

My Favorite Thing About COLOSSIANS

Colossians 3:12-14

December 18, 2021

It's still **62 AD**. Paul is still in Rome and he is still behind bars awaiting trial.

According to the book of Acts, Paul's base of operation during his 3rd Missionary journey was Ephesus. From Ephesus the Gospel was carried far and wide including to Colossae, 100 miles east of Ephesus. Colossae was famous for its wool trade and for its fusion of religions, which included: **Jewish, Gnosticism and Angel worship**. At one time, Colossae was an important regional city, but by Paul's day it was in decline, being overshadowed by the near-by cities of Laodicea and Hierapolis.

As far as we know, Paul never visited Colossae but he did seem to know some of the church members either personally or by reputation. He wrote the letter in response to a report, which included both **good news** regarding the believer's faith as well as **bad news** regarding the heretical teachings threatening to undermine that faith.

Not long after Paul wrote the letter, the city was destroyed by an earthquake. It was rebuilt, but permanently destroyed by the Turks in the **12th century**. As of 2019, all that remains of Colossae is a mound archaeologists have yet to excavate.

That brings us to **My Favorite Thing About COLOSSIANS ---- "Clothe Yourself"**

- **Colossians 3:8-17** - Put aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, *and* abusive speech from your mouth. ⁹ Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its *evil* practices, ¹⁰ and have put on the **new self** who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him ¹¹ -- *a renewal* in which there is no *distinction between* Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all. And so, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, **clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience;** ¹³ **bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.** ¹⁴ And beyond all these things **put on love**, which is the perfect bond of unity. Let the **peace** of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and **be thankful.** ¹⁶ Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. ¹⁷ And whatever you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.

Paul is talking about wardrobe.

Positively or negatively, uniforms tell us what we can expect from the people wearing them.

- You know who belongs to law enforcement because of what they wear.
- You know who the fire fighters or EMT's are because of what they wear.
- You know who to ask for help at the Home Depot because of the uniform.
- You know someone is in the Air Force and not in the Navy because of the uniform.

Uniforms play an important role in our daily lives so much so that wearing a uniform you're not entitled to wear can get you into deep trouble.

The assertion Paul is making in Colossians is that when we choose Jesus, the uniform of the world - **anger, wrath, malice, slander, abusive speech, lying and evil practices** – goes away – comes off – is removed. However, that cannot be all there is to it:

- Remember Zechariah's vision of Joshua, the high priest and his filthy rages? An exchange had to happen. It wasn't enough that the filthy rages were removed – Joshua was not left naked - they were replaced with clean white robes {Zechariah 3:1-5}.
- Remember the story Jesus told of the evil spirit that was driven out of a man? The spirit wandered around for a while then decided to return to the **"house"** he'd left, only to find it in orderly condition, yet empty. So, what does he do? He invites some friends over who are more wicked than he is. The result? The man is worse off than he was before {Matthew 12:42-45}.

It is not enough to simply take the old uniform off and throw it in the bin; a new and different uniform has to replace it: **"And so"** Paul says, **"as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience;** ¹³

bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.
¹⁴ And beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.”

Just like in Ephesians 6:13-18, where Paul lists the essential pieces that fit together to make up the armor of God: **truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation, the word of God and prayer.**

So, in Colossians, he lists the essential pieces that fit together to make up the Christian uniform called love: **compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience and forgiveness.**

- **John 13:35** - By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have **love** for one another.
- **1 Corinthians 13:4-8** - **Love** is patient, **love** is kind, *and* is not jealous; **love** does not brag *and* is not arrogant, ⁵ does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong *suffered*, ⁶ does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; ⁷ bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. ⁸ **Love** never fails....

While there is such a thing as an undercover cop – an officer who is intentionally out of uniform for a specific purpose, generally to catch the baddies in the act – there is no such thing as an undercover Christian. So, as chosen, holy and beloved children of God, *“clothe yourselves”* with:

Compassion

Compassion literally means *“to suffer together.”* It is the feeling that arises when you are confronted with suffering and feel motivated to relieve that suffering. Compassion leads to action.

