

Putting On the New Self

Colossians 3:12-14 - NCBC, Oct 4, 2015

Main Point: **A transformed identity in Christ produces a transformed love towards others.**

- A transformed identity (v. 12a)
 - My present is not my past
 - My future is not my past
- ...Produces a transformed love (v. 12b-14)
 - Christ-like attitudes of love (v. 12b)
 - Christ-like actions of love (v. 13)
 - Christ-like agreement of love (v. 14)

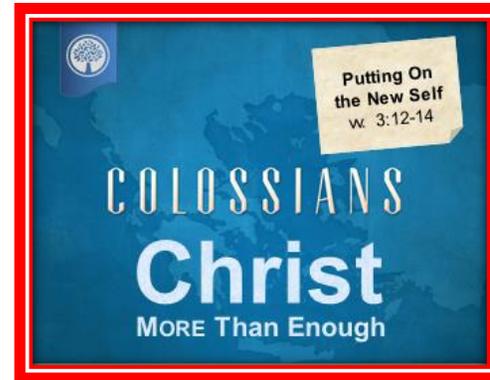
Application: **Walk in love, and don't wait to start forgiving others today.**

Opening Announcements:

Women's REFOCUS event

Youth Ministries Intern Announcement

NewComer's Lunch – today - immediately following 2nd service



<<Lord I Need You>>

Let's now continue our worship by reading from God's Word. Please open your Bible to **Colossians chapter 3**, and stand with me now in honor of God's Word as I read our text for us from Colossians 3:12-14, reading from the **English Standard Version**:

Colossians 3:12-14 Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, ¹³ bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. ¹⁴ And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

These are the words of God. You may be seated.

Let's Pray.

Our family was so thankful for all your love and encouragement last week at our installation service. We are so blessed to be serving Christ alongside each of you here at New Castle Bible Church.

However, we have not yet become accustomed to the country wildlife here. And now that deer season has started up, you never know what kind of wildlife we might find in our backyard.



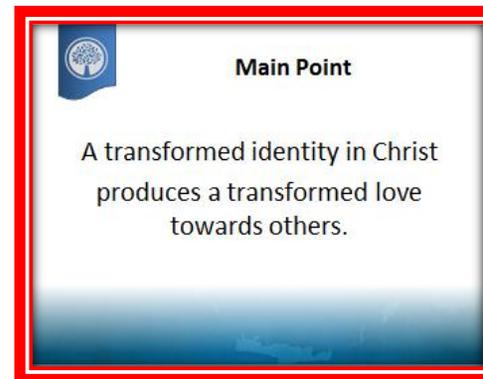
But sometimes ... As crazy as this photo is... I believe sometimes this is an accurate representation of how our relationships are going in our own homes, our work places, and yes, sometimes...even at church.

This week's tragic events in Oregon have given all us reasons to pray, to ponder over the cost of our allegiance to Christ, to hate sin more than we did before, and to find comfort in God's grace that is able to redeem and save souls like ours from the depths of such sin.

When faced with such evil, it is important for God's church to think rightly about how we are called to respond. In fact, how should believers respond to *anyone* who sins against us – whether it is someone in our own family or a sin-crazed madman?

What difference does our identity in Christ make in our responses to people's sin against us? And what does it mean to forgive after such serious sin?

Today as we come to **Colossians 3:12-14** we learn that



A transformed identity in Christ produces a transformed love towards others. No exceptions. God's grace marvelously makes us new in Christ so that we are able to genuinely love others.

Let's pick up our context. Verses 5-11 commanded all Christ-followers to put to death sin while we wait for Christ's appearing. All the perverted loves of sexual sin and social sins must be put off as part of the old way of living. Instead, all believers are called to "*put on the new*

self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.”

Since God’s living Spirit now indwells our hearts, then it only makes sense that our love would be transformed.

