



Dressing Up The New Man [2]

[3:15-17]

Chris Bullard

“And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful. Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father” (3:15-17).

When my wife dresses our young son in his “Sunday best,” it is understood that he will not go outside and play in the dirt. Being dressed a certain way mandates a behavior appropriate to the manner of clothing worn. The same is true spiritually. When we dress up the new man, we need to act accordingly.

After discussing the robing of the new man, Paul dealt with *the regulations* of how the Christian is to act to match his new spiritual wardrobe. Three guidelines in Colossians 3:15-17 can be applied to our resurrection garments.

THE PEACE OF CHRIST (3:15)

And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body (3:15a).

The word “rule” is another of the athletic terms which Paul demonstrated a fondness for using. The particular word occurs nowhere else

in the New Testament. Strictly speaking, it means “to preside at the games and distribute the prizes.” Perhaps at the Isthmian games near Corinth Paul had seen judges (we would call them referees or umpires) who rejected those contestants who were not qualified and also disqualified those who broke the rules. In the Christian community the umpire of the new man’s lifestyle is to be the peace of Christ.

What is meant by the peace of Christ? Upon reaching the age of accountability, you were at enmity with God. Knowing in your heart of hearts what was right, you still rebelled against that standard. When you became a Christian, you went to God’s side, and the war between the two of you was over. Through Jesus’ blood, a peace treaty has been drawn up, and you and God have ceased to be enemies.

Are you having a conflict with another Christian? Has your mate hurt your feelings, and you are uncertain how to respond? Remember now you are on God’s side. You are to act toward that person as the Lord Himself would.

Another aspect to the peace of Christ is an inner calm that Jesus gives. If you are uncertain how to act in a given situation, the umpire in that decision is this: Which choice will give you peace? Which one can you be the most confident that God will bless?

If you are conscientious about developing a new man lifestyle and you go against this divine umpire, you will be miserable. You cannot choose

to do what you now recognize as sin and still enjoy peace in your heart.

Verse 15 concludes with: "And be thankful." Do you want to experience an inner calm even in the face of a horrendous crisis? The answer is to continue to thank Him for everything, for you know He is in control. The measure of our thanks is the depth of our trust. When you maintain a spirit of gratitude toward Jesus, His peace can fill your heart in every situation.

THE WORD OF CHRIST (3:16)

Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God (3:16).

In Romans 7:17 Paul pointed out that at one time *sin* lived in him. That dominating force has been eliminated in the life of the Christian and replaced with the word of Christ. Paul's intention was that the attitudes and actions of each Christian be guided by the teachings of Christ.

This word of Christ is to dwell among Christians. The word "dwell" means to inhabit, to take up residence. No stranger to the Christian community, the word of Christ makes its home among us. Our hearts ought to be the kind of place where God's truths just fit in.

Out of hearts jammed with God's spiritual truths, Christians teach one another wherever instruction or admonition is needed. Information ("the word of Christ") becomes "formation" as we assist one another in our spiritual growth. We teach and admonish, guide and instruct. We counsel; we encourage. When Christians saturate their souls with the Word of Christ, they help others develop a new man lifestyle. Advice is no longer given from a worldly point of view, but can be given from a godly point of view.

Something happens when you begin to permeate yourself with God's Word. It not only flows out of you in counsel to others; it also flows out of your soul in praise to God. Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs begin to invade your speech.

At best, only a partial distinction can be made between these types of musical expressions. The "psalms" certainly represents the Old Testament book of praise by that title which was the songbook of the early church. Christians cannot do

better than to sing God's own Word back to Him as well as to other Christians. "Hymns" probably reflect songs written by the early church to round out the theology of the Psalter and were designed to be sung with other Christians. More informal spontaneous expressions of musical praise comprised the "spiritual songs."

Enormous power resides in music. Witness how an entire generation is shaped by the music its youth seizes as its own. The church has this same life-changing power at its disposal. We need the trusted hymns to keep us rooted in the great truths of the faith. We also need a continual supply of new songs written to express the faith of a contemporary generation even as the early church needed to compose its own music. When the church neglects to give attention to psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, it fails to grasp one of the divine means for keeping God's Word in our lives at all times. Dressed up resurrection style, we will be a singing people!

THE NAME OF CHRIST (3:17)

And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father (3:17).

