

Lesson 16: “The Wardrobe of the Chosen”

3:12-14

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Colossians 3:12-14 *So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.*

God loves to use analogy of everyday aspects of our life to teach us spiritual truths. Here in Colossians through the apostle Paul, God uses the taking off and putting on of clothing to teach us the critical importance of taking off bad and sinful qualities and putting on good and godly qualities.

Last week, Pastor Drew helped us see the importance of “taking off” such idolatrous and evil behavior as sexual impurity, anger, abusive speech and lying. But when we take off clothing, to use the analogy, it leaves us “naked” and “exposed” and unfit for any social contact. So Paul continues in today’s passage with God’s teaching regarding what we should “put on” instead, in order to be properly spiritually clothed.

He begins in verse 12 with, “*So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on ...*” And then he goes on to list a proper wardrobe of righteousness. But before examining those spiritual garments, I don’t want you to miss the three motivations he gives us for wanting to re-clothe ourselves.

3 MOTIVATIONS FOR A RIGHTEOUS WARDROBE (v.12a)

1. I am CHOSEN
2. I am HOLY
3. I am BELOVED

1. CHOSEN

I daresay that if you were chosen to be honored in person by the president, or attend a royal ball, you would spend some significant effort in choosing the proper clothing to wear to such a special occasion. Day by day, you might be most comfortable in well-worn jeans and a T-shirt, but for these monumental events those just wouldn’t do. Oh, “what to wear, what to wear?”

Well, as a child of the King of Heaven, you have been chosen among all the billions of people that have ever walked this earth, to honor the “president” of the universe by representing Him in this life of yours. And in addition, you possess reserved tickets to attend the royal ball of all royal balls in heaven one day soon. And it can well be said that this life you are now living is a life-long preparation to choose and put on the appropriate clothing to wear for that heavenly banquet. That you are chosen of God should be a HUGE motivation to wear His righteous clothing!

2 Thessalonians 2:13 *But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth.*

2. HOLY

To be “holy” is literally to be “set apart” for a divine purpose. Yes, Christian, you are special! God has a purpose for you that you surely have only begun to discover. Since you are declared as “holy” by the God of the universe, don’t you want to wear “holy” clothes? And I don’t mean those old work pants that have holes in the knees. I mean the righteous clothing described in the rest of our passage. Since you are “set apart,” God doesn’t want you to look and act the

same as all the billions of non-believers out there. He requires a new wardrobe for His “holy” ones. That you are holy should be a HUGE motivation to wear only His holy clothing.

Ephesians 1:4 *He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him.*

3. BELOVED

I remember growing up, that knowing I was loved – truly loved – by my parents was my greatest motivation to want to behave so as to please them. And that should be our greatest motivation to want to please God – to know that we are truly beloved by Him. That God is eternally and passionately in love with you should give you every motivation you need to proudly wear His righteous wardrobe. Dress appropriately for the one who can’t take His eyes off of you!

Romans 9:25 *As He says also in Hosea, “I will call those who were not My people, “My people,” and here who was not beloved, “beloved.”*

So chosen, holy and beloved. Notice how Peter in his first epistle puts these three motivations all together, as he quotes from Exodus 19:6.

1 Peter 1:9 *But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.*

Here Peter attributes to the Church that which formerly described the covenant people of Israel. It is not that the Church has displaced the Jews, but rather that the Gentile believers have been “grafted in” or “adopted into the family” with full equality as the chosen, holy and beloved of God.

3 IMPLICATIONS IN BEING ASKED TO “PUT ON” (v. 12b)

1. It is a COVERING
2. It is a COMMAND
3. It is a CHOICE

1. A COVERING

To “put on” God’s new clothing is to cover the spiritual nakedness of our life without it. In the garden of Eden after their sin, Adam and Eve felt spiritually “naked” (as they had been physically naked up to that point) and felt the urge and need to become clothed so as to be appropriate before God. In a similar way, when we “take off” the sinful characteristics mentioned in our previous Colossians passage, we are still found to be sinners, despite our righteous standing. And we find ourselves desperately in need of new spiritual clothing, to be dressed appropriately before God.

1 Peter 4:8 *Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins.*

It is not that our sin needs “covering” for salvation – Jesus has already taken care of that on the cross of Calvary. But the righteous wardrobe of God, all beautiful expressions of love for others, “covers” our still sinful self and shows off God, rather than ourselves. These qualities are like sweet perfume that lets others see the beautiful God in us, rather than the ugly self in us. After all, these qualities that we are about to name, are all a fruit of the Spirit, not of self-effort.

