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Title: “Put on the Lord Jesus Christ”

Key verse: Romans 13:14 (ESV) – “But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.”

Good morning, everyone. It’s good to see you all here today. Last month I shared with you one of my favorite passages of Scripture, the first half of Philippians chapter 2, and I entitled that message “Have the Mind of Christ Jesus.” In that passage of Scripture, we are given a description of God the Son, the second person of the Trinity, setting aside His divine privileges and coming to earth in the form of human flesh. I like to picture this as God the Son taking off His royal robes and putting on the clothes of a servant. This is God the Son humbling Himself by taking on human flesh as part of the program of saving us human beings and restoring our relationship to our Creator. And we were exhorted in that passage to have the mind of Christ, to have this mind of humility and service.

In today’s message, I would like to share a related theme. Last month, we saw Christ taking off His divine privileges, His royal robes. Today, we will look at putting on – we will look at ourselves putting on a new garment. I will show you some exhortations in the New Testament epistles that we followers of Jesus are to “put on the Lord Jesus Christ” (that’s the title of my message today). “Put on the Lord Jesus Christ.” I have this image of putting on a new piece of clothing. Today let’s look at this theme of putting on a new wardrobe, a new costume. Let me share a few verses with you.

Galatians 3:27 (ESV) – “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”

Romans 13:14 (ESV) – “But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.”

For both of these verses, the New International Version says we have “clothed ourselves” with Christ. We have a new wardrobe ... and a new identity. I love this image of putting on new clothes, putting on Jesus Christ himself. We now identify ourselves with Christ.

Do you know what the word “Christian” means? It means “little Christ,” and this term was first used in Acts 11:26, where we read that Paul and Barnabas spent a whole year teaching the new disciples in the city of Antioch ... and during that year, the disciples had so conformed their lives to reflect Christ that they were then called “little Christs” – Christians.

How about you? Have you so clothed yourself with the garments of Christ that people can see by your actions and your lifestyle and your vocabulary that you are a disciple of Jesus Christ? That should be a goal that we should strive for. This is an image I want to have of myself ... that I might put on Jesus Christ like a garment, and having this image helps me to walk faithfully as a Christian every day.

I have two more verses to share with you. Ephesians 4:24 (ESV) – “... And to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.”

Here, the wording is that we put on the “new self.” We have thrown away our old self and have put on a new identity. In fact, what we do is we return to our original identity, as creatures created *in the image of God, in the likeness of God* (Genesis 1:26-27 says), before mankind’s fall into sin. As new creatures in Christ, our relationship to our Creator has been restored. Ephesians 4:24 again: “... And to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.”

Colossians 3:10 (ESV) – “... And have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.” Here again we have put on this new self, and now we live a life of being renewed. We live a new life.

In today’s message, I want to look more closely at each of the four verses that I have just shared with you. I want to look at the wider context of each. You will see that the full story involves both negative and positive features. The negative is all of the ugliness and sin that we must throw off as we discard our old life in order to put on the new self.

Let’s return to Romans, chapter 13. Look at verses 11-14 (NKJV) – “And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. ¹² The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. ¹³ Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. ¹⁴ But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.”

I see several points here that I wish to highlight. The first is that we can fall asleep in our Christian life and fall back into old habits of sin. The Apostle Paul tells us to wake up ... “it is high time to awake out of sleep!” he says. Don’t you realize what time it is? The time of our final reckoning with God is drawing closer every day. We are closer today than we were yesterday. How are you doing in your Christian life? Have you gotten slack in living for Christ? Have you gotten lazy? Have you fallen back into old patterns of sin? Wake up!

Verse 12. The night is practically over. Daytime is almost here. Now is the time to “cast off” the works of darkness. “Cast off” those old sins and bad habits. We have a new wardrobe, and it’s not just a new coat that we get. Paul exhorts us to “put on the armor of light.” Did you see that in verse 12? We have armor ... this is battle gear. We have a battle to fight. A battle against our sinful desires, as well as a battle to bring the gospel to other people. First, we have to clean up our own lives, throw off those deeds of darkness. Then, we can be lights to the world. Put on your armor of light.

Matthew 5:14-16 (NKJV) – “You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. ¹⁶ Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”

Again verse 16 – “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.” If you slide back into old habits, you deaden your effectiveness for spreading the gospel.

Let’s take a closer look at our armor. ^{1st} Thessalonians 5:7-8 (ESV) – “For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night. ⁸ But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation.”

