

Colossians 11 – Change Your Clothes!
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We're in a sermon series on the book of Colossians called Christ Above All. Our goal is that you will find that place of maturity in Christ where you can enter into His new identity for you.

I want you to have a new way of looking at change – where you are defined by your destiny – not by your past. Our past has already been dealt with by Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says:

Anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!

Being a new creation in Christ does not refer to our behavior, but it refers to our identity. We don't change our behavior to become a new creation in Christ – but when we become new creations in Christ – He then changes our behavior!

Most people try to change by starting with their past and working forward. But this teaching is about starting at the end and working backward.

Being a new creation in Christ means that at the moment you received Jesus as your Lord and Savior all His righteousness became yours. Now you must change your behavior to line up with your new status.

It's not a matter of your attaining righteousness; you are righteous already through Christ. Righteousness is not about something you do – but something Christ has already done for you!

So instead of dredging up your past, we are going to show you how to progress forward by beginning with the finished work of Jesus Christ. And you must know your position in Christ in order to change your condition in life!

You already are complete in Christ – but you are becoming complete.

You are already righteous in Christ – but you are becoming holy.

You are already mature in Christ – but you are still growing in Christ!

So, what you need to do is put off anything of the old you and put on the new you! That's what I'm preaching on today in this message entitled Change Your Clothes! It's based on Colossians 3:5-13 which tells us:

Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. Don't lie to one another. You're done with that old life. It's like a filthy set of ill-fitting clothes you've stripped off and put in the fire.

Now you're dressed in a new wardrobe. Every item of your new way of life is custom-made by the Creator, with His label on it. All the old fashions are now obsolete.

So, chosen by God for this new life of love, dress in the wardrobe God picked out for you: compassion, kindness, humility, quiet strength, discipline.

Be even-tempered, content with second place, quick to forgive an offense. Forgive as quickly and completely as the Master forgave you. And regardless of what else you put on, wear love. It's your basic, all-purpose garment. Never be without it.

Notice that to mature in Christ – we need to change our clothes! There are some things we need to take off and some things we need to put on. Last week we dealt with putting away all sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed. In the passage today, it says to put away anger, rage, malice, slander, filthy language and lying.

Anger is a continuous attitude of hatred that remains bottled up within.

Rage is what comes bursting out, often uncontrollably or violently.

Malice is an attitude of ill will towards a person, a desire to injure them in some way.

Slander is when we destroy another person's good reputation by lies, gossip and the spreading of rumors.

Filthy language is crude talk or cutting words and is often filled with swearing and sexual innuendo.

Lying to one another disrupts unity by destroying trust. It tears down relationships and can lead to serious conflicts.

These behaviors have no place in any Christian or in any church. We cannot just cover them up. We must completely “rid” ourselves of these sins so that we can “put on” the attitudes and actions of Christ. That's why verse 12 says:

Clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

Before we can put on the new, we must first take off the old. The verb “rid” calls for immediate, decisive resolution. Before new garments of righteousness can be put on, the old rags of sin must be discarded. Colossians 3:9-10 says:

You have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.

Putting off the old man and putting on the new man was very real to first century Christians. In fact, history records that when they were baptized, they approached the water wearing old clothes. After they were baptized, they changed into new clothes before coming out of the water. The old clothes represented the old man, the old ways, the old life, which was now dead and

buried. The new clothes represented the new man, the new life, with its new way of living.

The purpose of this change of clothes is so that we can fulfill God's eternal purpose for us. Romans 8:29 tells us what that purpose is:

For those God foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brothers.

Your destiny is to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. God uses many things to accomplish that: His word, His Spirit, other believers, circumstances and spending time in God's presence. 2 Corinthians 3:18 says:

And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into His likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

With God's help, we can change. Change requires repentance – renewing our minds – and replacing the old man with the new. Ephesians 4:22-24 tells us:

Put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

Notice we must put off before we can put on. This verse goes on to say we must put off lying and tell the truth. We must put off stealing and get a job. Before we can put on we must put off.

When we are born again we become new creations in Christ. However, the old man's ways are ingrained in us, we have habits and ways of doing things that must be put off. New habits must be put on.

You need a change of clothes! Christ changed clothes so that we can change clothes. What do I mean by that? 2 Corinthians 5:21 says:

God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.

Christ – who is righteous – clothed Himself in sin – our sin – so that we might clothe ourselves in His righteousness. What a deal – we give Him our sin – He gives us His righteousness.

When we are born again we become as righteous as Christ. Salvation has made us right with God forever. And we need to get so firmly established in our righteousness that nothing can move us off it.

Our clothes reveal a lot about us. This is really true in high school. We all wanted to be “ourselves” but we dressed just like the people in our little group. We dressed like people we wanted to be like.

In a spiritual sense – we need to dress like Christ in order to be like Christ. I'm talking about something much deeper than physical appearance. I'm talking about what I call our cloak of identity and destiny.

We see this in 2 Kings 2:8-14. This passage tells of the time when it was time for God to take the prophet Elijah to heaven. Elijah had a protégé named Elisha. When they got to the Jordan River –

Elijah took his cloak, rolled it up and struck the water with it. The water divided to the right and to the left, and the two of them crossed over on dry ground. When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, "Tell me, what can I do for you before I am taken from you?" "Let me inherit a double portion of your spirit," Elisha replied. "You have asked a difficult thing," Elijah said, "yet if you see me when I am taken from you, it will be yours — otherwise not." As they were walking along and talking together, suddenly a chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared and separated the two of them, and Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind. Elisha saw this and cried out, "My father! My father! The chariots and horsemen of Israel!" And Elisha saw him no more. Then he took hold of his own clothes and tore them apart. He picked up the cloak that had fallen from Elijah and went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan. Then he took the cloak that had fallen from him and struck the water with it. "Where now is the Lord, the God of Elijah?" he asked. When he struck the water, it divided to the right and to the left, and he crossed over.