Note then verse 12,

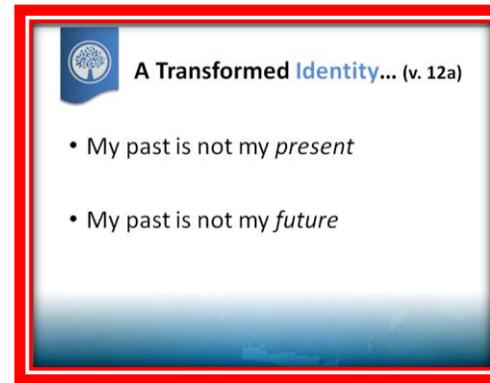
Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved,

Now just let the good news of these royal titles sink into your tattered reality for a moment. God generously grants these three names to all those He has purchased from the life of sin: Chosen. Holy. and Beloved.

Talk about **a transformed identity!**



Church – this is very good news. No matter what pain and shame is part of your own past... no matter how stained and shattered your own life has been– by the power of God’s grace’s, **Your past is not your present.**



My past does not define my present identity in Christ. I’m not just a sum of past decisions and past failures. Be amazed at your new royal identity in Christ!

Chosen Ones – Think of it – From the perspective of eternity, you did not chose God, but God chose you.¹ According to the sovereign purpose of His will, He adopted you.² Though we can’t fully understand the mystery of God’s election, do not resist or question its glorious love. For the invincible love of God’s election is rooted in His holy character.

And Set Apart – called **Holy!** We are no longer our own – we have been set apart from the raging world and belong completely to God now. We’re engaged to be married to Christ Himself – reserved for a righteous purpose as His **beloved.**

¹ John 15:16

² Ephesians 1:4-5

I pray that the perfect love of God would wash away all your fears this morning church. God loves you. Because Christ has taken your sins upon Himself and exhausted the holy wrath of God in your place... You are more loved now in Christ than you could ever dare to dream.

Can you imagine how a simple peasant girl of poverty would have her identity transformed by becoming engaged to a royal prince? My friends – in Christ - You are chosen, holy, and loved by God! Your entire life has been turned inside out by the love of Christ!

Because of the rescuing work of God, your **past is not your future**. Your diet has completely changed... you no longer have to eat the husks of this world, now that you're seated at our King's banquet table!

In other words Christ's power in our lives causes us to overcome sin and live differently than the world.

Ladies – please help me prove this point. If you had just become engaged to be married to a very wealthy King – who gave you full access to His wealth and told you to prepare for the wedding where the entire Kingdom would be present to witness your union ... would you wear one of the dresses that you presently have in your closet... or would that be enough reason to go shopping for something new?

That's right! Every one of you would agree that new clothes are in your future!

So Christian, *Put on then...*

Dress in the wardrobe that God has graciously provided for you! Envelope yourself in this new love. Your future is to become more and more adorned in the beauty of Christ – no matter how stained or dark your past. **A transformed identity produces a transformed love.**

One other important observation about this before we consider the various qualities of this transformed love.

The put-off and put-on dynamic that we see in this chapter and elsewhere in Scripture³ provides us with an important principle. **You don't overcome sin by focusing on it. Rather, we overcome sin by focusing on our Savior!**

Notice that Scripture never commands us to put off something...without in the same context telling us what to put on instead. The secret of biblical sanctification is replacement – not restraint. Transformed lives pursue and produce a transformed love. We are chosen, holy, and loved, and commanded to put on love! Without a doubt, **our transformed identity in Christ ...**

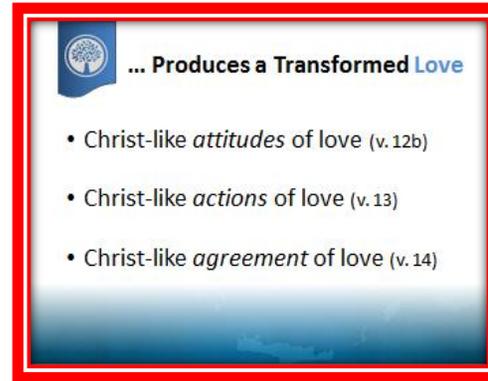
³ Romans 15: Ephesians 4:22-24



...Produces a transformed love (v. 12b-14)

In other words, “love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.”⁴ We are only able to love others, because God has first loved us.⁵

Notice first the **Christ-like attitudes of love (v. 12b)** that should characterize every child of God:



... *compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience,*

I don't know how your closest relationships go...but for me... just giving thought to each of these Christ-like attitudes is very convicting and worthwhile, for it ultimately points to how God has first loved us in Christ. Hallelujah!

