

# “WEAR YOUR NEW CLOTHES TO CHURCH”

## COLOSSIANS 3:12-14

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### INTRODUCTION

Principle: let our dress reflect our attitude toward worship and toward our God; not careless, disrespectful, too casual.

#### **God is important.**

But, if we place the emphasis upon external dress, we miss the main point of our passage.

We have already thrown off the “old man” and have put on the “new man” (vv. 9-10). The clothes (deeds) of the “old man” also have to go—vv. 5-9a.

Now, we need to make sure that we are “putting on” the clothes that are identified with our “new man”: A heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, bearing with & forgiving one another, loving one another.

#### **YOU MUST WEAR YOUR NEW CLOTHES TO CHURCH—[AND EVERYWHERE ELSE ALSO!]**

The focus of these verses, in harmony with verse eleven’s emphasis upon the corporate “new man,” is on the qualities that promote community identity and cohesion, just as the vices mentioned in vv. 8-9 focused on what would result in dissention in the community of believers. Believers are from many backgrounds and must allow nothing that would bring divisiveness, but only what brings order and harmony in Christ.

##### I. YOUR CLOTHES REFLECT WHO YOU ARE (12a)

###### A. Your position in Christ—Chosen, Elect

1. God chooses us: Here, as often in the NT the reference is to God’s choice of believers from eternity, a choice that is followed up by the divine call and the human response of faith.
2. Election affects life in all its phases, and is not abstract.

###### B. Your Character—Holy, set apart

1. Set apart **from** the world
  - Involves cleansing from the guilt of sin
  - Involves purification from the pollution of sin in the daily life.
2. Set apart **for** God and His service
  - Involves renewal in the divine image

###### C. Your Relationship—beloved

- Having been loved and still loved, always will be—perfect tense.

*All three of these terms were used of Israel, God’s OT people (cf. Ex. 19:6); the Church is God’s NT people (cf. 1 Pet. 2:9)—but not in the sense that they have replaced Israel and that Israel has no future in God’s plan!*

##### II. YOUR CLOTHES MUST BE BEAUTIFUL AND COLORFUL (12b)

All these virtues are either attributed to Christ elsewhere or are associated with Him. Putting on these virtues is like saying as Paul did in Rom. 13:14, “**Put on Christ.**” The New Man is identified with Christ in v. 10; so here believers must put on those virtues that characterize Christ.

###### A. A heart of compassion [bowels of mercies]

1. The 1<sup>st</sup> word means “inward parts”, especially the nobler inward parts such as the heart, lungs, liver. The term is more often used for the “heart” as the seat of the emotions and sometimes is best rendered “affections.”

The verbal root is used several times of Jesus’ deep feelings of affection and compassion (Mt. 9:36).

2. The second word means tenderhearted mercy, compassion.

###### B. Kindness

1. Sweetness of disposition.
2. Such kindness must be evidenced in both attitude and in actions—deeds of kindness.
3. This term is the opposite of the “malice/badness” mentioned in v. 8.

###### C. Humility

1. The noun means “lowliness of mind” or “humble-mindedness.”

2. Mic. 6:8 shows that those who wanted to walk with God must humble themselves to do so. Also, Is. 57:15 states that God makes his dwelling by preference with those who are ‘of a humble and contrite spirit.’
3. Christian humility (Phil. 2:3) is based upon the humility shown by Christ in becoming man and all that is associated with that (Phil. 2:8)

D. Gentleness

1. The opposite of arrogance and self-assertiveness;
2. Points to one who has a delicate consideration for the rights and feelings of others,
3. Not being overly impressed by a sense of one’s self-importance.
4. The adjective is used of Christ in Mt. 11:30; 21:5 and for His followers in the beatitude (Mt. 5:5).

E. Patience/longsuffering: “long of anger”, or taking a long time before expressing anger—patience

1. This noun, and “gentleness” and “kindness” are listed in Gal. 5:22 as part of the fruit of the Spirit.
2. God and Christ are the pattern for the believer: see Rom. 2:4; II Pet. 3:15
3. One has a view toward a final goal when circumstances will be improved—not immediate gratification

III. YOU MUST BE TOLERANT TOWARD THOSE MAKING OUTLANDISH CLOTHING CHOICES (13a)

- *Bearing with/forbearing one another.*
- Bearing with and forgiving are the natural outgrowth conveyed by all five virtues.
- The present tense of both indicates that the practices of “bearing with” and “forgiving” must be continuous.

A. To put up with, bear with, endure.

B. “Bearing with” can express a somewhat grudging willingness to ‘put up with’ difficult circumstances (e.g. persecutions (I Cor. 4:12; II Thes. 1:4) or people (here)).

C. Every Christian fellowship is made up of all kinds of people; some are very different than we are.

IV. YOU MUST BE FORGIVING TOWARD THOSE WHO HAVE DAMAGED YOU PERSONALLY (13b)

The verb is built on the noun *carij* meaning “grace, favor.” It has two basic meanings:

1. “Give freely as a favor”
2. “Forgive, pardon” (Eph. 4:32; Col. 2:13)
3. The verb conveys the idea that such forgiveness is an act of grace, freely offered, often not deserved.

A. Complaints do arise; esp. for debts not taken care of.

B. Jesus set the example of forgiveness toward us.

1. His words on the cross, and his forgiveness of us at our salvation.
2. He also taught us to forgive in “the Lord’s Prayer,” his words to Peter (70 X 7), and even in parables.

V. YOU MUST WEAR THE SPECIAL OUTER GARMENT OF LOVE (14)

A. This garment goes over top of our other garments, and is of the highest quality—the best of all.

Of course, love is clearly the preeminent virtue as seen in I Cor. 13:13.

B. It is the bond that ties together all of the other garments.

Such love was Jesus’ “new commandment” (Jn. 13:34; I Thes. 4:9).

C. It is the garment that brings perfection/completion—all that God wants us to be.

1. The term is from the commonly used verb meaning to “complete, finish, accomplish, bring to its goal, perfect”
2. Love is the bond that so ties us as to make complete.

CONCLUSION

So remember, your clothing reflects who you are: elect, holy (saints), beloved by God.

Your clothes must be beautiful and colorful: heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience.

You must be tolerant with those who make outlandish clothing choices.

You must be forgiving toward those who have damaged you personally.

You must wear the special outer garment of love.

**YOU MUST WEAR YOUR NEW CLOTHES TO CHURCH—[AND EVERYWHERE ELSE ALSO!]**