- **Nehemiah 9:19** - Because of your great **compassion** you did not abandon them in the desert. By day the pillar of cloud did not cease to guide them on their path, nor the pillar of fire by night to shine on the way they were to take.
- **Matthew 14:14** - When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had **compassion** on them and healed their sick.
- **Luke 15:20** - So he got up and went to his father. "But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with **compassion** for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

Kindness

Kindness is not a mood or an attitude. Kindness is an intentional and voluntary act of being friendly or generous or considerate toward someone else. Kindness is selfless. Kindness is unconditional. Kindness happens not only when it's easy, but also when it's hard. Kindness goes above and beyond the expected.

- **Hosea 11:4** - I led them with cords of human **kindness**, with ties of love; I lifted the yoke from their neck and bent down to feed them.
- **Acts 4:9-10** - If we are being called to account today for an act of **kindness** shown to a cripple and are asked how he was healed, ¹⁰ then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed.
- **Acts 27:3** - The next day we landed at Sidon; and Julius, in **kindness** to Paul, allowed him to go to his friends so they might provide for his needs.
- **Mother Teresa** – Let no one ever come to you without leaving better and happier. Be the living expression of God's **kindness: kindness** in your face, **kindness** in your eyes, **kindness** in your smile.

Humility

Humility has an honest and modest assessment of its own importance – not thinking of yourself as better than other people. Humility is the opposite of pride, arrogance, stubbornness and self-seeking. Humility is quick to right a wrong or ask for help or even to say, *“I don't know”*. In a spiritual sense, humility recognizes what it is before the God of the universe and understands that the ground is level at the foot of the cross.

- **2 Chronicles 7:14** - if my people, who are called by my name, will **humble** themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.
- **Proverbs 11:2** - When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with **humility** comes wisdom.
- **Philippians 2:3-8** - Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in **humility** consider others better than yourselves. ⁴ Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. ⁵ Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: ⁶ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, ⁷ but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he **humbled** himself and became obedient to death -- even death on a cross!

Gentleness

Being gentle does not mean being a doormat. Gentleness is might restrained. Gentleness holds the wounded bird even though it has the power to crush it. We all have the power through word and action to help or hurt, build-up or tear-down, heal or wound. The spirit of gentleness takes that power and infuses it with the desire to always help, always build-up and always heal.

- **Proverbs 15:1** – A **gentle** answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.
- **Matthew 11:29** - Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am **gentle** and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.
- **Philippians 4:5** - Let your **gentleness** be evident to all. The Lord is near.
- **1 Peter 3:15-16** - But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with **gentleness** and respect, ¹⁶ keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.

Patience

Patience is not just the ability to wait but the attitude while you wait. Patience is the capacity to accept or tolerate delay, trouble, suffering, or the trials of life. Endurance, self-restraint and not giving in to anger are all qualities of patience.

- **Proverbs 14:29** - A **patient** man has great understanding, but a quick-tempered man displays folly.
- **Ephesians 4:2** - Be completely humble and gentle; be **patient**, bearing with one another in love.
- **1 Timothy 1:15-16** - Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners-- of whom I am the worst. ¹⁶ But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited **patience** as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life.
- **2 Timothy 4:2** - Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage-- with great **patience** and careful instruction.
- **2 Peter 3:9** - The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is **patient** with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

Forgiveness

Human forgiveness is a reflection of our experience and understanding of God's forgiveness. Our relationship with God is restored because He chooses to forgive our offenses toward Him. If we have received God's forgiveness, we must extend it to those who hurt us.

When we choose to forgive, we find freedom. Freedom from hurt. Freedom from bitterness. Freedom from anger.

- **Jeremiah 31:34** - No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest," declares the LORD. "For I will **forgive** their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."
- **Ephesians 1:7** - In him we have redemption through his blood, the **forgiveness** of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace
- **Ephesians 4:32** - Be kind to each other, tenderhearted, **forgiving** one another, just as God through Christ has **forgiven** you.
- **Lewis Smedes {Forgive and Forget}** - When you release the wrongdoer from the wrong, you cut a malignant tumor out of your inner life. You set a prisoner free, but you discover that the real prisoner was yourself.

So there you go..... If we truly take to heart that we are chosen, holy and dearly loved – it will fundamentally change how we love people and that fundamental change has the power to change the world.

That's why *"Clothe Yourself"* is **My Favorite Thing About COLOSSIANS**.