Three guidelines apply to the wearing of resurrection garments. The first is to let the peace of Christ rule in our hearts. The second is to let the word of Christ dwell within us. The third is to let the name of Christ be our central concern.

In our modern society we pay little attention to names; most of us have a difficult time remembering others' names. In the biblical world, a man's name was held to have the utmost importance.

As Christians, we wear the name of another: Christ. In the beginning the designation "Christian" was a derogatory term given by our enemies. (See Acts 11:26.) The followers of Jesus, however, claimed it as a badge of honor. Thus, it has become a means of identification that has endured through the ages.

What does it mean in practical terms to take the name of Jesus today?

First, we will *act with the approval of Jesus*. In Paul's day a man's name and his character were inseparably linked. Time has not changed that concept much. One technique that Madison Avenue employs is to have a celebrity endorse a product it wants to sell. Many a boy, for example,

has wanted a specific baseball bat or glove because it had Mike Schmidt's name stamped on it. Whatever name was there, that superstar was saying in effect: "I approve this product. It is consistent with the standards I uphold as a professional ball player."

Similarly, to do everything in the name of Jesus means to do only that which Jesus Himself could endorse. All that we do should be consistent with His character.

One of the great things about the risen life is that the Bible is not primarily a rule book with a list of "do's" and "don'ts." The new man lifestyle springs from the character of Jesus.

Action based on character produces freedom in the spiritual lifestyle. Rules are for the immature. Loopholes can be found in rules. A lawyer once reported to his client in a divorce case: "Mrs. Brown, I've succeeded in making a settlement with your husband that is eminently fair to both of you." "Fair to both!" she roared, "I could have done that myself! What do you think I hired a lawyer for?"

One may twist the law, but there are no loopholes in character. Thus, the Bible is not primarily a book of pontificate minute laws, but a record of the character of Jesus out of which flow great principles for living. Foremost among those principles is this one: Do all in the name of Jesus.

To do everything in the name of Jesus also means to *act in the authority of Jesus*. Each time you sign your name on a check, you give your banker authority to pay certain funds out of your account. That is the significance of your name on that piece of paper.

A policewoman weighing 120 pounds stands before a semi-trailer and with uplifted hand says: "Stop in the name of the law!" What is she doing? She is appealing to an authority higher than herself. That truck comes to a halt because of that name (authority). The policewoman did not stop the truck with physical force. The truck stops because her badge and uniform carry the authority of the government she represents.

Knowing that name stands for authority, we can understand more fully what it means to pray in the name of Jesus. To pray in Jesus' name does not mean to close our prayers with the phrase "In Jesus' name. Amen." No recorded prayer in the New Testament so ends. That does not suggest we should not end our prayers that way; it only means that is not what the Bible intends when it teaches us to pray in Jesus' name.

The prayer in Jesus' name is the prayer that has His approval and authority behind it. Many spiritual forgers are signing Jesus' name to their prayer checks, but they will not be honored at the Bank of Heaven. Why? No authority exists behind the prayer because it does not have Jesus' approval. (See James 4:3.) To pray with His authority means claiming in prayer the blessings God has promised His children. One cannot pray with this authority until he first lives under authority.

To live with authority and to pray with authority, we must first be submitted to the authority of Jesus and those He has set over us. Only then have we properly taken His name into our lives.

To do all in His name also means to *act for the acclaim of Jesus*. As a temple of the Spirit of God, the Christian's life must be lived for only one purpose: that Jesus be glorified. Every day is to be lived with His honor in mind.

Peter wrote: "Whoever speaks, let him speak, as it were, the utterances of God; whoever serves, let him do so as by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever" (1 Peter 4:11). Paul echoed the same principle in 1 Corinthians 10:31: "Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."

The reason Christians get into spiritual trouble is that they do not make decisions daily based on the honor and acclaim of Jesus. Living the new life means that we will never intentionally do anything to dishonor the One whose name we wear.

CONCLUSION

Dr. Guy King was a preacher of another era in England. One day he was walking along the coast of southern England. "As I was approaching the beach one morning, this little fellow was going along there too. As he caught sight of me, he said, 'Mummie, here comes the Jesus man!'" That incident would not leave his mind. Dr. King kept asking himself, "What right had I—have I—to be called a Jesus man?"

That is an excellent question. What right do you have to be called the "Jesus man," or "Jesus woman," or "Christian" as we normally hear it? Have you put on the garments of the new man? Do you act appropriately for those who are so dressed?