

DAY 1 - (week beginning Mon 2 Jul 2018)**Read - Romans 13:11-14**

“Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh.” vs 14

Romans is a good place to start this week. Remembering that our theme is “The way of Christ”

In this passage from Romans and in our passage from Colossians that we will see later in the week, Paul talks about our behaviour – things we do and say.

In our modern world, it seems that anything goes – people do and say the most ridiculous, hurtful and damaging things. They behave as if they can do whatever they want without any consequences. We have seen numerous hate crimes around the world where people go out to kill scores of random people. We have also seen some people in our own country who say some really dumb, hurtful things in public as if it doesn't matter.

Paul makes the point very clearly that the way we behave does matter. Our behaviour not only affects others – it also affects us and the quality of our life. He is not simply talking about the external consequences of our behaviour, but also about how our behaviour affects us as people, and our relationship with God.

So as we journey through this week, let Paul tell us how wonderful Jesus is, and begin to think in terms of clothing ourselves with Christ.

Prayer: Father, please help me to have a good honest look at myself this week – through your eyes of grace.

DAY 2**Read - Zechariah 3:1-7**

“The angel said to those who were standing before him, “Take off his filthy clothes.” Then he said to Joshua, “See, I have taken away your sin, and I will put fine garments on you.”” vs 4

The analogy that Paul uses of clothing ourselves with Christ is one that is found quite often in Scripture.

Zechariah has a vision of the final judgement and sees Satan accusing the high priest Joshua as he stands before the angel of God. The angel rebukes Satan and tells Joshua to take off his filthy clothes of sin. He then clothes Joshua in 'fine garments' that represent the cleansing of his sin.

In our world we tend to make judgements on people based on their clothes: if they are dirty and damaged then they must be street people; if they are trendy and expensive they must be important people. That is why nowadays we have the brand name on the outside and not on the inside!

But we also get our image of people from their behaviour – that is why, in many ways, the way we act is like the clothes we wear.

Zechariah's vision, which was brought to fruition in Jesus, was that we would be forgiven from our sins and so no longer be clothed in our sinfulness, but rather in glorious, clean clothes that reflect the glory and holiness of God.

In Colossians Paul makes the same point.

Meditate: What 'picture' of you do people get by your actions? What is good about that and what is not so good?

DAY 3**Read - Colossians 3:1-17**

“Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.” vs 9

As we can see in this passage, Paul goes to great lengths to highlight those practices that are sinful and not appropriate for followers of Jesus.

He starts off with the 'obvious' ones and then moves on to the 'less extreme' behaviours – “anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips.”

Note that in our key verse for today, Paul continues the analogy of clothing. He does not simply say “You must stop doing these things”. Instead he talks about us “taking off the old self” and “putting on the new self”. This new self is made in the image of its Creator.

Remember that earlier in Colossians Paul had highlighted that “in him [Jesus] all things were created” (Col 1:16). So the image is Jesus as the model for our behaviour.

In order for us to 'change our clothes' we have to first take off the old dirty ones. We can't carry on trying to wear both sets of clothes – it becomes uncomfortable to live that way as we are trying to be two different things at the same time. Eventually our two sets of clothes come out at the wrong time.

The first step in being clothed with Jesus is to be prepared to give up your old clothes.

Meditate: What do you need to give up?

DAY 4

Read - Colossians 3:1-17

“Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.” vs 8

Having told us what clothes (behaviours) we need to take off, Paul moves on to highlight the behaviours that we need to focus on.

Notice firstly that these behaviours are all focused on others. They are outward focused and one can’t really do them to yourself (except maybe being patient with yourself).

The behaviours that Paul said we should ‘take off’ are behaviours that affect others negatively, but are in fact a reaction to others that is focused on ourselves.

This is probably one of the biggest lessons we all have to learn as we strive to follow Jesus – the more we focus on ourselves, the more we become (or stay) like the rest of the world. On the other hand, the more we focus on others, the more we find joy and peace in life for ourselves.

The world is constantly telling us that you must look after number 1 - that is how we end up with the mess we have! The best way to look after yourself is to focus on the good of others.

Prayer: Father, please help me to understand Your ways and do what You want.

DAY 5

Read - Galatians 5:16-26

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.” vs 22-24

Paul had the same message to tell the Galatians but phrased a slightly differently. Note that he spoke about the wrong behaviours and then the right behaviours. There are some people in this world who really think that what we do does not matter – God is not one of those!

However, Paul here clearly speaks of these good actions as ‘the fruit of the Spirit’. Here once again we encounter the good news of the gospel – we don’t have to do all this on our own!

We don’t change our clothes by our own effort, we do so by allowing the Spirit to work in and through us. If we try on our own, the clean clothes will soon become dirty again.

Jesus promised us the Holy Spirit to help us to be able to live the life God wanted for us. The Holy Spirit is there to help and empower us, but it is us who have to want it.

Most people know the difference between right and wrong, the real issue is whether they care about it. We first have to have the motivation to want to change ‘our clothes’ for the Spirit to be able to help us.

This is not ‘I wish I was different’ but rather an absolute determination to change.

Prayer: Lord help me to be want to change.

DAY 6

Read - Colossians 3:1-17

“Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.” vs 16

Once we have the clear determination to follow Jesus more closely and to be more like Him, then we need to allow the Spirit to work in our lives.

The world makes its daily choices and decisions based on what they think, hear from friends, read in magazines, see on TV etc. If we use these same sources of ‘knowledge’ to make our choices, we should not expect our life to be any different from the rest of the world.

We need to use a different source of knowledge – the knowledge that comes from God. As Paul notes, we can get this knowledge from focusing on Jesus (‘the message of Christ’), discussing and engaging with other Christians and through worshipping God with gratitude.

We have to change the way we make decisions in our lives if we are to see the change that the Spirit can bring. We need to allow His prompting to change the way we behave. When there is another voice in our head leading us to do things differently – that is probably the Spirit and if we listen to that prompting and change our choice of action, we will start to see a difference.

We don’t have to make the difference, we just need to choose it, the Spirit will then start to clothe us with Jesus!

Prayer: Father help me make good choices!