Christ-like Attitudes of Love	
Love's Fruit	Meaning
Compassionate Hearts	Tender mercy & concern
Kindness	Generosity & helpfulness
Humility	Considering others better than me
Meekness	Quiet strength, gentle self-control
Patience	Willing to suffer-long, "long-fused"
Love (agape)	Sacrificially laying down my life for the eternal good of others

⁴ 1 John 4:7

⁵ 1 John 4:19

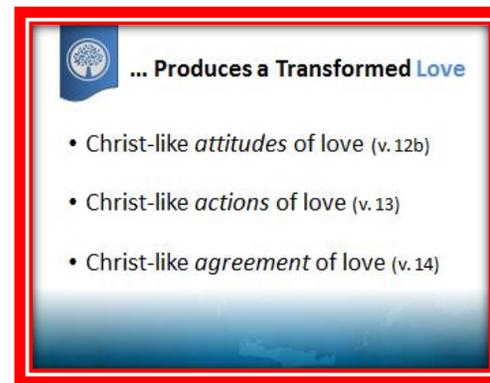
First we are to put on **compassionate hearts**. Sympathetic understanding. Not focused on personal rights, fairness, or getting even with others. But easy to relate to ... even in disagreement. Returning **kindness** for short-fuses. Kindness is the opposite of being severe. Not envying or despising others, but sacrificially doing good to them. **Humility** is “honestly assessing ourselves in light of God’s holiness and our sinfulness.”⁶ It is the opposite of pride and arrogance, and is willing to submit and surrender personal rights for the example of Christ. **Meekness** is that temper of spirit by which we receive all of God’s dealings with us as good, and therefore without disputing or resisting. It is closely associated with humility and self-control – and exerts its strength by moving gently and humbly into another person’s life. It is the opposite of rudeness and fierceness. And **Patience** is the power to stay calm when things do not go as desired – refusing to complain or become irritated. It is the opposite of being short-fused or taking revenge.

We could summarize all these attitudes as **love**. Sacrificially laying down my life for the eternal good of the other. Treating one another according to the law of mercy, instead of the law of performance. Or we could rightly summarize these attitudes as... the fruit of God’s Spirit in our lives.

⁶ C.J. Mahaney, *Humility*

For let’s be real with each other – this kind of clothing is supernatural – and is contrary to the daily messes of our lives and relationships. But because of God’s work on our behalf, our relationships are “messes worth making”. For every time these garments of love are worn in our homes or at our workplace, we become simply mannequins upon which God is hanging His own glory for all the world to see!

And notice the **Christ-like actions of love in v. 13** as well.



¹³ bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

Christ-followers are called to be continually and repeatedly practicing the actions of Forbearance and Forgiveness. Refusing to respond naturally in anger or resentment...but instead letting the pressure-cooker of

the complaint bring out the inner qualities of love like patience, humility, compassion, and kindness.

You see when the text says, “*if one has a complaint against another*” ... it could just as well say “*when one has a complaint against another.*” Because it’s not if, but when... and our responses to people’s sin against us will determine how much power they have in our lives. For to refuse to accept and forgive – is to invite the soul-shrinking tyrants of verse 8 to imprison us in our own self-made prison of bitterness – swallowing a poison pill ourselves while we wait for our enemies to die.

But in forgiveness, there is great freedom, peace, and blessing! Your identity in Christ – as the beloved – empowers you to bear with another, forgive one another, and above all these things demonstrate covenant love and care for one another.

So what is forgiveness anyway? Some teach that it’s just forgetting – but the harder I try to forget, the more I remember!

