

The Christ-Centered Life (Part 2)
Colossians 3:12-4:1

Paul continues the imagery of clothing here to describe the kind of character should adorn a Christian.

Fashion is a fascinating discussion to me.

A Recent text to a friend:

Me: “Hey bro, what should I wear to this conference?”

Bryan: “Dat fly Professor swag. Casual yet intellectual.”

We often want to know **what the dress code is**, don't we?

- **Casual Friday. Smart casual. Business casual. Formal. Semi-formal. Festive.**
- It can be very stressful, can't it?

Then sometimes people don't use the categories, but **speak more colloquial.**

- Steve Timmis told A29 folks to wear their “**Glad Rags**” to the Gala. What does that mean?
- Sometimes we are told to just “**look nice.**” “**Wear something comfortable.**”
- Sometimes people with no style are told, “**You have no fashion sense.**”

Of course the danger in **being fashionable today** is that you may find yourself looking at **your pictures in 20 years and find you looked ridiculous!**

- But then just wait; you can wear it again in a few more years and be fashionable!

A new word on the street for your cool attire or immense swag is “**your drip.**”

- NBA rookie Tyler Hero said he had “**the best drip**” in the house at the NBA draft, referring to his wild outfit.
- The players' attire has become a form of amusement at the NBA draft.

Whether or not you are fashionable, or have “**the best drip,**” or have no fashion sense at all, **there is good news for all of us:**

The clothes that matter most are described in Colossians 3.

Here are the real glad rags, the Christian's dress code... our drip.

Duds that fit the Christian.

- We are told here to throw off our old clothes **grave clothes** and put on **grace clothes.**

Review: If you weren't here last week (or if you were but have already forgotten what we were talking about!), we discussed how this passage breaks down in three parts:

1. Your new life is now in Christ [a new identity] (v. 1-4)

- a. You share in Christ's victory (v. 1)
- b. You have a new priority [to seek things above] (v. 2)

c. You have a new security (v. 3)

d. You have a new destiny (v. 4)

- The whole passage speaks of our **union with Jesus Christ**.
- **What is true of him is true of us**.
- His death was our death; his resurrection our resurrection; his return in glory means we will appear in glory.

2. Put Off All Practices that Are Inconsistent with Your New Life in Christ (v. 5-11) [Vice List]

a. Sensuality and Greed (v. 5-7)

b. Sinful Attitudes and Speech (v. 8-9a)

c. Rational: You are new! (v. 9b-10) [Indicative/Imperative]

d. An Implication or Blessing: Harmony (v. 11)

Verse 11 is powerful: Christ is all!

What does the **new self** involve?

- It involves seeing Christ as all — above all ... as your identity, joy, glory.
- These distinctives (v. 11) are not all — Christ is all.
- **Popularity, peer approval, achievement, power, wealth — they are not all.**
- Christ is all!

When he is everything to us, there can be unity among us.

3. Put On All Practices That Are Consistent With Your New Life in Christ (v. 12-17 + 18-4:1) [What it looks like when Christ is all]

- This is where we are today.
- It is the positive side of sanctification.
- (1) you can do this because you're new, and (2) these are traits of Jesus.

I want to say just two words about verses 12-17 that needs to be emphasized

1. This text has a **corporate/community emphasis**.

- We often envision the Christian life as individualistic self-improvement.
- While we each bear individual responsibility to obey this text, **the thrust of the passage is corporate.**
- These practices be lived out among the community of faith.
- The traits in v. 12-14 are to replace the practices in **verses 8-9 which divide the body..**
- **15** – “hearts” – plural --- **“one body”**
- **V. 16** – the word of Christ dwelling in you richly is for the purpose of teaching/ admonishing **one another**

2. This text has a **“replacement” emphasis**.

- Paul doesn't just tell us to throw off certain sins; he also tells us to replace them with positive virtues.
- Throw off your anger and sinful speech – yes – but replace it with compassion, kindness, forgiveness, etc.

