

A Bouquet of Christian Graces

by John Hames

The sermon emphasizes the importance of experiencing the supernatural life of Christ, which involves putting off the old man and putting on the new man with the beautiful graces of bowels of mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long suffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, all covered with the outer garment of Divine love.

Scripture: Galatians 5:22, Ephesians 4:22, Colossians 3:1, Colossians 3:14, 1 Peter 3:8

Topics: "Christian Living", "Sanctification"

Description

John Hames preaches on the importance of adorning our lives with Christian graces as outlined in Colossians 3:1-13. He emphasizes the need for believers to not only be saved and sanctified but to allow God to refine them to be attractive and beautiful in His sight. Hames contrasts natural human religion with true Christianity, highlighting how the resurrection of Jesus imparts a supernatural life that enables believers to live by His mighty power. He delves into the process of putting off the 'old man' with his sinful deeds and putting on the 'new man,' reflecting the image of Christ through virtues like mercy, kindness, humbleness, meekness, long-suffering, forbearance, and forgiveness.

Transcript

(Col. 3: 1-13)

In the third chapter of Colossians the Apostle gives us a bouquet of Christian graces which should adorn every believer's life. It is not enough to be saved from sin or merely to be sanctified. There are degrees far deeper than a clean heart. God wishes to beautify and polish and so refine the saints that they will be attractive.

"If ye then be risen with Christ." One of the best renderings of these words, literally and according to the exact idiom, we are told, is, "If ye were then resurrected with Christ." The difference between natural human religion and true Christianity is that in the former man tries to rise to a higher plane within his own strength, only to fall back in his weakness and heart corruption. Men all through the ages have tried to live and rise higher than their own hearts, and have failed. But the religion of Jesus Christ imparts a supernatural life. Instead of trying to rise to a higher human plane, we are resurrected with Him, and are to live according to the working of His mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised Him from the dead. The resurrection of Jesus gives us a religion that is as fresh, cheerful and spontaneous as the spring morning. Most Christians live on the dark, gloomy side of Christianity. But there is a sunny side, a

summer land of love, where the birds sing, the flowers bloom and the fountains flow, and the hot sunshine of God's love fills the believer's heart, and the graces mature and ripen for eternity.

"For ye are dead." This has reference to the "old man," the "body of sin." There is a teaching set afloat in the current Holiness Movement, that we are only cleansed up to the light we have, and as we get more light, we may expect to discover hidden depths of depravity. Such erroneous teaching would never let any one get sanctified in this life. They would have us going through a constant process of dying; but the Scriptures say nothing of the kind. There is a world of difference between being saved from all sin, and being illuminated from all ignorance. Nowhere does the Bible teach that we are to be purified only up to the light we have, or as far as we can see, but as far as the infinite, all-searching eye of God can see.

"Put off the old man with his deeds." There are several Scriptural names given to original sin, such as "the carnal mind," "an evil heart," "body of sin," "the sin which does so easily beset us," and the "old man," which means the essence and image of old Adam. It makes people act like Adam. Under a searching sermon they try, like Adam, to hide behind a profession, then, when cornered, lay the blame and their lack of deep spirituality onto others. Notice, the Apostle says we are to put off this old man like we do a corpse, which we make no more provision for. The soul is not to be a cemetery for the "old man", but he is to be put off. This is not a mere fancy or playing dead, but a reality, where we die indeed to sin. Many an altar service is well-nigh ruined by shallow workers, where seekers for Holiness are hurried through with whoops -- a lot of human noise -- and the work all has to be done over in a short time. But when one gets through by the energy of the Holy Ghost, he will generally stick. Now, while the "old man" is referred to in the Scripture in the singular, the unit principle of hereditary sin, his deeds are spoken of in the plural, referring to a variety of sinful tempers. In other words, if you feel deep down in your heart the stirring and uprising of anger, resentment, retaliation, a jealous disposition, a secret spirit of envy, lustful stirrings, a touchy, sensitive spirit, they are the sproutings from the deep, latent, inbred sin of the soul. One may not feel all these in the heart, yet if we have one of these traits, they are all there. One of the first manifestations of carnality in the newly converted soul is anger. While one does not have to give way to it, nevertheless that gunpowder-like nature is there. Now we are not to put off the traits of the "old man" by piecemeal; but when the body of sin is destroyed, all his traits and manifestations go with him.