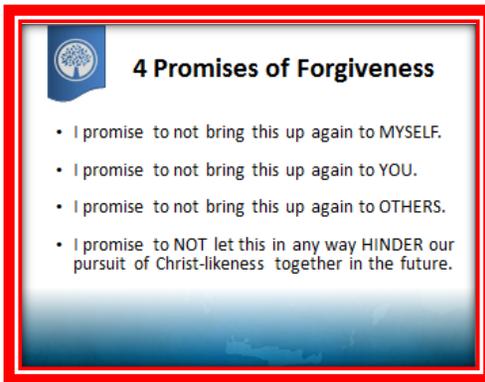
On the back of your sermon notes page this morning, you’ll notice that according to several Scriptures that are listed there for your further study - forgiveness is defined as “Sending away the debt” “releasing or pardoning the debtor” “Relinquishing all rights to revenge” Or my favorite definition of forgiveness – **a promise of pardon.**

If we are to forgive others in the same way that God has forgiven us... then it is very helpful to think of forgiveness as a promise of pardon – a contract, if you will.

Let me ask you this question. If you have a mortgage with a bank, what defines your relationship with that bank? A promise right? And every month when your payment comes due... no matter how you feel or whether or you want to or not... you make a payment, right? Why? Because you’re living with that bank according to promise. The promise between you governs your relationship. You and the bank live together according to promise.

And that’s exactly how a holy God lives with us here and now – according to the promise of His New Covenant by which we are forgiven, cleansed, chosen, made holy, and adopted and loved as His bride!

So what promises does God make with us when He forgives us? I believe we could summarize God’s promises of forgiveness towards us in 4 short promises – which are also written for you on the back of your sermon notes page this morning:



First, in His forgiveness of us, God promises not to bring up our sin again to Himself. In **Isaiah 43:25** God promises to blot out our transgressions for His own sake – and no longer remember (or recall into His mind) our sins.

Second, God promises in **Psalms 103:10** that because of His forgiveness He will not deal with us according to our sins, or repay us according to our iniquities.

And of course it almost goes without saying that in His forgiveness of us, God promises to not bring our sins up again to OTHERS in gossip or slander....but instead in **John 8:11** says, “Neither do I condemn you... go and sin no more.”

And fourth – God’s forgiveness brings peace and reconciliation to our relationship with God – “Your sins

are forgiven you...go in peace” He told the prostitute in **Luke 7**.

So if we are to forgive as God has forgiven us, these promises help us think through our forgiveness of others. When you agree to forgive me for my sin against you, you are agreeing to let these 4 promises govern our ongoing relationship:

I promise to not bring this sin up again to MYSELF.
I promise to not bring this sin up again to YOU.
I promise to not bring this sin up again to OTHERS.
And last, but not least,
I promise to not let this sin in any way HINDER our ongoing pursuit of Christlikeness together.

Are you catching a vision for the power of biblical forgiveness? It’s a promise of pardon. When we live with each other according to these promises – since this is how God lives with us – it puts offenses and sins to rest... standing feuds are brought to nothing.

Now quickly... think carefully with me about each of these promises that biblical forgiveness includes:

First, **I promise to not bring this sin up again to MYSELF**. This means you promise to not dwell or fester upon the sins of another. When memories come – and often they will obnoxiously intrude into your mind at the

most unwanted times – you’re promising to bring these thoughts captive to the obedience of Christ. You’re promising to refuse to let any memories of their sin reside comfortably in your own mind, or get any nourishment within your heart.

Aren’t you thankful that everytime you go to God in prayer, He’s not saying to Himself – Here comes that wicked sinner... I can’t believe how foolish he’s been today... NO! Our forgiven sins are as far from his thoughts as the east is from the west!⁷

Second - **I promise to not bring this sin up again to YOU.** This doesn’t mean that there’s never a time to talk with someone about a continued pattern of sin – even after its been forgiven. But it does mean that I’m promising to never throw your sin back in your face. Every time 100% language is used in a relationship – “You always...” or “You never...” we are failing to live in forgiveness with one another.

Third - **I promise to not bring this sin up again to OTHERS.** Here you are promising to not gossip or slander the one who has sinned against you. Forgiveness refuses to discuss matters with people who are not part of the problem or part of the solution. (Not even as a prayer request!)

⁷ Psalm 103

And finally – let’s talk about this fourth promise of forgiveness. Because it’s important to realize that forgiveness doesn’t remove the consequences of sin. Do you recognize that? God forgave David for his adultery with Bathsheba, but the consequences still remained – the child still died even though David was forgiven.

