

A STUDY OF THE PRISON EPISTLES

DON'T FIT

One year playing youth football, I had a practice uniform and a game uniform. My practice uniform fit perfectly, my game uniform not so much. The coach ran out of game pants for guys my size. I ended up with pants that were too long, which means we had to duct tape the pants so knee pads stayed in place. The duct tape didn't work well and every once and a while knee pads would move out of place, resulting in a painful fall for a lineman.

Paul packed Colossians 3 with so much wisdom we, regrettably, can't cover it all. However, one of his points was to "put off" our old ways, and "put on" Christ. As believers, when we return to our old clothes, *anger, rage, malice, slander, abusive language, and lies*, we look like I did wearing that ill-fitting game uniform—some of it matched the rest of the team, but what didn't fit caused lots of pain.

In today's study, we'll see what the uniform should look like. In Christ, we are reclothed into a new person that *is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of the one who created it* (Colossians 3:10). Our new uniform should look like Christ.

Not only that, but Paul goes on to show how our new uniform should look in various relationships—as wives, husbands, children, slaves, and masters. In any relationship or circumstance, our uniform must be consistent with the team. It should fit properly.

COLOSSIANS 3:11–17

¹¹ Here there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all and in all.

¹² Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with a heart of mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, ¹³ bearing with one another and forgiving one another, if someone happens to have a complaint against anyone else. Just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also forgive others. ¹⁴ And to all these virtues add love, which is the perfect bond. ¹⁵ Let the peace of Christ be in control in your heart (for you were in fact called as one body to this peace), and be thankful. ¹⁶ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and exhorting one another with all wisdom, singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, all with grace in your hearts to God. ¹⁷ And whatever you do in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Have you ever gotten fussed at for tracking mud through your house? We've all heard, "Take those shoes off and put them outside!"

We continue to wear dirty shoes, we make a muddy mess behind us. The same is true when we continue to wear the things the Bible tells us to "put off"—we leave a trail of hurt and emptiness behind us. Scan the QR code for a list of the things the Bible says to "put off," and with what things we are to then "put on."



DISCUSSION

Describe a time when you wore something that didn't quite fit right.

1. From God's perspective, what identity categories disappear between believers? (11)

2. What are believers commanded to do? (12-14)

3. What final, broad command is given? (17)

4. How does the command given in verse 17 apply...

A. Relationally-

B. Vocationally-

5. Of the traits, attitudes, and commands given in this passage, where do you see yourself needing to grow?

Even after coming into a relationship with Christ, we still fall short sometimes. God doesn't love you because you're "good enough." He loves humility and repentance. If you have questions, talk to your coach today.

ICEBREAKER

OBSERVATION

INTERPRETATION

APPLICATION

STUDY NOTES

“PLAY YOUR POSITION!”

How many times has your coach yelled that phrase? So much in team sports depends on individuals being in the right place, at the right time, doing the right thing.

The idea of “playing your position” begins with a simple fact—people are different. On a team, there are different roles and responsibilities. Likewise, there are different skill levels and aptitudes. Although different, teammates are united on the same team, team unity doesn’t diminish or deter individual differences.

In the many books that the Apostle Paul wrote, we see various themes that thread through many of them. One such theme is that all people are *universally condemned* because of sin. *All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God* (Romans 3:23). Salvation from sin is only found in Jesus Christ. That means, every believer has two things in common—we *used* to be destined for Hell, *but now* we are headed toward an eternity in paradise with the Lord.

In Colossians 3, Paul urged the Colossians to focus on Christ and not return to their old ways. As we referenced in the introduction, believers have been reclothed. This is where our passage picks up, that ***here there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all and in all.***

UNITY WITH GOD FULFILLS POSITIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Paul referred to several divisive differences in people, yet showed their commonality in Christ. In today’s terms, with hot-buttons like race, gender, sexual identity, wealth and poverty, etc. we can all understand where Paul is coming from. But don’t miss his point. If you are a believer, you have more in common with a tribal Pakistani on the other side of the world who is a Christian, than anybody in your race, socio-economic range, or gender who is not a Christian. The most important thing about anybody is their relationship with Christ.

All people are different. Should those differences divide us or draw us together? Paul’s conclusion is that as believers you should ***clothe yourselves with a heart of mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, bearing with one another and forgiving one another.*** If you think about each term or phrase, consider that each item offers a response to offense. Differences in people leads to ***complaint against*** others.

The tragic reality is, the more I trust someone, the more opportunity I give for them to hurt me deeply. Add to that the many differences between people, and you get a world full of hurt, betrayal, and oppression. So, should we give up, go crawl in a cave, and avoid people the rest of our lives? No. Paul said, ***“Just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also forgive others.”***

Christ forgave us infinitely and eternally. Literally nothing another person can do to me will come close to the infinite and eternal forgiveness I received.

Paul goes on to say, ***“and to all these virtues add love, which is the perfect bond.”*** Love doesn’t ignore differences or even hurt. It overcomes them. This kind of love isn’t the emotional feel-goods. Instead, it’s a decision to put others’ best above your own. Paul summed it up this way, ***“whatever you do in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”*** This shapes, not only your work ethic, but to your relationships as well. This attitude truly changes everything. To illustrate this consider the story of Corrie Ten Boom.

BELIEVERS HAVE COMMUNITY RESPONSIBILITIES

A Christian Dutch watchmaker named Corrie Ten Boom saved many Jews by helping them escape the Nazis in World War II. She was caught, arrested, and sent to a Nazi concentration camp. She wrote a biography called *The Hiding Place* and became a public speaker telling her story and sharing her faith.

One night after one such event at a church, Corrie was approached by a former guard at her concentration camp. He cheerfully approached saying “How grateful I am for your message, Fraulein. To think that, as you say, He has washed my sins away!” He reached out to shake her hand, but the conflict held her hand by her side.

Corrie wrote, “Even as the angry vengeful thoughts boiled through me, I saw the sin of them. Jesus Christ had died for this man; was I going to ask for more? ‘Lord Jesus,’ I prayed, ‘forgive me and help me to forgive him...’ Jesus, I cannot forgive him. Give me your forgiveness...’ And so I discovered that it is not on our forgiveness any more than on our goodness that the world’s healing hinges, but on his. When he tells us to love our enemies, he gives along with the command, the love itself.”

Corrie ten Boom suffered more than most of us will ever know. Yet, Christ clothed her to share the message of freedom to her captor. What, I wonder, has he clothed you to do?