There are a couple of things I want us to see from this passage: Elisha had a father figure in his life – a role model he followed because he wanted to be like him. His father had a destiny and identity that Elisha wanted desperately.

To receive it – he had to first tear apart his own clothes before he could take up his mentor's cloak. In ancient times they would tear their garments as a sign of grief and repentance. But God said in Joel 2:13

So rend your heart, and not your garments; return to the Lord your God.

This is very important! To take up our true cloak of identity and destiny – we must first take off and tear up our old identity.

Too many of us are defined by our past or by what somebody told us. If we are going to mature in Christ - we must be defined by what Father God tells us – not what other people tell us or what Satan tells us or what we tell ourselves!

You've got to take off the old ways of thinking.
 You've got to take off the voices that tell you you'll never amount to anything.
 You've got to take off the identity your family or our culture tried to put on you.
 You've got to take off the old identity before you can put on the new!
 You need to change your clothes!

We see examples of this all through the Bible! I showed you about Elisha - Then there was David. When he went out to face Goliath, King Saul tried to make him wear his suit of armor. But David refused another man's identity. He was secure in his own identity and he did not need someone else's identity or approval to move into his own destiny.

Then in the New Testament - there was a blind man named Bartimaeus in Mark 10. In those days blind people made their living by begging and they dressed in a way that identified them as beggars. When Bartimaeus heard that Jesus was passing by, he wanted to be healed. So, he began to cry out for Jesus to stop and heal him. People around him tried to shush him - but he yelled all the more.

Jesus stopped and said, "Call him." So they called to the blind man, "Cheer up! On your feet! He's calling you." Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and came to Jesus.

Then Jesus healed him. But first Bartimaeus had to take off his beggar's cloak. He had to take off that beggar's identity. He had to give up his old way of making a living. When he gave that up - his eyes were opened and he received a whole new identity and destiny.

Way too many of us are going through life blind and begging. No sense of direction. No goals. No vision - and the Bible says without vision people perish! If you want vision from God - you must be willing to take off the old identity and let God give you a new one.

The problem is that way too many of us become comfortable as beggars. Other people take care of us. Other people do the hard work and heavy lifting. I'm talking spiritually here - many believers never feed themselves on the word of God and they go through life blind and begging!

I'm encouraging you today to throw off those old ways, put away childish things and start acting like the child of God you are destined to be!

We must find our identity in Christ and not let anything steal it from us.

We must be like Joseph who received a coat of many colors from his father. That coat represented his destiny. His brothers were jealous and sold him into slavery. They took his coat, tore it up, put blood on it and lied to their father that Joseph had been killed by a wild animal.

But even though Joseph was a slave - he never had a slave mentality. Joseph was falsely accused and thrown into prison - but Joseph never had a prisoner's mentality! Why? He knew who he was! He had a vision from God for his life and nothing deterred him! Not the pit nor Potiphar's house nor the prison. Joseph knew he was destined for the palace and he never let that vision die!

While Joseph embraced his cloak of identity and destiny, the Prodigal son rejected his. He chose to reject his father and go his own way. He tried to establish himself without his father and his rebellion caused everything in his life to fall apart. He lost everything and finally decided to go back to his father's house and try to hire on as a servant.

But his father would have none of that! He would not allow his son to be a servant. He received back his son and in Luke 15:22-23 the father said -

Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate.

The sandals represented that he was a son, not a barefoot slave.
The ring represented that he operated with the authority of his father.
The cloak represented his identity and destiny.

I don't know where you are today. I don't know if you're on track or off track.
I don't how close to God or far away from God you are right now!

But I do know that if you will head in God's direction, like the Prodigal son's father – God will run to you! And He will give you the robe of righteousness – the shoes of peace – and the ring of authority!

Child of God – it's time to change your clothes! In the Greek – the words “put on” literally mean to sink into. Not just have it on outwardly – but really sink into it – find your identity in it. When you really sink into the new – it totally replaces the old. When you put on eternal life – that life swallows up death and takes away its sting.

So – when the Bible says to put on Christ – it means not to just dip a toe in – but to totally sink into Christ – be submerged in Christ – be swallowed up by Christ so much that you can say like the Apostle Paul in Galatians 2:20-

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

The key to living the Christian life is not you trying hard to live like Christ – but you allowing Christ to live His life in you and through you!

The most important thing for us to do is found in Romans 13:12-14

The night is almost gone; the day of salvation will soon be here. So remove your dark deeds like dirty clothes, and put on the shining armor of right living. Because we belong to the day, we must live decent lives for all to see. Don't participate in the darkness of wild parties and drunkenness, or in sexual promiscuity and immoral living, or in quarreling and jealousy. Instead, clothe yourself with the Lord Jesus Christ.

So, change your clothes and put on Christ!

Put off the old and put on the new by putting your faith in Jesus!
When you do – the new will swallow up the old!

When you are lost – put on Christ – who is your salvation.
When you are empty – put on Christ – who fills you with the Holy Spirit.
When you are sick – put on Christ – who is your Healer.

When you don't know where to start or when to stop – put on Christ – who is your Alpha and Omega – the beginning and the end.

When you need answers – put on Christ – who is your Wisdom.
When you need strength – put on Christ – who is the Almighty.
When you need freedom – put on Christ – who is your Deliverer.
When you need the presence of God – put on Christ – who is Emmanuel – which means “God with us”.
When you are in darkness – put on Christ – who is the light of the world.
When you are in turmoil – put on Christ – who is the Prince of Peace.

Whatever you need – put on Christ – because my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory BY CHRIST JESUS!