should have a little card and an envelope - no-one else needs to know what you write down - only you and God - but lets write it down and keep the envelope somewhere where

you'll see it daily and lets pray daily that God will give us the strength to put that off - so you can be clothed in Him.

Don't seal the envelope just yet - because we have something else to write down later.

Let's change the question a little as we come to verses 12-17 and let's ask - what do you want to wear? What shall we put on?

Read with me verses 12 - 17 [READ]

What a wonderful truth at the start of verse 12 - take a moment to ponder this - claim this - *"Therefore as GOD'S CHOSEN PEOPLE, holy and dearly loved..."*

Did you know that - you are chosen - holy - and dearly loved! Praise God and thank Him. Whatever dirty clothes we've been wearing - He loves us! [Refer back to dirty Ribena stained T-Shirt still

wearing] - no matter how stained/messed up my life is - like this T-Shirt - HE still loves me - He chose me - He died for me. (when we were STILL SINNERS) And because of that - I can - and I want to take off this dirty T-Shirt - put off those things that I once did and instead - well - see the rest of verse 12 and 13:

CLOTHE MYSELF with these positive qualities of Christian living.

You know - Paul is talking about putting on and putting off like clothes and we do that daily don't we - daily we take off the old clothes we've been wearing and each morning we put on our new clothes. (Practical way to help us remember the lesson.)

How are you in the morning? I am NOT a morning person - I never have been. I remember going home at the end of my first year at University and I had a great Summer job at a local radio station - which I loved - but it did mean having to get up at 7am every morning - which I know for you is the time for your mid-morning snack - but for me that's the middle of the night. And I still hear in my head even now when similarly I struggle to get up - my dad

used to shouting through the wall each morning (for the ENTIRE Summer) "Carolyn - I don't hear you moving!"

Apparently Albert Einstein was quoted as saying "The problem with the speed of light is, it comes too early in the morning!".

But, however, whenever you get up - we should be deliberately each morning putting on these qualities of life - the reason being that we CAN put them on - BECAUSE we are new men and women in Christ - therefore we can begin to live that way - so do it - or as Nike say "Just Do It" - that's what Paul is exhorting us to do here!

But remember we need to put off the old to put on the new. That can be a challenge for us because of our selfish nature which is so deeply rooted - we are often tempted to return to the old but - I need to take off this dirty T-Shirt [remove top] to put on this new clean one. [change into clean T-Shirt].

But we can do it because of what He has done for us.

Gospel presentation - using the illustration:-

T-Shirt illustration on one of the boys - I couldn't fit enough T-Shirts on today - its like of like this - [Dan/John]. We need to take off this old self [Black T-Shirt] - dirty with all our wrongs/sins/selfishness/pride etc. And we can do that - how - because of Jesus death - His Blood [Red T-Shirt] shed for us on the cross - taking our place for the sins we did (black T-Shirt). And as a result we can clothe ourselves in the new self - in Christ Jesus - [White T-Shirt].

So what should we be wearing?:-

- compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.
- We need to bear with each other (as hard as this can sometimes be).
- We must forgive as the Lord forgave us. How easy it is to

forget sometimes how much we've been forgiven when we hold unforgiveness against others!

- And (verse 14) over all these virtues put on love which binds them all together in perfect unity.

Love is the Key - and why should we love - because HE FIRST LOVED US (1 John 4:19)

That's the next thing we need to write down - What do you want to be wearing? Write down on your card one or more of these virtues we should be striving to be putting on so we can also remember that daily in our prayers (active put off and active put on) - to ask Jesus for His help in getting dressed as we seek to clothe ourselves in which ever of these in particular we have chosen.

Paul goes on to explain how we should live - with Christ's peace in our hearts, being thankful to Him for all He has done. We must let His word dwell in us - as we work together as His body

learning about Him, growing together, praising Him.

And verse 17 - should be our motto - as we make sure we are wearing the right clothes each day - as we go out - make sure we get dressed with Him, in Him - and then:-

...whatever [we] do, whether in word or deed, [we can and should] do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.