2. A COMMAND

Though it is expressed in the polite language of “put on ...” these things, and comes across as simply a pleasant suggestion, make no mistake – it is a command of God to do so. God is not giving us a list of “self-helps to being nice.” Rather He is commanding His chosen, holy and beloved children to correctly behave. Just as your parents did not “suggest” you wear nice clothes to an important event, but told you in no uncertain terms to do so – so God is here not suggesting, but commanding. We dare not dismiss His divine instruction.

3. A CHOICE

Yet, as always with God's commands, we have a choice to make. God could "make us" do it, but He desires a willing heart. And make special note that God never asks us to do these "character adjustments" by our own will power. Will power never works in the spiritual realm.

Zechariah 4:6 "Not by might or by power, but by My Spirit." Says the Lord of hosts.

Romans 9:16 So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy.

Galatians 5:25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.

So hopefully we all understand that by "putting on" these following qualities we are "covering" ourselves appropriately, obeying God's command, and making a conscious choice to cooperate with the Holy Spirit to do so. Now let's showcase the chic wardrobe God wants you to wear.

THE WARDROBE OF THE CHOSEN (v. 12c–14)

We now see listed eight godly characteristics, or "garments" of righteousness, that God has hand-picked and provided by His inner Spirit, for you to wear. As you peruse the list, it is easy to see that these are qualities you were encouraged to have by your parents, or guardians, and by your school teachers. Here God is doubling down on what you already have been taught as children, but now need to be sure you are taking into your adult life as representing your new-found faith in Christ – your "being raised up with Christ" life. We may *know* we are supposed to act this way, but God (and we ourselves if we are honest) know that we don't always do so.

And more, God doesn't want us to merely achieve these characteristics by self-effort. These are gifts of the Spirit, "fruit" of the Spirit as they are called in Galatians 5:22-23. In other words, God wants us to work in cooperation with the Holy Spirit within us to produce these garments of righteousness. He wants us to bear *His* fruit, not our own attempts to make them happen. As we find ourselves lacking in these qualities, we pray for Him to produce them in us, and then we strive with Him to grow in those areas. He wants us to wear *His* wardrobe, not ours.

To help us in remembering and relating to each of these eight qualities, I want to attach each of them to a part of our body. So imagine with me if you will, or draw if you prefer, a simply body with head, shoulders, arms, torso, waist, legs and feet. If you are like me, it will be a simple stick-like figure. It doesn't need to be a piece of art – just a helpful outline. And for character, give the face eyes, nose and mouth. And oh yes, give it a heart in the center of the chest area. Have you imagined it, or better, drawn it?

1. COMPASSION

Draw an arrow from the HEART, to the word "compassion." That makes sense, as we in our culture think of the heart as the center of our emotions. God wants His children to be "heart-felt" for the most at risk. And in this time of Covid-19 concerns, we all know what "at risk" means. He wants the Christian heart to "beat" with compassion, expressed in deeds of mercy. We are not to just "feel sorry" for the hurting, but to do what we can to alleviate the suffering.

It must start and continue with prayer. And then ...

Galatians 6:9-10 Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary. So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.

We can't help all, but we can certainly help one, or some. Be alert to God's leading. Maybe it is helping an individual, or maybe it is giving to a charitable ministry in service or contribution. But wear this garment of compassion as what is delightfully elegant to your Heavenly Father.

2. KINDNESS

Now draw an arrow from the MOUTH, to the word “kindness.” Just as Paul’s list of things to “take off” were generally expressed from the mouth – anger, slander, abusive speech, lying, etc., so kindness is generally expressed from our mouth. James, the brother of Jesus, is the one who challenged believers to “tame” their tongue with kindness, rather than flames of evil speaking. Listen to these Biblical admonishments about the power of kindness from our mouth:

Ephesians 4:29 *Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear.*

Hebrews 3:13 *But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called “Today,” so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.*

May each follower of Christ strive to be “clothed” in the sweet garment of kindness!

3. HUMILITY

For “humility,” draw an arrow from the feet. “Feet” is an appropriate reminder, because humility is “lowliness” of person, and being “on the same level” as others. It is “walking in another’s shoes” to better relate to him or her. No one was greater than our Lord Jesus, yet no one has ever been more humble. Humility is a stunning, but rare garment to behold.

