

## Led by the Spirit / “Dressed in the Best”

I was instructed back in seminary that I should never dress as to be a distraction. I apologize for my appearance today\_ but if you'll bear with me, I think you'll find my attire to be a help rather than a hindrance to this last sermon in my series on being led by the Spirit. Open your Bibles to **Colossians 3**. The apostle Paul writes to believers there...

**<sup>1</sup> Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup> Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. <sup>3</sup> For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. <sup>4</sup> When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. <sup>5</sup> Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. <sup>6</sup> Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. <sup>7</sup> You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. <sup>8</sup> But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. <sup>9</sup> Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices<sup>10</sup> and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. <sup>11</sup> Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all. <sup>12</sup> Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. <sup>13</sup> Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. <sup>14</sup> And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. <sup>15</sup> Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. <sup>16</sup> Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. <sup>17</sup> And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.**

There is no specific mention of the Holy Spirit in this text\_ so why would I close with it? Because it directly ties into my last two lessons on the traits of the Spirit and the most excellent way of the Spirit. It would be pretty hard to miss the reference to *“the works of the flesh”* here\_ and the similarity to the *“fruit of the Spirit”* and the *“characteristics of love”* is striking. In fact, one of the main motivations for Paul's writing them is described in the first chapter of this letter. He says there (**1:8**) he had heard of their **“love in the Spirit”** - and that his prayer (**1:10**) was that they would be **“bearing fruit in every good work...”** So, now here in **chapter 3**, Paul is calling for Christians in Colossae to utilize in a very practical way what God has given them in and through His Spirit.

THE MESSAGE renders **Colossians 3:12** as **“Dress in the wardrobe God has picked out for you.”** So as we each day, it would be good to give some thought to **“Get dressed in the Best.”**

**Take off robe\_ a symbol of the old life.**

**Put on Shirt /** Lord knows we need **compassion** and He wants us to know it's in our wardrobe. Most of us can likely think of someone we encounter each week that's particularly needy. It could be a homeless guy outside your office\_ or the girl at school who clings to you like a lost puppy. Maybe there's someone who's asked you to bail them out one time too many. The phone rings and you know they want one more favor, one more loan\_ so you to ignore the call. But what are we to do with those words of Jesus? **“Give to those who ask without expecting anything in return,”** (Luke 6:35) & **“When you help people like that it's like you're helping me.”**(Matthew 25) **Clothe yourself in compassion.**

**Put on Tie** / We all appreciate *kindness* though we know it's in short supply. There was a receptionist at the insurance office who never got my name right. Everyone knows if you can't remember someone's name it's because you don't care. "Hello, Mr. Boil." No matter how many times I corrected her: "It's Doyle. Do I really look like a big infected pimple?" I complained to my wife Nina (*who is always sweet whenever people get her name wrong*) and she asked me her name. Guess what? I didn't know it. I'd not given her a second thought other than to criticize her. So, I took the time to find out and started calling her by name. She never forgot mine after that. God did that for me and you. In **Titus 3:4-5** it says that **"He revealed His kindness and love to us. He saved us, not because of the righteous things we'd done, but because of His mercy."** *Put on kindness.*

**Put on watch** / I'd suggest you put on *humility* each morning. It's too easy to get caught up in the rat race of pushing ourselves forward, seeking attention and rewards for everything we do. Or taking credit for everything we have as if God had nothing to do with it. **James 4:6-10** says that **"God grants grace to the humble and will lift them up in time."** *Get dressed in humility.*

**Put on sweater vest** / I don't consider *gentleness* enough. I know I need to be gentle with little children and the old and frail, but is that where my responsibility ends? Many have fragile spirits and wounded hearts. There are others that are timid and afraid. They have been hurt so many times they are filled with distrust. As God's children, we should be the last people they would feel frightened by or intimidated around. Christ followers are never to be bullies. Jesus was gentle of heart. Children were drawn to Him. Battered and abused women felt acceptance and love. In **1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 5:14**, the apostle Paul urges us to **"encourage the timid and help the weak."** *Put on gentleness.*

**Put on sport coat** / Anybody need more *patience*? The context indicates that this is more about perseverance than merely not pacing the floor while we wait. Paul says we're to **"bear with one another"** and **"forgive one another."** How many times a day, does that need to be done? You barely set your foot on the floor, before it starts. "Mom, she's looking at me!" / "Honey, where's my keys?" Someone hurts your feelings or insults you\_ and sorry doesn't seem to cut it. Somebody steals your parking space or gets the promotion you feel you deserve. You're getting no where at work\_ no raise, no bonus, no recognition. No wonder Paul tells: **"Don't grow weary in doing the right thing, for at the right time we will reap a harvest if we don't give up."** (**Galatians 6:9**) *Don't leave home without patience.*

**Put on top coat** / Well, we might think that about does it. But, don't forget. **Over everything else put on LOVE.** None of us know what our day will hold, or what challenges we will face. Chances are we'll encounter more people and situations where we'll need some real help. Jesus tells us **"the greatest of all commands is to love God and to love others."** (**Mt. 22:36-40**) He even goes so far as to suggest, if we're clothes in love, we'll be able to deal with anything that comes our way. **Wherever we go and whatever we do, wear love.**

What if we really started our day with prayerful consideration of the people and the circumstances we expect to encounter\_ and asking God to remind us what we need for not only those things, but for all of those others we can't possibly know about. The truth is, if we're born again, He already has purchased a new wardrobe of clothes. It's up to us to put them on. And when we do, it will be apparent to all that **we have put on Jesus!** (**Galatians 3:27**) After all, though these are new clothes for us\_ this is the only wardrobe Jesus ever wore.