

## INTRODUCTION

*(For this message, I walked out wearing only trousers, socks, and a partially-buttoned dress shirt. I was rolling a clothes rack with different items of clothing on it. The point of the message was to "put on" the seven items of clothing corresponding to the seven personality characteristics of Jesus mentioned in the text.)*

As you can tell, I haven't finished dressing today. Lest you worry, I'm not running late, or getting forgetful. Today, in addition to speaking God's message to you, I'm going to demonstrate it. You may think my method is a little unusual, but it is one the Old Testament prophets often utilized. They often acted out God's message in unusual ways. Jeremiah once smashed a clay pot to symbolize the destruction of Judah. Ezekiel shaved his head and beard and weighed his hair before burning it. But perhaps the strangest act of all was Isaiah, who, according to Isaiah 20:3 walked around naked and barefoot for three years! Don't worry...I'm not going that far!

In Colossians 3, the Apostle Paul compared the Christian life to taking off old clothes and putting on new clothes. Beginning in Colossians 3:5, the Bible mentions eleven different sins we should toss off like old dirty clothes. The list includes: sexual immorality, lust, greed, anger, rage, and filthy language. These habits and weaknesses are like stinking grave clothes left over from our life before Jesus made us a new person. If you remember that week's message, I used Lazarus as an example to remind us we all need help in getting rid of those old habits and attitudes.

Beginning in verse 12 the Bible identifies the new garments we put on to replace the old stinking grave clothes. I'm glad the Bible is such a positive book. The Bible never tells you to STOP doing something without telling you what you should START doing. There's an old song popular before my time recorded by Bing Crosby that went, "You've got to accentuate the positive; eliminate the negative; latch onto the affirmative; and don't mess with Mr. In-between." That's basically the message of the Bible. But sadly, some people only see the Bible as a long list of "thou shalt nots." Let's read to find out what it means to dress in style with Jesus.

Colossians 3:12-14. "Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity."

The Bible lists seven positive characteristics we are to put on to replace those old clothes. But these aren't just qualities we have to create ourselves. They all form a description of Jesus Christ. If we just dress like Jesus, we'll wear all seven. In fact, the Bible states clearly in Romans 13:14, "Clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ." To put it simply, we just need to dress like Jesus. I'm not talking about his robe and sandals—but rather we should wear His personality.

In verse 12, we are identified as "God's chosen people." There was nothing attractive in us that

caused God to choose us—He chose us because of His amazing grace. So, if those old habits were like grave clothes, these new, beautiful clothes can be thought of as grace clothes. I'm ready to dress up in my new grace clothes, aren't you?

## **1. Wear Jesus' compassion**

The Bible says, "clothe yourselves with compassion." The first item I have on is this shirt. I'll let it represent compassion, because it's closest to my heart. The KJV translates this as "tender mercies." The word literally means, "bowels of mercy." The ancient Greeks believed the deepest emotions were located in the intestinal area, while we often locate them in the heart. We still use the phrase, "gut feeling" to describe a deep feeling.

Our English word compassion means "to feel with." It means to have empathy and sympathy with someone who is hurting. The opposite of compassion is being hard-hearted. We live in a world of scams and schemes and it's easy to develop a hard heart. The Bible says when Jesus looked at the multitudes He was moved with compassion for them. We should never become so hard hearted that we can't be emotionally stirred to help hurting people. As followers of Jesus we must have the hide of rhinoceros, but the heart of a lamb.

I like the story I heard about a chapel service at an all women's college years ago. The dean stood and prayed, "Lord, give us tender hearts. Lord, give us loving hearts. Lord, give us sweet hearts." And all the women responded, "Ah men!" Indeed, we should all pray for the Lord to give us tender, sweet hearts—that's what compassion is."

## **2. Attach Jesus' kindness**

The Bible says, "clothe yourselves with ... kindness." The Greek word for kindness literally means, "grace in action." I'll let these cuff links represent kindness. I seldom use cufflinks, but if I was going to start this message with my shirt on, I needed seven additional items of clothing! Like the cuff of this shirt, kindness moves from the heart out to the hands, just like the sleeve of this shirt. Kindness is compassion put into action. Compassion is feeling love for someone, and kindness is doing something loving for that person. Like these cufflinks, kindness may be a small thing, but it is extremely powerful. We've all heard of random acts of kindness, but we live in a world where there are many more random acts of violence than there are acts of kindness. As followers of Jesus, we should be involved in intentional, continual acts of kindness!

