

Complete: Put Your Best Outfit On – Colossians 3:12-17

Around 15-20 years ago Bethany and I would occasionally watch this reality TV show called *What Not To Wear*. It's a little embarrassing to think about it now, but here's how the show worked.

People could nominate a co-worker, family member or friend to be a participant on the show. And they would always nominate someone who had terrible style in dress. Sometimes the friend would send video to the show with their nomination of just how badly the nominee dressed. If the show chose to have you on, the hosts would show up and surprise you and tell you that your friend or family member has nominated you for our show because you have terrible style. The good news is that we are here to help. Then they would give them fashion advice and \$5,000 to go and buy new clothes.

There were a number of interesting elements to the show. Of course, it's always funny to see people get nominated and told they dress terribly. Then, it was fun to see people get to spend the money and dress completely differently by the end of the show. Sometimes they would look like a new person.

One of the biggest struggles people often have with dress is just a failure to dress appropriately for the occasion or their age. When I say appropriately, I don't mean that people dress immodestly or scandalously. You want to dress in a way that fits the occasion. So, you don't wear jean shorts and a tank top to a wedding. Come to think of it, guys, you should never wear jean shorts and a tank top. You also don't wear a wool suit to a 4th of July pool party, or pajamas to a job interview, or an evening gown and high heels on a 5 mile hike. If you are 55 you shouldn't dress like your 17 and vice versa. Matching your clothing to the occasion is a social grace and a way to put others at ease.

We saw Paul last week in Colossians 3:5-11 use language that speaks to clothing. He said in verse 8 that there are certain qualities that Christians cannot wear but must remove. We can't clothe ourselves in these qualities because they don't fit our new status in Christ. Look at verses 9-10. Notice in verse 10 that we have put on the new self which is being renewed. We talked last time about this renewal as

a lifelong process and that process involves putting on new qualities that match our status. One author said it like this: *The Christian is a new self, but he must learn to act like it.* – Richard Melick

We want to increasingly learn to dress appropriately to our new status in Christ. There are qualities and ways of life that we must put on. So, what does the new life in Christ look like? Let's talk about what you should wear. **5 Articles of Spiritual Clothing to Put On because of Your New Identity.**

1. Settle into Your Selection (v. 12)

The New Testament never just gives us a disconnected string of commands to obey or a list of qualities to develop. We always get the motivation for why we ought to obey those commands or put on those qualities. We saw this last week when Paul told us to put away anger, wrath, malice, etc. Now that Paul tells us what to put on, he gives us the right motivation, and it's rooted in our identity in Christ. Look at the beginning of verse 12. Paul lays out 3 identity markers for us that shape the type of lives we are to live moving forward.

First, he says that if you are in Christ, you are God's chosen ones. The Bible talks quite regularly about Christians being chosen by God or elected by God and some people have concerns about this sort of language. But what this language is doing is pointing us to the beautiful reality that God made the first move. He sought us when we were dead in our sins and couldn't seek Him. He loved us when we hated Him and were in rebellion against Him. Listen to Ephesians 1:3-4.

If you are a follower of Christ this morning God put this together as a part of His plan before you were ever born. He set His affection on you and opened your eyes to the glory of the gospel even when you would never have chosen Him.

And this choice of His to bring you to salvation indicates that these other two qualities define us. Look again at verse 12. To be holy is to be set apart or dedicated to God for His purposes and use. I think you know what beloved means but think about what this tells you about your identity this morning. Listen to John 3:35 and then let's read Ephesians 1:3-4 again and add verses 5-6. The Father loves and the Son and you and I are now adopted as sons and accepted into the

Beloved. The same love that flows from the Father to the Son in the Godhead now includes you. And, you have been selected and set apart for this love. Listen to 1 John 4:10.

But so often we doubt this truth. Perhaps we struggle to put on the qualities we are going to talk about in a minute because we cannot seem to settle into our status in the beloved by God's initiative. Here's what the puritan John Owen counseled regarding God's love for us and our enjoyment of fellowship with Him and life change from Him.

How, then, is the love of the Father to be received, so as to hold fellowship with him? The answer, by faith. The receiving of it is the believing of it...Let the soul frequently eye the love of the Father...so eye it as to receive it. Unless this be added, all is vain as to any communion with God. We do not hold communion with him in any thing until it is received by faith. This, then, is what I would provoke the saints of God unto, even to believe this love of God for themselves and their own part, believe that such is the heart of the Father towards them, accept of his witness herein. His love is not ours in the sweetness of it until it be so received. – John Owen

You cannot and will not truly put on any of the rest of these qualities unless you start here. Relax into the sweetness of this truth this morning. God has loved you and accepted you. And then, turn that love outward toward others.

2. Selfless Love (vv. 12-14)

Let's read the rest of verse 12. Paul gives us 5 characteristics that define our relationships with others as God's beloved children. You may remember that he gave us 5 negative qualities in both verses 5 and 8 and now he gives us the remedy for those qualities. These are the qualities that bring healing and wholeness to relationships.

These are characteristics that get built into you as you lean into God's love for you. You deal with others in compassion and kindness. In other words, you understand their weaknesses and struggles and know how God has been kind to you in yours. You are humble and meek. You don't draw attention to self and are not overly

impressed with your own importance. You are patient with others and remain calm, especially during difficulty. Notice that verse 13 gives us two actions that define how to express this list of 5 in very practical ways in the life of the church.

