

“The Clothing of Gratitude”—Colossians 3:12-17

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “The Clothing of Gratitude”, is Colossians 3:12-17 → *Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

“I just don’t know what to wear!” This statement may not be made by many of us on a regular basis. However, when trying to make a decision about what to wear for a special occasion we may find ourselves “frazzled” over selecting the attire which best fits the event. For many people just making the decision

of what to wear each morning can be quite an experience! While many may view clothing as a fashion statement in every area of their lives others may think more seriously about their clothing only at “appropriate” times . . . and most people have their own ideas of “appropriate” clothing for “appropriate” times.

The Bible talks about clothing as well to describe our lives in relationship with the LORD. Isaiah rejoiced in the LORD because He had *clothed* him *with the garments of salvation* and *covered* him *with the robe of righteousness*. (cf. Isaiah 61:10) Galatians 3:27 says that *as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on* or clothed yourselves with *Christ*. Revelation 7:13-14 describes those in heaven *clothed in white robes* as those who *have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb*. It’s about faith in Jesus and being “covered” by His blood with the forgiveness of sins and eternal life through His means of grace!

Thus, “getting dressed” from God’s perspective takes on a whole new meaning because it has to do with the actions which reflect Jesus in our daily lives. God tells us in verses 12-13 of our text to clothe ourselves with *compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive*. Such actions

actually go “against the grain” of our sinful natures and our sense of justice. Oh sure, it may be easier to be compassionate, kind, humble, gentle, patient and forgiving to those whom we feel “deserve” such treatment because they’ve displayed the same kind of behavior toward us . . . or because we have a special relationship with them. There are those to whom we must show such behavior because you may be able to pick your friends but not your relatives. Do you ever find yourself being compassionate, kind, humble, gentle, patient and forgiving to others while being resentful about having to do so the whole time? Your self-righteousness prevents you from displaying such behaviors properly, especially if the others whom you are serving are totally ungrateful for your sacrifice and service!

Notice that *which binds* all of these actions *together in perfect harmony—love*. Such actions will have no place in our lives without living as *God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved* in Jesus Christ. In His Person & Work we see these virtuous actions **in perfection** as He humbled Himself to save a bunch of ungrateful sinners; as He had compassion and showed kindness to those who were unthankful and simply went happily on their merry way relieved of their pain; as He dealt gently and showed forgiveness to those who rejected Him, mistreated Him and finally killed Him on a cross. Sinners are certainly a bunch of ingrates!

This is why such actions which we are instructed to display amongst each other, especially the church who is called into one body in Christ, must flow from our identity in Christ. Romans 5:8 says: *God shows His love for us in that **while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*** The expression of love through these actions can only flow from God's love for us ungrateful, unthankful sinners! Thankfulness can flow only from the grace experience! It can flow only when *peace of Christ* rules in your hearts because of sin forgiven in humble repentance and faith in Jesus!

In verse 16 of our text Paul describes our worship services, within which thankfulness is a re-occurring theme. Unlike the concept of thankfulness which comes with the declaration of a national holiday such as Thanksgiving Day, the thankfulness in our text is much more than simply thanking God for all the wonderful physical blessings which we enjoy each day. A simply natural knowledge of God can produce such an attitude of gratitude without conversion or an understanding of this "Provider" or "god" to whom one is grateful.

Colossians 3:10 reveals a much deeper basis for giving thanks. Christians *have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its Creator.* We know from Whom we have received all blessings because He has revealed Himself to us in His Word, the Bible! We recognize

the true nature of His blessings primarily in the forgiveness of sins, so we can experience the eternal blessings of His grace in Christ! This is why it is so important to *let the word of Christ dwell in you richly*. As we gather in worship we teach and admonish *one another in all wisdom* by the proclamation of God's Law which shows us our sin and His Gospel which shows us our Savior, Jesus Christ! We gather to sing *psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in our hearts to God!* The liturgy and hymns are filled with *the word of Christ* and deliver this word as we speak and sing praises and thanks to Him! It's all about being clothed with Christ Jesus!

The "clothing of gratitude" in Christ is not something you put on and take off only when you think it is "appropriate." You don't clothe yourself with Christ only when you're "in church" or at "religious" events of some kind. You don't "change into" a different outfit—that is, become a different person when you're away from worship in family settings, on the job, enjoying recreational events and so forth. You are clothed with Christ in those situation as well and the Holy Spirit desires to display the fruit of *love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control* in all the vocations, activities, conversations and relationship of your life. (cf. Galatians 5:22-23) Do your family Thanksgiving Day celebrations overflow with such actions? We know only too well how sin and satan strives to destroy the peace of Christ in

even the most “religious” family celebrations.

This is why Ephesians 6:10-11 refers to this “clothing of gratitude” as *armor*, telling us to *be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.* It goes on to describe this *armor*, all of which describes the Person & Work of Jesus Who has defeated the devil’s power in our lives through His life, death and resurrection!

Think of your “holiday” experiences. Those “personality struggles” within your family which breed contempt for one another—they are spiritual battles led by the devil himself. Those resentments and grudges which seem to surface when you are with family members—they are ways in which satan is striving to get a foothold in your lives and lead you away from Christ. With so much spiritual warfare taking place in relationships and families, is it any wonder that many in the world have labeled Thanksgiving Day as one of the most family dysfunctional holidays of the year? We need *the peace of Christ* to rule *in our hearts* in order to celebrate Thanksgiving Day properly by not just *bearing with one another* but also *if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other as the Lord has forgiven you!*

It’s about being clothed with the Lord Jesus Christ, covered in His righteousness and forgiveness **at all times!** This is why verse 17 of our text

tells you that *whatever you do, in word or deed, do **everything** in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him*. Doing **everything** in the name of the Lord Jesus simply means that you live your identity in Christ Jesus in all the vocations of life. Others will see a different attitude which displays compassion, kindness, humbleness, gentleness, patience and forgiveness toward others as well as *giving thanks to God the Father through your new identity in Christ!* You will even find yourself thanking God for those other sinners in your family.

Yes, you do know what to wear because you have been clothed in Christ Jesus with His salvation, with His righteousness, with His forgiveness every moment of every day! It is such blessings of His grace in the midst of all the physical blessings you enjoy on various levels which move you to *give thanks **in all circumstances**; for this is the will of God **in Christ Jesus** for you*. (cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:18) Amen.

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