- If you are struggling with sexual sin, the point is not just to turn off the computer; but to put something on: set your mind on things above; let the word of Christ dwell in you richly...
- Recall Eph 4:25-32 – notice the replacement

²⁵ Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. ²⁶ Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, ²⁷ and give no opportunity to the devil. ²⁸ Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. ²⁹ Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. ³⁰ And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. ³¹ Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. ³² Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

- The goal of godliness is not just to say no to sin; it is to say yes to godliness!
- Don't just throw off sin; put on Christ-likeness!
- Think about Zaccheus. He was filled with sinful greed (4:5); but what happened when Christ transformed him? He not only threw off greed, but he put on generosity!

The Christian is to be known by not just what they reject, but also by what they practice.

#1: May the Character of Christ Depict [Adorn] Us (3:12-14)

12: Paul returns to clothing (v. 10) but now gets more *specific*.

But before he does, he again reminds them of their new identity: *chosen, holy, beloved*.

- This is the **rhythm of the Xian life: remember who you are; go live out that identity.**
- This language is found throughout the OT, as in Deut 7:6-8
- The **Christian stands in a privileged position, a privileged status/identity.**
- We are chosen by God, holy before God (because of Christ); and beloved (in Christ)

12: Traits of Christ - what kind of chapter is fitting for one who is chosen, holy, beloved?

A. Compassion: This word speaks of **concern for someone's bad circumstances.**

- This virtue is rare in cultures where there is a race to **outdo others**; where people are **self-absorbed**, and grow callous toward the great needs of our day.

B. Kindness: This refers to graciousness, goodness, gentleness, a sweetness of disposition.

- In Romans 11:22 it is contrasted with **severity**.
- In Gal 5:22 it is listed as **a fruit of the Spirit**.
- I personally believe it is **one of the most underrated leadership qualities of our time.**

C. Humility and Meekness [Gentleness]: are related words.

- They were not virtues in Paul's day.
- But the Bible teaches that these are fundamental virtues, the soil in which godliness grows.

Humility: Not thinking less of yourself; but thinking of yourself less.

- Looking on the interest of others.
- Serving others when you get no attention for doing so.

Meekness: The opposite of **harshness**, arrogance.

- It is not weakness; but strength under control.
- It is a characteristic of Christ Matt 11:29; and a fruit of the Spirit 5:23, and is a distinctive trait of those in the kingdom (Matt 5:5)

D. Patience: This denotes self-restraint. **Being forbearing in the face of provocation.**

- **This means you won't always be out for revenge; you are willing to endure, even endure wrongs.**
- We see the patience of God throughout the Bible (cf, Rom 2:4), and is also a fruit of the Spirit...

So note the obvious: The opposite of throwing off sinful practices, and putting on Christ-likeness **may not look spectacular to people.**

- **Real godliness doesn't involve moving among the influential and successful;**
- **it doesn't mean you will become a preacher on a stage!**
- Real godliness looks like
 - **Compassion toward those who are hurting;**
 - **Kindness to those in your home and in your church, a sweetness of disposition;**
 - **Humility that involves thinking on the interest of others in a spirit of gentleness; i**
 - **Enduring hardship with self-restraining patience.**
- **This life matters – this life glorifies God!**
- **This is the life that each person in this room can pursue regardless of your vocation.**
- **Do you realize God is more concerned with your character than your career?**
- **The main question is not what does God want me to do, but who does God want me to be.**

13: This character is **expressed** in the following two ways (**two adverbial participles**): **“bearing with one another”** and **“forgiving one another”**

“Bearing with one another” is a **very nice way saying “putting up with one another.”**

- **There are some difficult folks in Christ's fellowship, and we each may be that person at various times!**
- **That doesn't mean you leave; it means you forebear.**
- **This is why you must put on love/compassion/etc.**

The two actions are related; **for one of the ways you bear with someone is by forgiving them.**

Forgiveness is explained with the phrase, **“if one has a complaint against another...”**

- And our forgiveness is to **be a reflection of Christ's forgiveness: “as the Lord has forgiven you, so you must also forgive.”**
- That is the Lord Jesus.

How has Jesus forgiven us? **Fully, freely and gladly.**

- **Ephesians 4:32... Matt 6:12, 14-15; 18:23-25**
- Matthew 6:12: forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.
- That cuts the ground out from under all our excuses... remember how he forgave you
- That's how we are to forgive others.
- Notice here, forgiveness is **not an option**; it is **demand**: the ESV captures the force of it: "you **must** also forgive."
- **It is not okay to bear a grudge, to complain, slander, gossip!**
- **Those are traits of the old self, not the new self!**

N.T. Wright: "First, it is utterly inappropriate for one who knows the joy and release of being forgiven to refuse to share that blessing with another. Second, it is highly presumptuous to refuse to forgive one whom Christ himself has already forgiven"

14: The final article in the Christians "attire" ("drip") is love (cf., 1 Cor 13).