Jesus showed kindness to all types of people—whether they looked like they deserved kindness or not. He showed kindness to a woman at the well who was living in sin. He showed kindness to the woman caught in adultery. He showed kindness to the little tax collector who had been robbing people. We need to show kindness to people whether we think they deserve kindness or not.

In 1956 a poorly dressed man walked onto a Cadillac dealership in Tennessee. He was wearing dirty overalls and muddy boots, and his hair was sticking out from under an old hunting cap. He meandered around the car lot for 30 minutes with no one offering to help him. Finally the manager asked the newest salesman to go and ask the bum to leave the car lot. But instead the

new salesman greeted the man and patiently answered his questions about the Cadillacs. After a few minutes the man asked if they took cash or check. The salesman almost laughed, but instead said, “Sir, we take cash or check.” The man said, “Fine, I want to pay cash for this model in every color you make.” The man in the hunting cap was Elvis Presley, and he bought six Cadillacs that day. That salesman’s kindness to that “bum” paid off.

We don’t show kindness to strangers for what we can get out of it; we show kindness to people because that’s part of the personality of Jesus we display.

### **3. Get into Jesus’ humility**

The Bible says, “clothe yourselves with... humility.” I’ll let my shoes represent humility, because you have to bend down to put on your shoes. The shoes are the lowest part of your wardrobe, and humility often means bowing down before others. A person who is truly humble thinks of others before he thinks of himself. Humility is not thinking less of yourself, but thinking of yourself less. The opposite of humility is being overbearing, ostentatious, and loud. Sir Winston Churchill was the master of the quip. In referring to a certain member of Parliament who was an egotistical braggart, Churchill said, “There but for the grace of God, goes God.” Perhaps you’ve known someone like that—or perhaps you are someone like that! The Bible says God resists the proud, but He gives grace to the humble. If we humble ourselves before the Lord, He will lift us up, but if we exalt ourselves, God has a way of humbling us.

Coach Chan Gailey is the head football coach at Georgia Tech. Many of you remember Coach Gailey from his short stint as head coach of the Dallas Cowboys. Before coming to Dallas he was head coach at Troy State in Alabama. In his final year as coach he had taken the Troy State team to the championship game for their division. The week before the big game, he was headed to the practice field when his secretary called him in back for a phone call. He told her to take a message since he was headed to practice. She said, “But it’s Sports Illustrated on the line.” He turned around and said, “Tell them I’ll be right there.” On his way back to the phone, Coach Gailey started thinking he had finally made it to the big show. He was thinking about the possibility of a three or four page article. Or he thought maybe they might ask him to be on the cover of *Sports Illustrated*. He was trying to decide if he preferred an action photo or a posed picture on the cover. He was feeling excited when he picked up the phone and the voice said, “Is this Chan Gailey speaking?” He said, “Yes it is.” The voice said, “This is Sports Illustrated calling. We want to inform you your subscription is about to expire, would you like to renew?” Whenever he tells that story Coach Gailey concludes by saying, “If you don’t humble yourself; you will be humbled!”

### **4. Add Jesus’ gentleness**

Next the Bible says, “clothe yourselves with... gentleness.” The actual word used here is “meekness.” Meekness is not weakness, it is strength under control. I’ll let my belt represent gentleness. To me, it reminds me of meekness in a couple of ways. First, when I was a kid, my dad used his belt as the rod of correction on me. He never spanked me as hard as he could have—he always demonstrated restraint. But a belt can also remind us of the need for restraint. Whenever you’re tempted to get that extra serving of desert, the tightness of your belt can be a

reminder to resist that temptation.

Gentleness or meekness isn't highly valued in our dog-eat-dog culture. Today, courses are taught on self-assertiveness. A popular best-selling business book is *Winning by Intimidation* by Robert Ringer. This method teaches that the squeaky wheel gets the grease—and the louder and more abrasive you are, the more you can accomplish. Contrast that attitude with Jesus who said, “I am gentle and humble in heart.” (Matthew 11:29) Jesus wasn't a wimp. He was a man's man. I believe He had hair on His chest and dirt under His fingernails. He had the strength to single-handedly drive animals and scam artists out of the Temple, yet He had the gentleness to caress the cheeks of little children. That's the kind of gentleness we should display.

The Bible word for “meek” was used to describe a strong stallion that had been “broken” to the point that it would follow the directions of a rider. It still had all the strength it had before it was broken, but now, that strength was under the control of its master.

A few years ago there was a movie called “The Horse Whisperer.” Based on a true story, Robert Redford played the role of a man named Tom Booker with a special gift of “gentling” horses. In one scene, a skittish horse is frightened by the sound of a cell phone and bolts away and gallops to the other end of a large pasture. Tom Booker walks out into the pasture and sits down for what appears to be hours. The horse is drawn by curiosity and gradually creeps closer and closer to Tom. Finally the horse gets close enough for Tom to whisper calming words into its ear, and the horse allows itself to be led back to its stall.

In some ways, we're like that horse as well as the Horse Whisperer. Most of us have been traumatized, terrorized, or stressed out and God whispers to us, “Be still and know that I am God.” And once He “gentles” us and gives us peace, then we can show gentleness and meekness to others.

## **5. Put on Jesus' patience**

The Bible says, “clothe yourselves with ... patience.” I'll let this tie represent patience. Actually, it takes patience to tie a tie. I can remember my dad taught me how to tie using a story about a rabbit running around a bush and then going down into a hole.

The word for patience here doesn't mean to wait for something. A better translation is the word “long-suffering.” It is the opposite of “short tempered.” Some people have a hair-trigger temper and it only takes the slightest provocation to set them off into a rage. This character quality describes having a long fuse when you deal with difficult or obnoxious people.

It reminds me of a young father who was standing in the middle of a grocery store with a screaming kid in the shopping basket. The child was red-faced and crying loud enough to be heard all over the store. The young father was repeating, “Easy, Donald. Take it easy, Donald. Calm down, Donald.” A lady who overheard him said, “Sir, I want to commend you on the way you're talking to Donald. You know how to speak to a child, calmly and quietly. Good job.” She bent down to the child and asked, “What's the problem little Donald?” The man said, “Oh no. His name is Henry, my name is Donald. Take it easy, Donald!”

Displaying longsuffering or patience means we don't respond in anger when we are mistreated or insulted. Booker T. Washington was born a slave but became a great African American educator and innovator. He founded Tuskegee Institute in Alabama. He was the first African American to be a guest in the White House when Teddy Roosevelt invited him to dinner. The story is told that one day Mr. Washington was walking down the street in Tuskegee and a well-to-do woman asked him if he would like to earn a few extra dollars chopping wood. Instead of being offended or telling her who he was, he simply rolled up his sleeves and chopped the wood. A few days later, when the woman learned he was the President of Tuskegee Institute, she apologized profusely. She was so impressed with Booker T. Washington's humility and longsuffering she organized a group of local donors to fund Tuskegee Institute. That's a great example of being longsuffering.

The Bible says Jesus displayed longsuffering when He was insulted, “When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.” (1 Peter 2:23) When we wear Jesus' patience, we'll demonstrate the same kind of behavior.

## **6. Slip on Jesus' forgiveness**

The Bible says, “Bear with one another and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another.” I'll use this suit coat to represent forgiveness. If you're going to a formal setting, you really aren't ready to go until you have a coat or jacket on. And if you're planning on going to heaven, you aren't ready to be admitted until you have found it in your heart to forgive those who have wronged you.

In Matthew 18, Jesus told the parable of a man who owed his boss, the king \$100,000. The king demanded payment, but the servant couldn't pay and begged the king to forgive the debt. The king had mercy on the servant and erased the debt. That same day the servant went out and found a fellow servant who owed him \$10. He seized him by the throat and said, “Pay up now!” The fellow servant didn't have the money and begged the first servant for mercy. Instead, the servant had him arrested and thrown into jail. When the king heard about this, he was furious. He had the first servant brought back and said, “I forgave you \$100,000, and yet you wouldn't forgive your fellow servant? Forget that! Now, you owe me the \$100,000 and you're going to jail until you can pay it off.”

That story describes our lives. We owed a debt we could not pay, and God forgave it. The Bible says “God demonstrated his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us.” (Romans 5:8) When you have truly experienced God's unconditional forgiveness, you will be willing to extend forgiveness to those who sin against you.

## **7. Be enveloped in Jesus' love**

Our last item of clothing can be described this way, “And over all these put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.” In Texas, we seldom have a need for an overcoat, and we certainly haven't needed raincoats, lately, but to complete this ensemble, I'm going to use this

overcoat to represent love.

We use the word "love" so often we have robbed it of its force. When you say you love your wife, your husband, or your sweetheart that means one thing. But you use the same word to say, "I love cherry pie" but the feelings are certainly different. You can say, "I love America" and it means something totally different from the first two examples of love. Our word "love" has become a catch-all for many different feelings.

Do want to know what the garment of love really looks like? Go to 1 Corinthians 13 and you'll find God's definition of love. In fact, all the other parts of my grace clothes are covered by love. Are you looking for compassion? 1 Corinthians 13 tells us that "love always protects." Are you needing kindness? The Bible says, "love is kind." Do want to have humility, just be filled with God's love, because the Bible says, "love does not boast." Gentleness? It's right there in 1 Corinthians 13 where it says, "love is not rude." Love is the key to patience, because the Bible says, "love is patient." And the key to forgiving others is to love them because we read, "love keeps no record of wrongs." The Bible says love covers a multitude of sins.

When it comes to dressing in style with Jesus the Beatles were right when they sang, "All you need is love."

## CONCLUSION

Have you noticed what you wear often determines how you behave? Clothing—especially when it is a special uniform—can actually influence the way we act. For instance, when a state trooper or a policeman puts on his or her uniform he or she suddenly projects an air of authority, and should act in a way that would never betray that uniform. Is there anything more powerful than seeing a soldier dressed up in his or her dress uniform? They project an image of respect and dependability. They are drilled to act in a way to bring honor to our nation when they are wearing that uniform.

When a nurse puts on his or her uniform, he or she projects an image of a caring, helping individual. A good nurse will always behave in a nurturing way when they wear the uniform. I could go on and on with other examples, but you get the point.

When you are aware of being clothed with the Lord Jesus Christ, it will change the way you think and the way you act.

In Northern Africa there was a Muslim student named Hawa Ahmed. She read a Christian tract in her dormitory and decided to become a Christian. She knew her family would reject her, but she had no idea at the violence of their reaction. When she told her family she had become a Christian and changed her name to Faith, her father exploded with rage. Her father and brothers stripped her naked and bound her to a chair and tried to electrocute her. Faith asked for a Bible. "If you want to die with your infidel religion, so be it" and he placed her Bible in her lap. "This will show you how powerless your religion is." Three times they pushed the plug into the socket to electrocute her and each time nothing happened. Frustrated, her father and brothers removed her from the chair and beat her and threw her naked into the street.

She ran through the streets naked and humiliated looking for help. Shaking and tearful she finally found a friend who let her in to her home, who washed her, clothed her and fed her. The next day the friend asked her neighbors how they reacted when they saw a naked girl running through the street. The neighbors said, “What are you talking about? The girl we saw had a wonderful white dress on. We wondered why someone so beautifully clothed would run down our street.” Today when Faith tells that story she says God miraculously hid her nakedness from the eyes of her neighbors. Today, she is a powerful Christian witness in her city.

In Revelation 19:8 the Bible says the church; the Bride of Christ will be given fine linen, bright and clean to wear at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. In a sense we are already clothed in the righteousness of Christ. We can't see it with our mortal eyes. But for every person who has trusted Christ for salvation, God has covered their sins with the garment of His love and forgiveness. When God looks at you with His eyes of love He sees only the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

So, if you are dressing in style with Jesus—you are all dressed up and you *have somewhere* to go!

## OUTLINE

Clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ. *Romans 13:14*

1. Wear Jesus' compassion
2. Attach Jesus' kindness
3. Get into Jesus' humility
4. Add Jesus' gentleness
5. Put on Jesus' patience
6. Slip on Jesus' forgiveness
7. Be enveloped in Jesus' love



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For the Joy...  
Pastor David Dykes