"And put on the new man." This means that the very image of Christ, which takes the place of the old man. "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercy." The Apostle is here describing the Christian experience under the figure of spiritual robes. God clothes everything He makes. He clothes the trees with leaves, the animals with a garment of their own kind, and the saints with the graces and virtues of the Spirit. The phrase "put on" means to put on as the grapevine puts on leaves from the inward sap until the whole vine is covered. So the Holy Ghost clothes the saints.

Let us notice some of the garments that are to be put on. "Bowels of mercy" -- which means softness and tenderness of heart. The Holy Ghost can not live in a hard, crusty heart. As flowers and plants grow more rapidly in tender, mellow soil, so the graces and fruits of the Spirit flourish in a tender heart. All great soul winners and missionaries have been men and women of great compassion, with yearning hearts for the fallen.

There are some things that are non-conductors of electricity, such as glass, and dry wood, and cotton string. So there are a great many lives that are non-conductors of the Holy Ghost. They are narrow, little, selfish and harsh. The Lord may get such to Heaven, but they will never be used very much of the Spirit here unless they have a breaking down, a smashing-up time in their souls.

Katherine Booth, the mother of the Salvation Army, was tender-hearted from childhood. When she was a little girl of only twelve years, she saw, one day, a policeman beating a man who was drunk. She rushed to the scene, and, bursting into tears, said to the drunkard, "Mister, I love you." It sobered him. No wonder the Lord used her in rescuing tens of thousands of souls. We need to pray much over keeping our hearts tender.

"Put on kindness." Divine kindness is a plant that does not belong to this world, but is introduced into the heart in the new birth. Under the mighty baptism of the Holy Ghost it becomes natural and easy to be kind. It will unlock more old rusty hearts' doors than any one thing in the world. Kindness is a slight change of the word 'kin-ness'. It means to have the mutual feeling for each other that we have for our own family or kin. Especially should this be true when we hear of one of God's children being abused or slandered or mistreated. There should be a tender feeling for our brother's reputation and good name.

"Humbleness of mind." This means to be so little in our own eyes that we can be contradicted, corrected and reprovved without feeling sore or touchy. The reason some are so easily provoked and offended is that they have such a great opinion of themselves. They must be looked up to, flattered and praised in order to be gotten along with "An humble saint," says Benjamin Pomeroy "can sit on a low seat and grow tall." He can be overlooked, set aside, and not feel hurt. The vision of the man of Calvary, with His thorn-crowned brow, has been so burned into his soul that he has no craving for red tape or ecclesiastical power. Such a soul is easy to warm up to and live with.

"Meekness." This is the attitude of the soul toward God. All the self-life has been burned out. "It is perfect love with a bowed head."

"Long suffering." This means that one bears all that men or devils may put on him with a sweet, Christlike spirit, without complaining or grumbling. The beauty of perfect love is that it can suffer long and still be kind. Some can suffer, but after awhile their patience gives out. The very same trials, sorrows, crosses and losses that make a heart in which Satan reigns turn in open rebellion and bitterness, will make a believer more Christlike, tender and sweet.

"Forbearing one another" means to put up with each other's faults and peculiarities. Just so long as we live in a fallen world, we might as well make up our minds that we are going to have to bear some things, if we grow in grace and keep an even, sweet temper. We will meet religious people who are cranky; these will be a trial to us unless we keep tender and melted in Divine love.

"Forgiving one another" means to carry a heart full of forgiveness for every one that may have injured us. People often wonder why their prayers are not answered, their sicknesses healed and their lives filled with joy and peace. If they will dig down a little, perhaps they will find malice or an unforgiving spirit. Maybe an unkind word has been flung at some child of God in an angry voice, hurting his influence, and has never been straightened up. Remember, no prayer reaches God so long as we harbor an unforgiving spirit. A spiritual heart would rather forgive than not to forgive.

These are the seven beautiful graces or garments we are to put on by the power of the Holy Ghost. These garments are very popular in Heaven. If we want to be in style with the heavenly world, let us see to it that our souls are clothed with these graces. Above all these things, put on charity, which is Divine love. This is the outer garment that is to cover all the others. In the Eastern countries, the outer garment is a long, pure white mantle. So Divine love is that pure, white mantle which is to be put on over all the other graces, which is our full dress that prepares us to meet the heavenly Bridegroom.

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