- This is like as the **overcoat**.
- **NJB translation: "Over all these clothes, put on love."**
- Moo: These virtues attain their full power when they are unified and empowered by love."
- **2:3** – being knit together in love"
- **1:3** – "your love for all the saints" – one of the three key traits of a Christian
- **1 Cor 16:14:** Let all you do be done in love."
- How can each of these people in verse 11 be united? The love of Christ.

App: Does the character of Christ describe you and me?

- **Is this what people sense when they come to IDC?**
- **What would happen in the church if we put on these traits every day?**
- **And when you attend gatherings together?**
- **For this to be the case, we must live like Christ is all – not our ego, self, preference, etc.**

#2: May the Peace of Christ Rule Us (3:15)

Beginning in this verse, the **clothing metaphor** gives way to a series of instructions intended to build up the body of Christ in other ways.

The peace of Christ refers to the calmness of mind that is not troubled by adversity.

- **This peace comes from our trust in Christ, and the maintaining of a clean conscious.**

The word "**rule**" is important. It is only used here in the NT.

- It originally meant to **act as an umpire**.
- **Christ's peace must give the final decision in regard to Christian conflicts.**
- Let **peace rule your heart individually**, and **let this peace be the goal** in all your dealings with other Christians; all your complaints. [**Repeat**]

- **When this peace is experienced it is a sign that the in breaking of God's kingdom has come, for when it fully arrives there will be total shalom – no more conflicts!**
- There is a tradition in some context called **“the passing of the peace”** (during a greeting time, prior to the Lord's Supper or at the conclusion of the worship service)
- Peace should indeed dominate the fellowship, not discord and disharmony.
- We are to do nothing to violate this peace, but rather, seek to maintain it.

“to which indeed you were called in one body”

- Why were we called into one body? **It was this goal: peace.**
- Jesus has died to bring us peace with God and one another (**Eph 2:11ff**); and this is what we are to do, pursue this peace.
- **We didn't establish or create peaceful unity, Christ did that; but we are to maintain it.**

So then, let the **peace of Christ** be your goal in relationships in the church.
And be a **Peacemaker!** (**Matt 5**)

“And be thankful”

Paul continues to punctuate his letter with word about thankfulness.

Here thankfulness is associated with “peace.”

- **I take this to mean we are to be thankful for the peace Christ brings (for it is a gift of grace), and let this thanksgiving should be an incentive for maintaining peace.**

#3: May the Word of Christ Transform Us (3:16)

The peace of Christ is tied to the word of Christ.

- The peace of Christ rules where the word of Christ dwells.

“The word of Christ” – that is ***the message of Christ*** – that's what the Word is about!

- **Let it be at home in you!**
- **Not an occasional visitor in your heart, but let it settle down and live there and transform your heart!**

Here again the focus goes corporate ... let it dwell in you richly as you do something:
teach and admonish one another.

This doesn't mean there are no formal roles of teaching and pastoring; but this text is one of those passages that emphasizes how every believer should be instructing and encouraging one another with the word of Christ (cf., Rom 15:14).

Paul says that ***one of the ways we instruct and encourage*** is through ***Psalms***, referring to OT Psalms which are to be **read now through a Christ-centered lens.**

- **He calls Psalms** “the word of Christ,” “the word about Christ.”

Often people try to differentiate between three types of songs here, but I think that a rigid distinction is unnecessary, as in Psalm 66:1; 75:1, these terms are used in the superscription to describe one Psalm.

The important aspect is that **we sing**, that are singing should have **rich variety**, and that this **singing be about the message of Christ**.

Further, there is a **sense of joyfulness** that should be part of the Christian church: **“with thanksgiving in your hearts to God”**

Our joyful songs are to then bring glory to God, who has given us His Son, the hope of glory, and our songs are meant to instruct and encourage one another.

Here we see a much needed word regarding Christian worship: Worship is to be (1) word-driven, (2) Christ-centered, and (3) community focused.

