“The Christian’s Spiritual Clothing"

(Colossians 3:12-14)

9/18/2016

INTRODUCTION:

***As Christians, we must be conscientious about putting on spiritual virtue!**

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EX: The advice our "Careers" (P.I.C. - Program for Industrial Careers) class teacher gave us. When seeking a job, to impress the interviewer, dress your best, because "first impressions are lasting impressions."

Are you dressed for success? Such a question is frequently asked in magazines such as the men's "G.Q." (Gentleman's Quarterly) or the glamour magazines (Cosmopolitan, Mademoiselle).

Wearing the most fashionable suits, skirts, and jeans is an obsession to many.

While the world places a heavy emphasis on the external appearance, God still looks at the heart (I Sam. 16:7). God still measures the beauty of a woman not by the apparel she wears, but by the meek and quiet spirit she possesses (I Pet. 3:3-4).

***As Christians, we must be conscientious about putting on spiritual virtue!**

I. WHY should we put on Christian virtue? (v. 12a)

"Put on" - clothe yourself (aor, middle, imperative)

"Therefore" - because of this; because the old man has been put off, and the new man has been put on (v. 9-10) (at salvation), the way we dress ourselves spiritually ought to match the way God views us positionally.

Because Christ is in us (v. 11), His wardrobe should be upon us.

NOTE: The exhortation to "put on," of necessity follows the command to "put off" (v. 8).

Before one can clothe himself or herself with the divinely pressed, fresh-smelling, good looking virtues in verses 12 and following, he must first of all back up to verse 8 and strip off the old, stinking, stained, dirty, leprous, grave clothes of anger, wrath, etc.
"Put on . . . as the . . ." - Just as one's clothing will usually reflect the fashions and styles of a society in which he lives, our spiritual clothing should reflect our position and standing before God (in Whom we live! cp. 3:4).

Whom should we dress up like? (what model should determine our style of spiritual dress as Christians?)

The words "elect, holy, & beloved" are 3 descriptions of a child of God.

"Elect" - emphasizes how we were chosen by God to salvation.

"Holy" -emphasizes how we were sanctified by God through salvation.

"Beloved" - shows how we are loved by God throughout salvation

Dress up for Someone who has chosen you!

"As the elect of God" - The word "elect" means to select or choose.

Out of the billions of people that inhabit this globe, to think that God has selected you to be the Bride of His Son! (Eph. 5).

God took the initiative and chose you (Jn. 6:37, 39, 44, 65). You then responded to His invitation by believing, and thereby became the "elect of God." God's selection of us demands our best wardrobe, our best dress.

Dress up for Someone who has sanctified you!

"Holy" = to be set apart (sanctified; made a saint) (Eph. 4:24 - "And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness").

How a Christian "looks" spiritually ought to reflect his God-given purity. You are a saint! Dress like one!

Dress up for Someone who loves you!

"Beloved" - a perfect, passive participle. It is God who has loved us in ages past, and in the moments present. His love for us demands our best dress for Him (I Jn. 4)

ILLUS: how young couples who are "in love" dress to please each other).

II. WHAT Spiritual Virtues Must We "Put On"? (v. 12b-14)

Characteristics of these virtues (v. 12-14):

--They all stem from inside a person

--They all relate to others

--They all display a velvet-like softness

A. Our Internal Virtue (v. 12b)

1. "Bowels of mercies" (inner compassion)

   "Bowels of mercies" = inner compassion; a heart-felt, emotional yearning for the well-being of someone else.

   It describes one who has pity because of the ills and difficulties of others.

   "Compassion" - describes the sympathy one feels for the loss, pain, frustration, problems of others.

   EXAMPLES of compassion:
   --David for Absalom (II Sam. 18:33 - "And the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept: and as he went, thus he said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!").

   --Jeremiah for Israel (Jer. 9:1 - "Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!").

   --Jesus for Jerusalem (Mt. 23:37 - "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!").

   --Paul for Christians (Acts 20:19 - "Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews")

2. "Kindness"

"Kindness" = kindness is "the friendly and helpful spirit which seeks to meet the needs of others through kind deeds" (Reinecker, p. 580).

"Kindness" - an attribute that was characteristic of Christ's ministry. He went about "doing good."

Kindness is compassion put into action.

It is genuine "goodness".

"He is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil. Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful" (Lk. 6:36).

3. "Humbleness of mind"

Humility was not popular int he pagan world of Paul's day. The Greeks & Romans admired pride and domination (cp. Wiersbe, p. 114).

"Humbleness of mind" = lowliness in one's thoughts about himself.

NOTE: true humility cannot be measured by how one looks (externally) but by how one thinks in his mind.

Phil. 2:3 - "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves."

Rom. 12:3 - "For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith."

4. "Meekness" (gentleness)

"Meekness" - "Not weakness, but strength (power) under control."

"This word was used to describe a soothing wind, a healing medicine, and a colt that had been broken. In each instance, there is power: a wind can become a storm; too much medicine can kill; a horse can break loose. But this power is under control." (Wiersbe, p. 114)
(a fruit of the Spirit - Ga. 5:22)

The word describes someone who is gentle in dealing with others.

