

A New Pattern for Living Putting On The New Nature

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I. Introductory Remarks.

In this lesson we will be exploring what it really means to put on the new nature and why it is an important aspect of our salvation. This is more of a doctrinal statement on the need for change by clothing ourselves in Christ and His nature than on how the transformation comes about.

In much of today's Christianity there is a lack of true conversion and transformation in the lives of those who are attempting to follow Christ. Many are being seduced by a watered down version of Christianity that doesn't challenge people to put off the old nature by being crucified to the world and to put on the new nature which is being created by Christ.

We must keep in mind that the goal or the ultimate destiny for the Christian is to come into the fullness of Christ, being changed or transformed into His image.

2 Corinthians 3:18 *But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are **being transformed into the same image** from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.*

In the previous lesson we looked at those traits or patterns of our old way of life that Christ commands us to put off. We saw that we are to put away sins of the past such as fornication, uncleanness, passions, evil desires and covetousness. We also saw that we are to put off things such as anger, wrath, malice, filthy communication and lying. In this lesson we will be focusing our attention on those character traits that are essential for us as new creations in Christ.

Colossians 3:9-10 *(NLT) Don't lie to each other, for you have stripped off your old evil nature and all its wicked deeds. ¹⁰In its place you have clothed yourselves with a brand-new nature that is continually being renewed as you learn more and more about Christ, who created this new nature within you.*

We must realize that active response to God's will involves constant change. The character traits that we will be discussing in this lesson are

traits that should be a part of all our lives in varying degrees. We need to realize that Christ desires to develop these character traits to their full potential in our lives.

The new man is created in true righteousness and holiness, meaning that if Christ is truly a part of our lives and we are walking in His righteousness we are going to be taking on His very nature.

Ephesians 4:23-24 and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, ²⁴and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

2 Peter 1:4 by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

Commentary Note: These "precious promises" have a purifying effect on the believer's life (cf. 1 John 3:3). Conversion involves a definite break with the corruption caused by evil desire. In coming to know God through Christ, not only do believers escape the corruption of sin, but also Christ renews and restores the divine image in them.

The provision of the divine nature through repentance from sin and faith in Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit belong to the divine sovereignty of the Lord. But the application and the fulfillment of these is the human responsibility of every believer. The seeds¹ of these character traits come with being born again by God's Spirit, but the full development of His divine nature in our lives is our responsibility as we labor together with Him. The Bible says, "We are to put on the new man."

God has positionally given believers all things that pertain to life and godliness. It is the believers' responsibility to take what God has given and use it for the glory of God.

Our goal as Christians is to have our negative characteristics and habit patterns that have been formed in us by our sinful, fallen nature to be transformed into Christ like characteristics and for the new man or nature to come forth that God has created.

II. The Essential Christ like Characteristics of the New Nature.

Colossians 3:12-15 (NLT) *Since God chose you to be the holy people whom he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. ¹³You must make allowance for each other's faults and forgive the person who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. ¹⁴And the most important piece of clothing you must wear is love. Love is what binds us all together in perfect harmony. ¹⁵And let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of one body you are all called to live in peace. And always be thankful.*

The above characteristics from *Colossians 3:12-15* are essential characteristics that must be in each and every one of us if we are to grow into balanced and mature Christians with the power and anointing of God flowing through us. These are the characteristics that enable others to receive the gifts and callings in our lives. These are traits that keep us from becoming wild tares² in the kingdom of God.

■ **Brief Descriptions of the Above Character Traits.**

1. Tender Mercies – This is a heartfelt compassion that is expressed with tenderness of the heart. Because God comforts us through His mercy, we are able to comfort those who are in need as well.

2 Corinthians 1:3-4 *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, ⁴who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.*

2. Kindness – Kindness has to do with being of a friendly nature, a person who is generous, hospitable, good and warmhearted. It is often exhibited in acts of kindness that show consideration, sympathy and understanding towards others. A kind person is very courteous and thoughtful towards others.

3. Humbleness of Mind or Humility – Humility has to do with being aware of your own shortcomings so that you don't exalt yourself above others. It also has to do with showing an attitude of deferential respect. You are satisfied to be lowly and unpretentious.

Pride comes in all shapes and sizes. Some of us put ourselves on a pedestal from which we judge the faults of everyone else. Others are so self-effacing that they cannot take their eyes off themselves and their own

inadequacies. A poor self image is not humility. Still others swing like a pendulum from one extreme to the other. Paul exhorts us neither to exalt nor to belittle ourselves, but to think with sober judgment.

Romans 12:3 *For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.*

We are to be clothed with humility, because God resists the proud.

1 Peter 5:5-6 *Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and **be clothed with humility, for "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble."**⁶Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time,*

4. Meekness – Meekness is strength under control and has to do with a consideration for others and a willingness to waive your rights. It is important to keep in mind that neither meekness nor gentleness is to be confused with weakness.

The meek are those people who humble themselves before God, because they acknowledge their utter dependence upon Him. In consequence, they are gentle in their dealings with others. You can be tender and gentle with people because you have given control of your life to God and you don't have to "win" all the time.