- A. **Word-Driven** — that would dwell deeply in us, producing fruit in our lives.
- B. **Christ-centered**: A member was complaining to Fran Chan: **“I didn’t really like church this morning.”** He replied: **“That’s okay, we weren’t worshipping you.”** (Fran Chan)
- C. **Community Focused**: There’s a togetherness...
 - **It has been very common to have this “me and Jesus” feel in worship services.**
 - **The lights are down, the lights on the stage up, and no one can see anyone in the room.**
 - **Does this not diminish the one-anotherness in worship (not to mention the temptation for passivity rather than participation; anonymity rather than identification)?**
 - **I want you to see your Bible and your fellow members.**

“in all wisdom” likely alludes back to 2:3, where in Christ we find real wisdom, not in the false teaching in Colossae.

As Christ’s word is expounded and sung, true wisdom transforms us.

Curtis Vaughan writes: “The great periods of renewal in Christendom have always been accompanied by an outburst of hymnology.”

Armitage Robinson describes the apostolic age was **“characterized by vivid enthusiasm”** and as **“a period of wonder and delight. The floodgates of emotion were opened: a supernatural dread alternated with an unspeakable joy... [Christian hymns] demand two things above all else. They must express real emotion of the heart, adoration and worship. They must do it in a way worthy of our Savior God.”**

#4: May the Name of Christ Motivate Us (3:17-4:1)

Verse 17 serves as a summary of what has just been said, and then it prepares the way for verses 18-4:1.

- In 3:18-4:1, Paul mentions the **“Lord”** seven times (Gk).
- 3:17 is the general principle.

- 3:18-4:1 is what it specifically looks like at home and at work.

What does it mean to do everything “in the name of the Lord Jesus”?

- It means to be **conscious of his calling of you**. Remember who you are!
 - His name represents **his character**.
 - **You bear Christ’s name** – at home and the workplace, not just corporate gatherings.
- It means to **be aware of his sovereign presence, to depend on him at all times**.
- It means to **be mindful of his instructions at all times**.

This is our great motivation: Christ’s name. We want to honor Christ by the power of Christ.

- **Kanye West: “I’m a Christian everything.”**

3:18-4:1: The reciprocal responsibilities here are striking.

- Notice, with each pair there is one party who in Paul’s day had a position of authority and the other party, which did not.
- Paul addresses both, including the person with authority.
- **“Wives, children and slaves are addressed equally with their husbands, fathers, and masters. Although this is not totally new, there are no extant examples which are as thoroughgoing as Colossians 3:18-4:1 in this emphasis on reciprocal obligations.” (O’Brien)**
- The ultimate authority lies with Christ, who is mentioned some seven times (w 4:1 being translated “Master”).
- He is to motivate all our relationships.
- **“All human relationships are set in the context of relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ, and any human authority is relativized by his ultimate authority.” (Alistair Wilson)**

Husbands and Wives: Let the Name of Christ motivate you

18: Wives are to *submit* to their husbands, as “fitting to the Lord.”

- Submit **does not convey some kind of inferiority**.
- It is used to describe **a modest, cooperative demeanor that puts other people first** (a basic description of every Christian: cf., Eph 5:21).
- She is to **choose** this way of relating **voluntarily**.
- It is a **happy relationship** that is envisioned.
- It is not some way of speaking of **male domination**.
- **The vision is of a Christian wife freely and gladly following the loving leadership of a faithful, servant-leader Husband, not an abusive self-absorbed jerk.**
- We must reject all improper ideas about this concept.
- The picture is not of a man lying on the couch yelling in the kitchen to his wife, **“Bring me the pretzals, woman.”**

- Why submit? Stott: “The wife’s submission is but another aspect of love... What does it mean to submit? It is to give oneself up to somebody. What does it mean to love? It means to give oneself up for somebody.”
- The primary motivation for responding to this charge is due to her relationship to Christ, “**as fitting to the Lord**”
- This kind of happy, loving relationships, that involves giving oneself up for the good of the other pleases the Lord.