So forgiveness promises to not let this sin in any way HINDER our ongoing pursuit of Christ-likeness together.

Forgiveness doesn’t remove the consequences for sin – but forgiveness puts both parties on the same side of the consequences of sin, so that they can walk through the rebuilding of their relationship and the difficult consequences of their sin together.

For example – suppose a teenager comes home drunk after curfew some night. The next morning as he comes downstairs into the kitchen, he sees his father sitting at the kitchen table waiting for him... before the father can say a word, he says, Dad – I’m sorry for last night... I sinned against God and I sinned against you and Mom. I’m ashamed of how I acted, and don’t want to ever do that again. Could you ever find it possible to forgive me?

The dad stands, embraces his son, and says quietly...of course I forgive you. After all that God has forgiven me, how could I not forgive you ? The teen says thank you,

and then says... now where are the keys...I've got to get to school. "Well son, you've lost the privilege to the keys." What? I thought you said you forgave me?

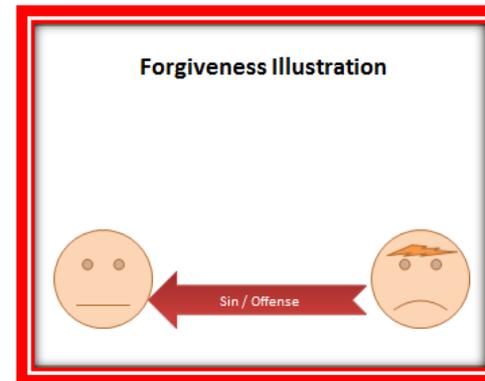
You see – forgiveness doesn't remove the consequences of sin...but restores the relationship which has been broken by sin – so both parties may pursue greater Christ-likeness together.

So God's command to forgive one another is powerful, is it not? This is not just 2 sinners looking each other in the eyes and saying "I'm sorry." Nothing substantial has changed yet in that relationship. But now, through this promise of pardon – through the forgiveness contract – the relationship is transformed... the sin is put away, and Christlikeness is able to be pursued – no matter how I feel, or what memories I have, or how deep the pain of the offense and the hurt.

You see – Jesus teaches in **Matthew 18** that the only motivation for forgiving others in this way is to first consider how much God has forgiven us. That's right. We didn't deserve forgiveness any more than your enemy does. But it doesn't have to do with whether or not they deserve to be forgiven. It has to do with the fact that we are now clothed with the characteristics of Christ Himself – and just as He forgave us when we didn't deserve it ... so likewise should we. A transformed

identity produces a transformed love. Forgiven, we can now forgive.

So let's walk through a scenario just to make sure we're thinking biblically about how this practically plays out in our daily reality of life. First, someone sins against you.



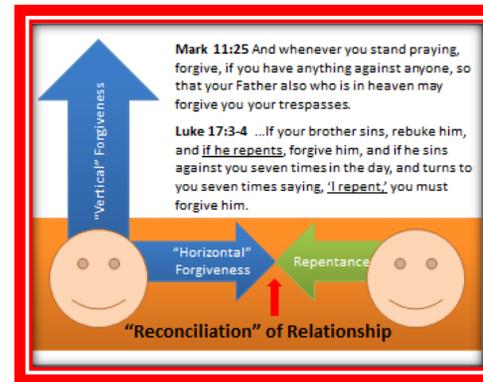
The pain is real, and the offense is grave. But as you pray through the anguish of your soul... God's Spirit reminds you that you too have sinned...and your sins against God's holiness were far greater than any horizontal sins could ever be against you. And so in that very moment of your own silence... you vertically release the offence to God...making room for the wrath of God as it says in Romans 12, and posture your will to enter into a relationship of promised pardon with your offender.

Notice then this diagram.



Motivated by God’s forgiveness of me, my prompt response to another’s sins against me is reflected by the 2 blue arrows. The first vertical forgiveness can happen immediately – between us and the Lord. Lord – I give up my right to revenge. In the privateness of my own heart attitudes – I give this debt over to you, and at the same time – I stand ready to enter into this relationship-changing contract with my enemy. As much as it’s up to me... I’m going to pursue peaceful reconciliation with the one who offended me... because that’s exactly what you’ve done with me, God. Immediately after we’ve been sinned against... we can enter into “Vertical forgiveness.”