2 Timothy 2:24 *(NLT) The Lord's servants must not quarrel but must be kind to everyone. They must be able to teach effectively and be patient with difficult people.*

5. Forbearing and Forgiving - To exercise forbearance means to endure, bear with, put up with by Christians towards one another. Forbearance and forgiveness are qualities of meekness and patience in action.

The forbearing person will remain calm whatever the provocation and will keep clear of unkind reactions. The forgiving person must go even further and wipe clean from his or her heart all bitterness and irritation.

If we expect forbearance and forgiveness from God, we must be able to forbear and forgive others as well.

Forbearance and forgiveness go hand in hand.

Mark 11:25-26 (NLT) *But when you are praying, first forgive anyone you are holding a grudge against, so that your Father in heaven will forgive your sins, too.*" ²⁶ (NKJV) *"But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses."*

Luke 17:3-4 (NLT) *I am warning you! If another believer sins, rebuke him; then if he repents, forgive him.* ⁴*Even if he wrongs you seven times a day and each time turns again and asks forgiveness, forgive him."*

No matter how much you are sinned against you must be willing to forgive. We must continually be willing to forgive others as Christ has forgiven us and continues to forgive us.

6. Love – Love is the crowning grace of the new nature, because love is the glue that holds everything together.

1 Corinthians 13:4-8 *Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; ⁵does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; ⁶does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; ⁷bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. ⁸Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away.*

Each of these character traits show how we as Christians are to be clothed and how we are to behave in our dealings with others, particularly with fellow-believers. These are character traits that will enable the body of Christ to come forth as one new man.

III. Simple Faith Principles For Putting On The New Nature.

Think of Peter, a man who was a profane fisherman who later became a powerful man of God as his character was transformed – a man whose very shadow healed people. This is the kind of transformation God.

1. Believe In Christ and What He Has Accomplished.

The first step of faith in this process of becoming new is that of believing in Jesus Christ – Who He is and what He has accomplished for you. You must believe you are a new creation in Him.

2 Corinthians 5:17 *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.*

Commentary: A new creation, a new heaven and a new earth, are promised in the Word of God (cf. Isa. 65:17; Rev. 21:1). By the New Birth the Christian has already undergone the fundamental change; he is a new creature of the sort that belongs in the new creation.

The incorruptible seed³ of God's word has been planted in your hearts, which is intended to bring forth the new creation and divine nature of God within you.

Let this be the confession of faith that comes out of your mouth. You are no longer in bondage to sin. You have been made completely new in Christ. Believe and speak what Christ what Christ has made you to be.

2 Corinthians 4:13 *And since we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, "I believed and therefore I spoke," we also believe and therefore speak,*

2. Understand that God is the Enabler.

Romans 8:11 (NLT) *The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as he raised Christ from the dead, He will give life to your mortal body by this same Spirit living within you.*

The apostle Paul's ambition was to present every man perfect in Christ with an understanding that it is God who is working mightily on our behalf. It is the Spirit of God that quickens us and then we respond in obedience.

Colossians 1:28-29 *Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. ²⁹To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.*

Notice that it says, "His working which works in me mightily." God is working in a mighty way, but if we are not exhibiting an intense exertion in a violent manner we end of frustrating the grace of God. "The violent take the kingdom by force."⁴

The important thing to keep in mind when pressing into the character of Christ is that it is His Spirit who is working mightily on our behalf, taking us

through the metamorphous or character transformations, but we must co-labor with Him in the process otherwise we will frustrate the grace of God

3. Understand that Habits are a Part of Your Makeup.

Habits are a part of our makeup. Whenever one does something long enough it becomes a habit. Habits can be hard to change because of the fact that they have become unconscious responses.

The key to change is to start becoming aware of your habit patterns by allowing God to reveal them to you.

Putting on new clothing is not always comfortable. Your old clothes were comfortable even though they may not have looked very good. Your old ways may have become comfortable, but they no longer look good in the kingdom of God.

You may say, "Being kind is not comfortable to me, forgiving is not natural to me or humbleness of mind is not natural." The answer is to keep doing them until they become comfortable. That's how change comes.

Illustration: How do baseball or football players do what they do so well? By practice, disciplined practice until it becomes second nature. Your new nature must become second nature to you, but that will only happen as you add diligence to your faith.

2 Peter 1:5-6 *But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, ⁶to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness,*

IV. Concluding Remarks.

Galatians 6:14-15 *But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. ¹⁵For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation.*

If we have truly been saved and converted the New Creation in Jesus Christ will begin to come forth in our lives; and our character will have gone through a transformation.

Remember, these traits start out in their infancy and mature more and more as we grow in the Lord Jesus Christ. The seeds of the transformation process were planted when you were born again with the incorruptible Word of God.

¹ 1 Peter 1:23 – having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible...

² Matthew 13:24-30 – The Parable of the Wheat & Tares.

³ 1 Peter 1:23

⁴ Matthew 11:12