19: The charge is not one sided; for Paul follows that with “**Husband love your wives, and do not be harsh with them**”

- The call to love is explicit here.
- Paul’s goal is not to prop up the husband’s authority.
- We tend to always relate love and marriage **because they go together...**
- But in the ancient world other things were elevated in marriage, like producing heirs.
- Veyne: “**Love in marriage was a stroke of good fortune; it was not the basis of the institution.**”
- It’s important to see that submission is in view of a husband’s Christ-like love.

Do not be harsh with them

It means don’t be tyrannical, intimidating, controlling, or overbearing to your wife.

That is not love!

- Sulking, fuming, grumbling, or even worse lashing out in verbal or physical violence is strictly forbidden.
- That obviously does not honor the Lord Jesus.
- What does? Loving the way he has loved us.

You are not a godly man if you do not love your wife and are instead harsh with her. I don’t care how many books you’ve read, how much theology you know, or how many twitter followers you have.

20: Children, are to obey their parents ... **for this pleases the Lord.**

- The language recalls Exodus 20, the fourth commandment.
- “**in everything**” implies that what the parent asks of the child is appropriate.
- The child should never sin if the parent is telling him or her to do something wrong.
- The assumption is that the parent has the child’s best interest in mind.
- “**this pleases the Lord**” – again here is the motivation.
- Children, when you honor and obey your parents, this pleases the Lord.

Now we get to **parenting...** isn’t this fun?

“**I used to have 0 kids and 6 theories. Now I have 6 kids and no theories.**”

It’s a challenge... My wife says she never struggled w/ cussing until she had kids...

21: Fathers (as the head and one primarily responsible for training in 1st century), are told not to be unreasonable.

- Snodgrass: “In the ancient world fathers had absolute control and were sometimes harsh.”
- We must avoid nagging, belittling, or being overly harsh in punishment.
- Overly stern, heavy handed parents may drive their child away from the faith:
- **“lest they become discouraged”** – we should be aiming and encouragement and edification!
- Don’t rouse them to resentment by over-correcting.
- We should seek to be fair, loving and consistent.
- Fathers are to reflect the fatherly character of God (Ps 103:8-14)
- Of course, mothers can do this too, so we should make this a parental challenge.
- Here are some ways we might do this:
 - *When we fail to take in to account the fact that they are kids.*
 - *When we compare them to others.*
 - *When discipline is inconsistent.*
 - *When we fail to express approval, even at small accomplishments.*
 - *When we fail to express our love to them.*
 - *When we discipline them for reasons other than willful disobedience and defiance.*
 - *When we pressure them to pursue our goals not their own.*

The result... they get angry or, in the words of Colossians: discouraged.

3:22-4:1: Servants/Masters: Let the name of Christ motivate you.

Paul doesn’t answer all of our questions about slavery.

- It was complex and massive.
- It was not like American slavery, which was primarily racial and also lifelong.
- In Paul’s day it was not racial and it was not lifelong.
- And there were also “white-collar slaves.”
- The Bible certainly forbids what we know as slavery (1 Tim 1:10; Lk 10:27; Matt 7:12; Ex 21:16; Lk 4:18).
- Here Paul is simply talking about how to relate to one another in this broken system – and his instructions subtly undermines the institution.

3:22-23: Bond-servants are to obey their Masters.... In view of the Lord

- Not only when observed, and not to just seek affirmation but as a commitment the Lord.

23: More detail: work heartily unto the Lord. The language echoes 3:17. Sometimes you cannot transfer jobs; but you can transfer your Master.

24: Paul is reminding these servants of what they already know. It’s remarkable.

- They will receive a reward .. a bondservant was not an heir in a Greco Roman family, but these bondservants are now part of the family of God, sharing in the inheritance of the saints in light (1:12)

- You are serving the Lord Christ.
- We should all remember this, whatever line of work we are in.

25: If bondservants do wrong, they will be judged for it; as will the Masters (as the next verse says), for in God there is no partiality.

4:1: Masters: Paul says be just and fair for they will give an account to Christ. This was unique teaching.

Therefore, the name of Christ is to motivate us – in all of life, including the home, and in the workplace.

Conclusion

So here is the Christian dress code, here are the clothes that should fit us, that should adorn us...

- The character of Christ. May it depict us!
- The peace of Christ. May it rule us!
- The word of Christ. May it transform us!
- The name of Christ. May it motivate us.

May Christ be all to us.

When he is all to us, there can be wonderful harmony and peace and joy among us.