Here are two pieces of armor: the breastplate, and the helmet. We have what Paul calls the “breastplate of faith and love.” And our helmet is “the hope of salvation.” Here we see faith, hope and love. Have heard these put together before? The last verse of the famous “love chapter,” ^{1st} Corinthians 13 (NIV) says this – “And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.” These are the fundamental characteristics that should show forth in our lives: faith, hope, and love.

Let's return to Romans 13, verse 13 – “Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy.”

Let's walk properly. Christians walk in the daytime, not nighttime. We should not get involved in the deeds that people like to do at night.

First, in verse 13, Paul says: don't engage in revelry and drunkenness. Alcohol and drugs and any other kind of substance abuse. Don't get involved in it.

Second, don't be lewd and lustful. Don't indulge wrong sexual desires: fornication, adultery, pornography. Stay away from those dirty pictures. I read recently that 25% of internet searches are related to pornography. Stay away from that stuff – it will mess up your mind and direct your passions toward the wrong places.

Third, don't live in strife and envy with each other. James 3:13-16 (NASB) – “Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom. ¹⁴ But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. ¹⁵ This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. ¹⁶ For where jealousy and strife exist, there is disorder and every evil thing.” Disharmony begins in the heart, and when you let jealousy and strife express itself in your behavior, you bring disharmony to your relationships.

Let's return to Romans 13 and back to our theme in verse 14 – “But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.” Don't indulge the flesh and its cravings.

Put on the Lord Jesus Christ. Put on your armor of light. Be a child of the light. Let your light shine. Let the world know that you are a Christian. Walk like a Christian walks.

Let me share with you an image that I have found helpful when walking through life and battling sinful desires. I've been speaking of “putting on” Christ like a garment. But another image I find helpful is an image of walking arm in arm with Jesus. As I walk through life, I imagine myself arm in arm with Jesus. He goes with me wherever I go. He hears whatever I say. He sees whatever I do. And if I veer off into sinful territory, I recall Jesus arm in arm with me. I'm dragging Him into that territory that I ought to know is off-limits. I'm bringing Him with me ... I'm making Him a witness of what I'm doing ... maybe I'm giving the appearance of making Jesus look like He's a participant in what I'm doing. What if any non-Christians are nearby and noticing?? This image of walking arm in arm with Jesus has many times helped me walk away from questionable activities.

Let's now look at our passage in Colossians chapter 3. Verses 5-10 (NIV) – “Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. ⁶ Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. ⁷ You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived...”

Verse 7 again: “⁷ You used to walk in these ways [*that's your old life!*], in the life you once lived.

⁸ But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. ⁹ Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices ¹⁰ and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.”

Verse 9 – “you have taken off your old self and its practices” ... You have taken off your old, filthy clothes. Throw them in the trash and ...

Verse 10 – “you have put on the new self ...” This new self is “being renewed.” It is this renewed life that we should be living in. It is this renewed life that you should be modeling to the world. Faith, hope, and love.

Well, I think I have described enough for you about the negative aspects of today’s message, about how we must always be mindful that we are to forsake and throw off that old life.

Let us now move to the more positive features of today’s message, a life of putting on the Lord Jesus Christ, to be a reflection of His light to the world.

Continuing in Colossians chapter 3. I quoted verse 10 for you already – “... And have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.”

In verses 11-14, we see our new Christian community. Verse 11 (NIV) – “Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.” Here, under Christ, everyone is equal. We are all made in God’s image and He calls all of us to repentance and faith. Then He brings us all together. In the early centuries of the church, one thing that the non-Christian society found remarkable about the Christians is that they often shared meals together, different people mixing together without regard for social class. That was a revolutionary idea in that society.

I love the song that is sung to Jesus, the Lamb of God, the sacrifice for our sins, in the book of Revelation, chapter 5, verses 9-10 (NIV) – “And they sang a new song, saying: ‘You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation. ¹⁰ You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth.’” All kinds of people are included in God’s kingdom – in the church age today and in the Kingdom of Christ later on.

Let’s return to Colossians chapter 3 and our theme of putting on the Lord Jesus Christ. Verses 12-14 (NIV) – “Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. ¹³ Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. ¹⁴ And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.”

We are God’s chosen people, we are holy and beloved. Let our lives and our relationships in this place, in the Christian church, be marked with: compassion ... kindness ... humility ... gentleness ... patience ... forgiving one another (remember: the Lord has forgiven you). Verse 14 again – “And over all these virtues put on: ...love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.”