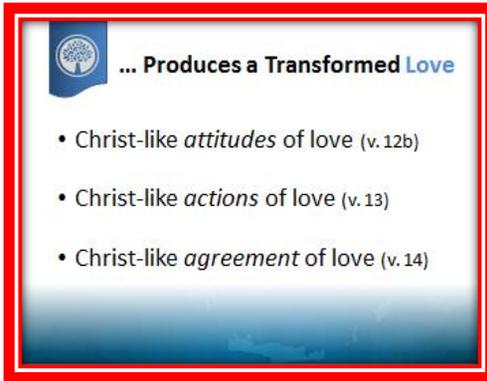
But again, the contract analogy is helpful here, right? For unless the offender comes in repentance, and “quote-unquote” agrees to live under these terms of forgiveness... true reconciliation cannot occur. This is why **Luke 17** makes *the repentance of the offender* the condition of horizontal forgiveness.



So reconciliation (or what we call horizontal forgiveness) cannot demonstrate its full restoring power to a relationship unless both parties are engaged in the transaction of giving and receiving forgiveness.

So... as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. When you want to get even...do the opposite. Remember God’s grace towards you in your new position in Christ, and choose to love.

A transformed identity in Christ produces a transformed love of **Christ-like attitudes, actions, and agreement.**



Note verse 14:

And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

Here is the sum of all Christ-like virtue! The most important piece of clothing that God's royal family can wear is love – a commitment of the will bound to an affection of the heart – expressed through personal sacrifice for the eternal good of others. This self-giving love is the source of all unity and harmony in Christ's church.

Sin is always self-centered and selfish in all its forms. But when the love of God has the right-of-way in the hearts of the redeemed – selfishness is conquered and unity and joy is the result!

Loved ones – A heart that is so satisfied in the sufficiency of Christ's love will not allow the glory of Christ to be so

quickly hijacked by the mere inconvenience, difference, or offense of others.

So this morning, I urge all of us based on the authority and goodness of God's gospel, to



Walk in love, and don't wait to start forgiving others today.

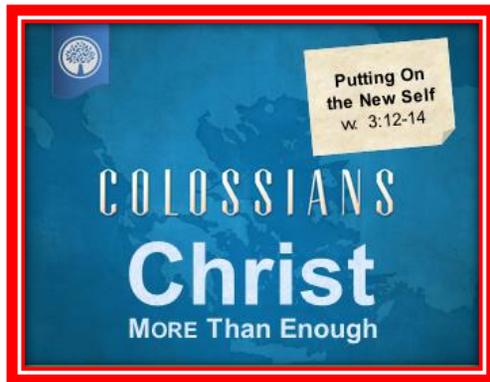
You're not dressing in the King's clothes if you're not constantly practicing forgiveness in your relationships. Don't believe the lies that you're happiness is found in the pain and suffering of your enemies. Don't let the foolish and destructive sins of others hold your soul in the self-made prison of bitterness and resentment.

Surrender what happened to a good and just God who promises to make everything right in the end. Make room for His wrath, by humbly seeking to overcome evil with good.

And dear friends – if you don't know God's love and

forgiveness yet in your own life – then of course none of this is possible for you. It is true for everyone of us here today – the greatest sin that we have ever experienced has always been our own. For all of us have rebelled foolishly against a good and Holy God. All of us have fallen short of His glory, and boldly sinned against His infinite love. It's only by God's grace that we can be forgiven. But what a wonderful grace ...that comes this morning and promises to live with you in forgiveness if you will but repent – turn from your sin, and believe that Christ is more than enough for you.

Will you believe in Christ today? Will you trust that His ways always bring more joy in the end than your own ways of thinking and living? If so, then come and feast at the royal table where the King calls you chosen, holy, and beloved. Because your transformed identity in Christ will produce a supernaturally transformed love towards others. All glory to God above!



Let's pray.

Closing prayer.

Closing Song

Jude 24-25 Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, 25 to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.