Philippians 2:3-5 *Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind, regard one another as more important than yourselves. Don’t merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Have this attitude in yourselves, which was also in Christ Jesus.*

4. GENTLENESS

For “gentleness,” draw an arrow from the brain, or mind – the forehead of your figure. This is because “gentleness” means literally “brain-washed” as in a horse “broken” of a wild spirit, or a wild animal “tamed.” The word is often also translated “meekness” in our Bibles. But “meekness” is not “weakness,” but strength of a calm and self-controlled spirit, or better, a Spirit-controlled spirit. When Jesus spoke of the “yoke” he wanted his followers to wear, the word for “yoke” is the same word as is translated “gentle.” The wants us to wear this garment, or yoke.

Matthew 11:29 *Take My yoke [gentleness] upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest [taming, being broken] for your souls.*

5. PATIENCE

I chose the waist, where the belt is on your figure, to remind me of “patience.” Why? Because patience is “sucking it in” and “taking a deep breath” when things get crazy around you. Patience is staying even-tempered at all costs – not overly agitated nor wimpy in not caring. It is “rising above,” the fray, being “raised up with Christ” as we learned in Colossians 3:1. It is not saying “whatever, I could care less,” nor getting angry and overreacting. It is taking those times that try our patience and turning them into opportunities to show the patience of God with those He loves, and that we should love with patience as well.

1 Peter 2:20b *But if when you do what is right and suffer, patiently enduring it, this finds favor with God.*

6. FORBEARANCE

“Forbearance” is to bear with one another. And since we bear burdens on our shoulder, draw an arrow from your figure’s shoulder to “forbearance.” Forbearance is also “shrugging off” irritations. The prefix “for” indicates what comes “before” the bearing. Therefore, forbearance implies forgiving and bearing the burden before it even happens. This is what we do with those we love – we “pre-forgive” them or “forbear” them. This is an article of righteous clothing that many know not how to wear, but oh what a blessed garment to those who receive its blessing.

Philippians 4:5 *Let your forbearance be known to all men. The Lord is near.*

(note: many translations use “gentle spirit” instead of forbearance, but the literal meaning is forbearance – bearing with and through the struggles with others)

Galatians 6:2 *Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.*

7. FORGIVENESS

Now draw an arrow from the hand(s) to “forgiveness.” Why? Because the hands can cling tightly onto something, or release it, such as we need to do in order to forgive. We must “let go” and “release” our resentment, bitterness and need to retaliate. That doesn't mean our hurt is over and the wrongdoing is gone. Nor does it mean all consequences are dismissed.

But forgiveness is treating the offender with respect and cordiality as if the offense never happened. That is exactly what God does for us as sinners. In His forgiveness he releases and lets go of our sin, and treats us with love and respect – even though there may surely yet be consequences to our sin. “*Father forgive them, for they know not what they do*” should ever ring in our ears when we are faced with forgiving another. Yes, they probably did know exactly what they were doing in respect to their action, but in the eternal and long-lasting respect they probably did not know what the impact of their sin would have. So like God does for us, we must always forgive, for our offender truly doesn't really know what he or she is doing.

Matthew 6:14 *For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.*

8. LOVE

And now we have come to the final and ultimate garment of righteousness that God want us to wear and show off – at all times, and that is LOVE. He says here, “beyond all things” put on love. He says LOVE is the “perfect bond of unity.” You see, LOVE is the all-purpose garment, that is always in style, always appropriate and always utilitarian. It fits all circumstances. If you don't know what to say – speak words of LOVE. If you don't know how to act – do something that shows LOVE. If you don't know how to react – react in a LOVING manner.

So put a big robe or cloak over your figure, representing LOVE, the all-purpose, ever-appropriate garment. Never be without it. Always take it with you. Have it when you are sad, mad, happy, worried, anxious, lonely or just bland. Always speak and act in the universal language, the ever-stunning garment, of LOVE.

May we ever cooperate with the Holy Spirit, who possesses these qualities in perfection, to put on these beautiful godly garments every day, every way, all the time. This is living “above the world” and “raised up with Christ” being found “complete in Him.” This is proudly and humbly wearing “The Wardrobe of the Chosen.” AMEN