Once more I share with you one of my favorite verses, the one that tells us the distinguishing mark of Christians. John 13:34-35 (NASB) – “Jesus said, ‘A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; just as I have loved you, that you also love one another. ³⁵ By this all people will know that you are My disciples: if you have love for one another.’”

It is by this mark of love one for another that the world knows we are Christians.

So ... we have new clothing. We have each put on Christ, and people should be able to look at us and tell by our behavior and language that we are disciples of Christ.

And ... we have put on the armor of light. Our lives and our witness should also be shining in a place that can be seen by the non-Christian world around us.

And we have a new community ... by our love for each other and by our unity, the world can know that we are followers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the next part of today's message, I want to talk about something else new: we are to have new minds. Yes, I did talk about this last month, but I want to focus more today on renewing our minds.

Let's look again at Ephesians chapter 4. I'm going to return briefly to some negative aspects. Let's read verses 17-20 (ESV) – “Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. ¹⁸ They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. ¹⁹ They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. ²⁰ But that is not the way you learned Christ!”

Verse 17 – Don't walk as the non-Christians do, in the futility of their minds.

Verse 18 – They are darkened in their understanding ... ignorant ... hard of heart.

Verse 20 – “But that is not the way you learned Christ!” Of course not. You can't learn the way of Christ while following after sensual ways and having darkened minds and hard hearts.

Next, verses 22-24 (ESV) – “... To put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, ²³ and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, ²⁴ and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.”

Verse 22 – put off your old self.

Verse 24 – put on your new self.

And in the middle, verse 23 – “...be renewed in the spirit of your minds.”

Be renewed in the spirit of your minds.

It starts in the mind, in the heart. Jesus said in Matthew 12:34-35 (NIV) – “You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of. ³⁵ A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him.”

And Matthew 15:18-19 (NIV) – “But the things that come out of a person's mouth come from the heart, and these defile them. ¹⁹ For out of the heart come evil thoughts—murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander.”

We must be extra-careful to watch over our hearts. Proverbs 4:23 (NIV) – “Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.” *Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.*

The book of Proverbs contains much wisdom for living. Proverbs 23:19 (NIV) – “Listen, my son, and be wise, and set your heart on the right path.” *Set your heart on the right path.*

Proverbs 28:26 (ESV) – “Whoever trusts in his own mind is a fool, but he who walks in wisdom will be delivered.” Don't trust in your own mind. Walk in wisdom.

The right path. Walk in wisdom. Where does this wisdom come from? Let's look at the first chapter of Proverbs, verse 7 (NIV) – “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.” It starts with the fear of God, our creator. The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge ... and from that come wisdom and instruction.”

Let's look at the first Psalm, verses 1-3 (NASB) – “Blessed is the person who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers! ² But his delight is in the Law of the LORD, and on His Law he meditates day and night. ³ He will be like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither; and in whatever he does, he prospers.”

Here is the secret of godly living: to meditate on God's Law day and night, meditate on God's Word, the Bible. Filling your mind with God's Word. Living by the fear of the Lord, and wisdom.

Romans 12:2 (ESV) – “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

Colossians 3:2 (ESV) – “Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.”

Our minds need to be transformed, renewed. We should set our mind on godly things, on the things above. We belong to Christ now, and so we need to honor Him in the things we think about and in the things we say and in the things we do.

Philippians 1:27 (ESV) – “Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel.”

A new life. A new mind. A new community, living in unity. Being a light to the world. Wearing our new wardrobe – the armor of light, putting on the Lord Jesus Christ himself.

I would like to close today's message with a little poem I am quite fond of. You have heard that there are four Gospels – the Gospel “according to Matthew” / the Gospel “according to Mark,” etc. Here is a poem that is entitled “The Gospel According to You,” and it was written by a man named Arthur McPhee.

The Gospel According to You

The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John
Are read by more than a few,
But the one that is most read and commented on
Is the gospel according to you.

You are writing a gospel, a chapter each day
By the things that you do and the words that you say,
Men read what you write, whether faithless or true,
Say, what is the gospel according to you?

Do men read His truth and His love in your life,
Or has yours been too full of malice and strife?
Does your life speak of evil, or does it ring true?
Say, what is the gospel according to you?

Arthur McPhee