Firmness does not necessitate harshness. One can be firm yet gentle.

This word is often connected with "humbleness" (EX: Eph. 4:2; Zeph. 3:12).

Before one can express a gentleness in dealing with others, he must first of all have an inner humility.

Those who are proud are the harshest, meanest, loudest, most vicious people you will ever meet!

Those who deserve "gentleness" the least, need it the most!

Ex: those who err (Gal. 6:1)
Ex: those who oppose themselves with sin (II Tim. 2:24-25)

This feature is what made Moses the greatest human leader to ever live (Num. 12:3).

And this feature is what makes Christ such a wonderful Savior (Mt. 11:28-30 - "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light").

NOTE: Before God's Word can ever penetrate your heart, you must have this virtue! (Ja. 1:21).

5. "Long-suffering" (patience)

"Long-suffering" = patience; lit. the ability to put up with much heat without blowing your top! (if you want to be "cool" - be patient! For patience means to stay cool under the irritable heat of other's sin and foolishness).

God's long-suffering toward us (II Pet. 3:9) should motivate us to be likewise toward others.

Your patience is tested every day.

Those who test our patience (examples):

--Children
--Old people
--Those who are spiritually immature (or slow in growing)
--Our spouse

B. Our External Virtue (v. 13)

1. Forbearing one another

The participles of verse 13 ("forbearing" & "forgiving") describe the manner or means by which we exhibit the virtues of v. 12.

How do I express my compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience in a practical way?

ANSWER: By forbearing and forgiving others.

"Forbearing" - to bear with; to endure; to have an ability to put up with someone. When you can bear up the burdened (Gal. 6:1-2) and endure the troublesome, and put up with the problem makers, you have been dressed for success in your life.

"Forbearing" - Everyone of us is guilty of some weakness that needs mending, some unattractive character train that needs to be straightened out, some failure that needs to be over-looked, some bad habit that needs to be corrected.

2. Forgiving one another

"One another" - note the reciprocal nature of the forbearance and forgiveness. it's a two-way street; it's not merely others doing it to you, but you to them.

Before you get bitter because of someone not doing something for you, ask yourself, "What am I doing for them?!"

"If any man" - "forgiveness" is to be the dress for every child of God!

"Quarrel" - to find fault with someone; to have a cause for complaint; to have a reason to blame someone for doing something you felt he/she should not have done or for not doing something you felt he/she should have done.

Our pattern for forgiveness is not man, but the Lord! (Eph. 4:32 - "And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you").

"God's ultimate purpose for allowing irritations and offense to occur in our lives is to give us opportunity to become more like His Son Jesus Christ."

How did Christ forgive us?

a. Christ graciously forgave us

The word "forgave" means to bestow grace upon someone. It not merely describes the negative aspect of removing our guilt and condemnation, but it depicts the positive aspect of replacing our death sentence with the gift of eternal life.

When our forgiveness is not accompanied by giving and doing good and being kind to the one we forgave, we are not forgiving the way Christ forgave us.

b. Christ impartially forgave us (He indiscriminately forgave us. Note the phrase: "against any" v. 13)

Christ forgives all who come to Him, regardless of rank, race, or riches (Ja. 2:5) (I Jn. 2:2; I Tim. 2:4, 6; Is. 53:6).

When we forgive only particular people, we are not forgiving the way Christ forgave us.

c. Christ totally forgave us.

All our sin, despite its enormity, ugliness, shame, etc., has been forgiven us.

When we forgive some sins that someone commits, but not any and every sin, then we are not forgiving the way Christ forgave us.

"And if he trespass again thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent, thou shalt forgive him" (Lk. 17:4).

d. Christ eternally forgave us.

Our sin is forever cleared from the record once and for all time. it will no longer be held against us; it will never be brought up again.

If it were to be brought up, we would be condemned for it (Explain the difference between the Judgment Seat of Christ [I Cor. 3; II Cor. 5:10] and the Great White Throne Judgment - Rev. 20:10-15).

If your forgiveness is only momentary and temporary, you have not forgiven the way Christ has forgiven you.

When we do not forgive, we will not be forgiven (Mt. 6:14-15).

C. Our Supreme Virtue (v. 14)

"Above all" = lit. upon (epi) all; on top of all; over all the other clothing, put on as an outer robe or as an overcoat, the prime virtue of agape love (I Cor. 13).

The phrase "above all" shows the supremacy of love (it is the highest of relational virtues).

(I Cor. 13; I Pet. 4:8 - "And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.")

"Put on charity" - lit. the charity; pointing to a particular or specific love (the love of God).

No Christian is dressed for success without the garment of love.

Love makes all the other virtues easy to put on. Without love, forbearance is torture! Without love, forgiveness is impossible!

Love fulfills the Law (Rom. 13:8-10).

"The bond of perfectness" - love is the outer-garment that holds all the virtues underneath in place.

Or in other words: Love is the bond that cements every other virtue into your life, thus making you perfect (complete or mature).

Love is the thread that sews (knits) every other desirable train to your personality.

CONCLUSION: