

What do you think of your outfit today? How do you like your wardrobe? Maybe you spent a lot of time getting ready this evening, and you're happy with how you look. Maybe things aren't fitting quite how you wish they did. Do you have plans to look better and be a better person in the New Year? The world loves to tell us how we should look, and our sinful nature is so comfortable putting on the clothing it wants to wear. Tonight we'll hear about how God wants us to look, the new wardrobe that he has in mind for you to wear.

### **New Year - New Wardrobe**

When Paul wrote this letter to the Colossians describing the fashion sense of a Christian, he wasn't exactly able to follow the latest trends himself. Paul wrote this letter from a jail cell, and his only accessories were rusty chains. But through the Holy Spirit he knows how a Christian should look. So **God presents us with a challenge in this text - put on the Christian Wardrobe.** Let's see how it looks. *Read lesson Colossians 3:12-17*

**Compassion** refers to that feeling you have when you see a brother or sister suffering. You really feel for them deep inside, your stomach hurts, your heart breaks. You're actually suffering with them. Believers are also clothed with **kindness**. We are never harsh or malicious, showing goodness and generosity to everyone.

Wear **Humility** - Paul tells us that the Christian wardrobe isn't flashy or showy. When clothed with humility we are lowering ourselves. We recognize our own unworthiness and sinfulness and always cheerfully place others and their needs above our own.

Well-dressed Christians are **gentle**; they don't blow up or get angry when people act carelessly toward them. We would rather suffer than hurt others. Paul says we are also **patient**. We keep working with people even though it will be a long road. We try to see where others are coming from and help each other grow.

Paul continues, we should have peace ruling our heart, and our lives are full of thankfulness. All of these exquisite virtues are pieced together, overlapping and flowing into each other to make truly glorious clothing. And **love is the thread** that sews all of this and all of us together in perfect unity. The love of Christ changes this outfit from a checklist of virtues that can unravel so easily to a truly beautiful lifestyle that is held together by love and reflects Christ's love.

There is it. It's beautiful, lovely, and refreshing. The perfect outfit that goes with anything. The Holy Spirit through Paul describes what a Christian looks like, what a Christian should look like. **He gives us a challenge that's appropriate for the new year - Resolve to look like this.**

So how do you look? At first I'm excited. I'm going to look good! Then I look at this catalogue of Christian attitudes and virtues a little longer. Looks great on the page... but will it fit me? Does it come in another size? The cost is pretty high, have anything cheaper in the clearance section? My rumpled everyday clothes are so comfortable. Do I need to change?

I'm supposed to be clothed with **compassion and kindness**. When I see suffering, instead of offering support, I guard myself and thing - man I hope that never happens to me. Sometimes we see someone suffering and say, "Serves him right. Or Better him than me."

"Clothe yourselves with **humility**, gentleness, and patience." Sometimes I wish this would read, "Clothe yourselves with ambition, drive, power, and performance!" Isn't that what the world looks for? I don't always put others before myself, in fact, most of the time we do whatever we can to look better than the next guy.

**Patience.** Where does your patience run out? With a parent, a husband, a wife, a co-worker? A lack of patience leads to a lack of **gentleness**. We get frustrated when things aren't happening on our time table, and we can get angry, harsh, and aggressive.

Then Paul says that Christians "**bear with each other and forgive.**" Do we work patiently with people even when they let us down? Forgive others when they wrong us? Naturally we would rather get even or hold it against them. I'm sure that if we take a moment to think about it, there is someone in our lives that we need to forgive. Paul says, "**Forgive whatever grievances** you may have against one another." He doesn't say, "Forgive the people who deserve to be forgiven."

So am I wearing the Christian Wardrobe? When I measure myself against God's expectations of perfection - I fail in every aspect. And I know what the problem is. Each of us is also wearing another wardrobe. The Bible calls it the sinful nature, sin living inside of us, yes even inside of Christians. It always wants to please itself instead of God. Even when it seems like I'm doing alright, my actions are never fully motivated by perfect love which should bind everything together. The outfit falls apart at the seams. And the Bible says that we can't come close to God wearing anything less than perfection.

**Transition** This outfit looks great in the catalogue, but honestly, how do we fit into the clothes?! It looks impossible. It feels impossible. How do we put it on?

#### **How can I keep this resolution?**

The Holy Spirit wants us to know how to put on these clothes. He longs for us to wear them. How do we do it?? Paul writes in verse 16: *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.* Notice the eagerness of God, who wants to make a home for his Word in your heart! God's Word isn't just a weekend guest in our hearts, but a **permanent member of the household**. Christ comes in stable 2000 years ago, so that he can live in your heart forever. He's there by our side in the darkest times, reminding us gently, patiently, confidently that Christ's death on the cross defeated the sin that covers us. Urging you to believe that your sins are forgiven. The Word of Christ pick us up reassuring us that Satan has no lasting power over us, because in the sight God, the only one that really matters, we are in fact HOLY.

Paul writes that we are *God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved*. The holiness of Christ has been given to us as a gift. For all the times that we have not been perfectly compassionate, kind, humble gentle, patient, or forgiving, Christ was. He kept the law of love perfectly in our place. We are reassured of this over and over in the **Word of Christ**. For all the times when I didn't show **compassion**, I hear the words of Christ, *"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."* For all the times that I have made a decision based on how much power, influence, or glory it will get me, I see the **humble** Jesus, choosing to be born among sinners like me, praised by shepherds, and killed among criminals. I have so often sinned in my impatience, yet I see Jesus **patiently** instructing a small group of disciples who still didn't "get it" until after he had risen from the dead. For all the times I have harbored a grudge and refused to **forgive**, I hear Christ on the cross looking out over this grinning crowd who was enjoying the sickening entertainment of a crucifixion. *Father forgive them.* Paul writes in our text - *Forgive as the Lord forgave YOU.* It's personal. We have Christ's forgiveness. We too are we the very people Christ came to save. All of the times that Christ chose to follow God's will, he was choosing with your soul in mind. He was doing it so that he would maintain his holiness, so that he could give his holiness to you.

So what are some practical ways this next year to *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly*? Well first and foremost, remember that you stand forgiven. We ARE wearing the holiness of Christ. You have been cleaned from the inside out. Paul also says in verse 12 that we are **Chosen and Dearly loved**. There is no checklist to follow to earn his love. But don't we appreciate his love more and more when we study it? I encourage you to resolve to personally read your Bible. Don't get crazy ambitious, but maybe start with one of the Gospels, read it slowly, and plan to see Jesus, to see how he wears the Christian wardrobe, how he gives it to you. Join us regularly in worship and stay connected to Christ here. Find ways to connect your daily lives with Christ and talk about your Savior in the home. When Christ lives in you, peace will rule your heart, and you are free to serve him. We have nothing to prove to God. All of the pressure is off.

**Conclusion:** Every year we make our resolutions, and inevitably, every year we fail. This year, remember that you're not going to fail because Christ has won the victory. All our resolutions are resolved in Christ. The Christian Wardrobe is the perfect life of Christ. He has given it to us to wear, and by the grace of God, it fits! Now, my dear brothers and sisters in Christ, take these beautiful clothes, and wear them. Amen.

<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.*