

Colossians 3:12-14 (ESV) ¹² Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, ¹³ bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. ¹⁴ And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus the Christ.

Amen.

Decades ago, there was an understood dress code for church. Young boys wore dress shorts to church before they were old enough to wear long pants. Girls always wore dresses to church and never pants. Women wore dresses and would not be caught dead wearing pants to church. Often women wore hats and even had white gloves on their hands. Older boys and men wore suits and ties. It was the dress code of the day.

Today preachers preach with holes in their jeans and body shirts showing off that they lift weights. Some think it important to wear leather jackets making them look like a bunch of people ready to ride a Harley. I often tell these young preachers that they do not have to dress like a pig when they are serving the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. So far, I have not been able to change any of their minds. How times have changed.

1. God does have a dress code for us. He tells us what to wear every day wherever we are and wherever we go. God's dress code does not change with the seasons and His dress code is for all temperatures. These are clothes that do not wear out and are always in season year-round. As a matter of fact, when you come to church you are looking for people who are wearing God's dress code. When you find that person you have found a treasure indeed.

¹² Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Put on then, as God's chosen ones. God is telling His chosen ones the proper dress code. Who are the chosen ones? The chosen ones the Bible

tells us are all of those who have been saved by God's grace through faith. They are the true Christians. The Bible speaks of the true Christians as sheep, not goats, and as wheat and not chaff or weeds. Only God knows exactly who His chosen ones are because God is the one who did the choosing. What this means practically is it is God's grace that saves you for eternity and it was not your own doing. God selected you. God adopted you. God elected you into His family and He did this long before you were born, even before the creation itself. You did not choose God. God chose you. Left to ourselves, to our sinful human nature, the only choice we would make would be to reject God's grace. Thank God for His supernatural grace that saves us for all eternity.

God calls us chosen ones, holy and beloved. Yes, as Christians we are called the holy ones. The Bible says, "be holy as I am holy." What does that mean for us? To be holy is to be chosen of God, set aside by God for a special purpose. To be holy is to be different. It is to be other than. **2. God has set us aside for a special purpose to live our lives fully for God, to glorify God and enjoy God forever.** Specifically, we live to love God and one another. God calls us His chosen ones. God calls us holy, and God calls us His beloved. God started loving you before He created the universe. God chose you and knew your name from eternity past. J.I. Packer writes God's love is God's goodness toward individual sinners. Everything God has ever done for you and will do for you is based in God's perfect, unmerited love. Whenever we question God's love for us it is like we are slapping God in the face and how dare we do such a thing to the Almighty God, creator and maker of heaven and earth. We are God's beloved. There is nothing you can do to make God love you more and there is nothing you can do that will make God love you less. There are times in your life that the Holy Spirit will immerse you with God's love. Those times make everything worth it that we go through as Christians living in a hostile world that hates Jesus.

The first piece of clothing in God's dress code is compassion. God Himself is full of compassion. During the days that Jesus was on earth He was so often moved by compassion to be a helper and healer for those He encountered. **3. One definition of compassion is to be torn from the heart at the sight of another person's suffering.** Compassion is an emotion and an action. You see something or you hear someone's story, and you are deeply moved on the inside so much so that you take action to help the person in need.

When I see on the news how badly police are being treated and thought of, it hurts me on the inside. A few rotten apples have spoiled something good nationwide. When I see a police car I feel genuine compassion for the person inside, enough to stop and speak and pray with him or her. Compassion sees a need and does something to help or aid the person. When someone tells you something very difficult that they are going through, please listen and show signs of concern. Let them talk freely and as you listen, ask God for wisdom. Please do not be judgmental and critical. Compassion feeds a person's soul. Judgmentalism and constant criticism, having a critical spirit is just the opposite of compassion. I pity the children who have hypercritical parents. They make their children feel less than and not accepted. Compassion begins on the inside as the Holy Spirit moves you, motivates you to help in any way you can to meet the given need right in front of you. It is putting another's need or needs ahead of your own. When your own heart is filled with the love of God it is hard not to be compassionate. Knowing you are chosen by God gives to you the security and confidence to try to be more of a helper than a taker. It is doing your best to build up the person in front of you moved by the compassionate work of the Holy Spirit inside of you.

Add to the clothing of compassion kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Friends God is telling us what to wear and in so doing God is telling us how we are to treat one another. God has placed inside of every Christian the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit working inside of us that produces kindness, humility, meekness and patience. **4. It means you care about how**

you come across to others so much so that you wish your behavior will please Jesus in the way you treat one another. There are people in my life that upon seeing them my stomach relaxes and I feel peace because this person is wearing God's dress code. There are other people who have chosen to wear other clothes and every time I see them, I want to run because I have no idea what hurtful, harmful, or critical thing they will say to me next. I have to brace myself every time I see such a person.

I may open up to a person and say something I am struggling with. The uncompassionate person says, "Well, you better think long and hard about that and change." The compassionate person says, "Thank you for being so honest about your life. It takes courage to admit such a difficulty. Is there anything I can do to help." People of compassion give you hope, a reason to keep growing in Christ. People who lack compassion are impatient and make you want to do something that could be harmful to yourself and the other person. May God increase in all of us a compassionate heart and may we wear it every day. These are clothes that impact other peoples lives for the better when we wear them.

A word about patience. I like this definition. **5. Patience is giving time for God to act before I react. Patience is the ability to endure unpleasant people or circumstances out of obedience unto God.** Patience is bearing with one another's faults, waiting on the Lord do to the changing without us trying to speed the process up. Wives have to be patient with their husbands for marriages to be good. Husbands must be compassionate with their wives, tenderhearted and display genuine kindness for the marriage to be good.

Verse ¹³ bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. My greatest weakness is self-pity and the second is holding grudges. I cannot remember what I had for lunch yesterday, but I can remember what someone said to me in grade school, junior high, high school and beyond, things I need to let go of. This is why I have a crucifix sitting here to remind me that

everyone here is someone Jesus died for. I no longer see you as a council member that ticked me off when you expressed your opinion. I see you as God's beloved child, someone Jesus died for and that fills me with compassion. I hope you do the same for me, by the grace and compassion of God.

Friends, we have got to let it go. Those grudges, that hidden anger inside has to be given over to God and healed. People medicate themselves with alcohol, illegal drugs, meanness, anger, and other addictive behaviors. God has given to us Jesus. God has forgiven us all of our sins. God's grace inside of us motivates us to forgive those who have hurt us so deeply. Inner healing comes when the Holy Spirit moves into your room of grudges. That room stinks worse than hog manure. The Holy Spirit enters the room and begins to prick your spirit to let these smelly stinky things go. It takes time. It takes a lot of time. The Holy Spirit is even working inside of you when you are sleeping. The Holy Spirit does an intervention on you, and you begin to feel freer on the inside. The weight of those grudges is being melted by the love of God. **6. Love covers a multitude of sins and heals all grudges, God's love.** Amen and Amen.

Let us pray.