To bear with one another is to endure difficulty with others. I don't know if you are aware of this, but occasionally people can be annoying, challenging, difficult, and even exasperating. Occasionally I can be annoying, challenging, difficult and even exasperating, and so can you. To bear with one another is to be longsuffering and to forgive is to be quick to put the wrong done behind you.

Paul puts all of these together in verse 14. Notice the language used. Love binds all of these together. There's actually no command here, even though it looks like it in English. This says something like this, "upon all of these love." It's like you lay love on top of all of these qualities in verses 12-13 and it brings everything together. Love is the glue in our relationships. If you stick with the clothing metaphor, love is the article of clothing that makes the whole outfit work. Guys, nothing about that sentence resonated with you. Love is chassis on which the car is built. It holds all the parts together. It's the frame of the house. Without love, compassion and patience may become distorted, but love keeps them all centered on Christ and aimed at the honest good of the other person. Love keeps us unified even when people and circumstances are challenging. And this brings us to our 3rd article of spiritual clothing.

3. Submission to Unity (v. 15)

Look at verse 15. What sort of peace are we dealing with here? Is this an internal sense of calm and serenity or a peace that comes to a community of people? Notice the language of being called in one body. The peace of Christ is the peace that Christ brings through His death on the cross and our reconciliation to God. This bring peace with God and this peace should define our relationships with others.

Notice it says that this peace should rule in our relationships. The idea here is of an umpire or referee. I will occasionally get frustrated with the calls of a referee in one of my kids sports games. But it's also true that you cannot play a game

without a referee. The idea here is that Christ's peace control our relationships and define them. In other words, peace should be the determining factor. We don't sacrifice the gospel for a veneer of peace, but Christ's peace brings unity to the church. If I am at peace with God, I can figure out how to be at peace with you. Let's look at our 4th article of clothing.

4. Saturation in the Word (v. 16)

Verse 16. Here's the point. As a church body, the Word about Christ, the gospel, should be the water we swim in. It's should saturate everything we do. Paul says that we should be teaching and admonishing one another in wisdom. This is the same language that Paul used in 1:28 to define his own ministry. In other words, teaching the Word of God and admonishing one another in wisdom is not just the domain of pastors. The pulpit isn't the only time this happens. If you are "in Christ" and have a new identity, you wear the clothing of the Word of God. You immerse yourself in Scripture and it comes out.

This saturation even extends to our singing. When we gather for worship, we teach one another the Word by singing to each other and encouraging one another in all the varieties of music we sing with. So, sing out. Sing so that others can hear you and so that together we can build the truths of Scripture into our lives.

5. Showcase Christ (v. 17)

Finally, verse 17 sort of summarizes the approach to all of what we've seen in verses 12-16. Notice it says "whatever you do" and then gives you two categories that encompass all of life, words and deeds.

Whether you are speaking or acting, inside the church or out, in relationships or alone, all that you do is to be clothed by the name of Jesus Christ. This doesn't mean that you pronounce the name of Jesus before you do something. But it means that all of life comes under the Lordship of Christ. The character of Jesus shapes all that you do. So, you interact in relationships as Christ would. You carry yourself in meekness and humility because that's what Jesus did.

You let the peace of Christ rule in your heart and the Word define your life. When you go to work, enjoy your hobbies, engage in family life, or worship at church, all of it is defined by Christ's character and empowered by His Spirit.

But how do you know if you are doing this? Well, there's at least one thing we can clearly point out from this passage. Go back to verse 15 and look at the end of it. "Be thankful". Now look at verse 16 as the Word dwells in you and as you sing what defines you. And finally, at the end of verse 17.

3 times Paul tells us that thankfulness is vital for our new identity in Christ. Thankfulness sees grace and responds to it and nothing defines the work of God toward us more than grace. It's all a gift.

I cannot stress to you how simple this is but how necessary this is. Thankfulness rightly situates our hearts and lives as those who have received something we didn't deserve. That's the perspective change that must be at the heart of our new identity. If you don't grasp this, you don't understand the work of Christ and the gospel.

If there's one thing you can do to change your perspective and put on these articles of spiritual clothing, take 5 minutes each day to write down 10 things you are thankful for and begin with some aspect of Christ's work on the cross for you. Do this for a month straight and see if you aren't beginning to dress in a way that is more fitting to your new identity in Christ. An identity that is defined by love and grace. Let's pray.

Sermon Reflection Questions – 5/24/26

- What's the worst example you have seen of someone's dress not matching the occasion?
- Paul moves from 'take off' to 'put on' between these two passages. Which of those movements — letting go of something or actively cultivating something — feels harder in your own life right now, and why?
- Explain this quote: *The Christian is a new self, but he must learn to act like it.* – Richard Melick
- The biblical teaching on election is meant to be a comfort. Does that framing change how you've thought about this doctrine? What emotions does it bring up for you?
- What are some practical ways to deepen our belief that God truly does love us?
- Which of the qualities in verse 12 is the most challenging for you to cultivate? Can you describe a time recently where you felt you needed it but struggled to display it?
- What does it mean to bear with one another (v. 13)?
- Describe a time when someone helped you through personal teaching or admonishment?

- We suggested making a list of 10 items you are grateful for daily. What keeps you from doing this and what's one simple action step you could try to help you do this?