

Colossians 3:12-17

We have different clothes for different occasions. The occasion or activity determines the attire. Something very similar is true in our Christian walk. Because we are believers in Jesus Christ by faith we are to put on appropriate attire. I'm not talking about physical clothing like dress, sweater, coat and tie etc., but attitudes and actions that show we are Christians. That is what Paul is driving at in Col. 3:12-17. We are to “wear” our Sunday best on a daily basis as those who are God's family.

It also seems to me that as believers one of the reasons we don't put on the Christian attire – attitudes and actions honoring to God - is because we don't see the need for it. For instance, why should I show compassion for someone who has made poor choices and gotten themselves into trouble? Why should I forgive when I have been hurt so badly? Why should I be kind to so-and-so when they never seem to appreciate it and never say “*thank you*”? Why do I need to be patient or put up with the personalities of people that drive me nuts?

God knows how we think and the types of questions we ask so before he tells us the wardrobe itself he gives us the rationale – why the items listed in the following verses are appropriate attire for the believer.

The outline or overview of the passage before us looks something like this:

I. The Rationale for Putting on Christian Attire

A. You are a new person in Christ 3:9-11

B. You are special to God 3:12a

1. You are Chosen

2. You are Holy

3. You are Beloved

II. The Wardrobe Described 3:12b-14

A. General Treatment of Others 3:12b

1. Compassion

2. Kindness

3. Humility

4. Gentleness

B. Reaction to Others

1. Patience

2. Forbearance

3. Forgiveness

III. The Thread that Holds the Wardrobe Together 3:14

IV. Evidence that you are Wearing Christian Attire 3:15-17

A. Allow the Peace of Christ to Rule 3:15

B. Allow the Word of God to Saturate your mind and words 3:16

C. Live to God's Glory with Thankfulness 3:17

I. The Rationale for Putting on Christian Attire

A. You are a new person in Christ 3:9-11

This idea takes us back to Rocky's lesson from two weeks ago, particularly the last three verses where we were reminded that we are no longer who we once were. The old self, who we were before we came to faith in Christ, has been replaced by the new self who we are in Christ which Paul describes as a renewal.

Simply put, you and I will not put on our Christian wardrobe unless we remember who we are in Christ. Paul continues that theme with three specific words that describe our current state as believers – chosen, holy and beloved. These are exalted titles formerly used as designations for the nation of Israel (Deut. 4:37; 7:7–8) but now applied to the new community in Christ (1 Pet. 2:9–10). Taken together they show how special we are to God.

B. You are special to God 3:12a

1. You are Chosen

God chose you! He wants you for his own. If you have trusted in Jesus Christ as your Savior you are chosen. It simply means that God took the initiative in our redemption. No one decides for God on their own initiative. We were dead in our sins and incapable of deciding anything for God. The idea of God taking the initiative and choosing is found throughout Scripture.

It's true for Israel – Deut. 7:6-8

It's true for the disciples – John 15:16

It's true for the church – Eph 1:4; 1 Peter 1:1-2

Because you are chosen, because you have been renewed, because the Spirit of God lives in you, you are also holy.

2. You are Holy

The word *holy* means “*set apart*” or “*a cut above*”, “*totally separate from*”. As believers in Christ we are set apart for God and set apart from sin. We are not our own as we have been bought with the precious blood of Christ.

The Bible describes our salvation as a marriage relationship with Christ. We are the Bride and he is the Bridegroom. We are set apart for each other. He has no other bride and I have no other Savior. Just as it is appropriate for me to act married because I am married so it is appropriate for me to act as a Christian (holy) because I am holy – set apart for God. It would be just as inappropriate for me to act as if I wasn’t married – live for myself and be with other women – as it is inappropriate for us as believers to live for ourselves and indulge the flesh.

3. You are Beloved

We are objects of God’s special love. It’s the same word that is used to describe God’s relationship with his Son – Matt. 3:17; Luke 3:22 – “*This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.*” The tense of the Greek word used here is timeless. God has always been and always will be pleased with His Son.

We stand before God tremendously loved and intimately cared for. We are addressed as ‘*beloved*’ multiple times in the NT – Rom. 1:7; Eph. 1:6; 1 Thess. 1:4; 2 Thess. 2:13; Jude 1

These three words describe who we are to God – chosen, holy and beloved. Because of who we are, dress appropriately. What follows is the believer’s wardrobe - tuxedos-to-t-shirts...suits-to-sweats. Once we know who we are in Christ we have a responsibility to live that out in our relationships.

Look again at the list of clothes in vv. 12b-14. It doesn’t take a master’s degree in biology or even a grade school ‘A’ in English to see that the wardrobe has a major purpose – how to get along agreeably with disagreeable people. It’s not a manual or a monk’s robe for the private interior life of mystical contemplation. It’s attire that helps us get along with people. Because how we get along with people is often a truer test of our Christian character than our theological knowledge.