

**SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS**  
**Commentary by Michael Sigler**  
**May 16, 2010**

**A Chosen Community**

Colossians 3:12-17

**Key verse: “As God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience” (Colossians 3:12)**

You have watched this scene or one like it in a dozen TV shows and movies. The rugged frontiersman stumbles into town, after living for weeks in the wilderness. He is dirty and un-shaven. His clothes are torn and frayed.

The first thing he wants is a hot bath and a shave. Add a fresh haircut, a dash of cologne, a new set of clothes—and a new man emerges to face the world.

It seems to me that the Apostle Paul must have had in mind something like that scene when he wrote to the believers at Colossae: “clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience.” Instead of a fresh new shirt and pants, we are to clothe ourselves with *Christ-like character qualities*. These character qualities are outer expressions of the *new persons* we are becoming in Christ.

But to get the whole picture, we need to go back to the first half of verse 12. There we see that *what we do flows from who we are*. Clothing ourselves with Christ-like character qualities is not merely a matter of behaving differently. No, changed behavior starts with a changed heart. So, Paul starts by reminding the Colossians of their identity in Christ. He reminds them that, in Christ, they are (1) “God’s chosen,” (2) “holy,” and (3) “beloved.”

(1) “God’s chosen” – Just as ancient Israel was chosen to have a unique and special relationship with God, now, in Christ, the Christian is included in that special relationship with God. (2) “Holy” – To be called holy is to be one who is “set apart” and dedicated to God. Every Christian is set apart as belonging to God, through Christ. (3) “Beloved” – In Christ, the believer experiences the life-changing, unconditional love of God.

Knowing who we are in Christ is so important, because *what we do flows from who we are*.

Having reminded the Colossian believers of their identity in Christ, Paul then challenges them to “clothe” themselves with “compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience” (v. 12). Let’s take a look at each of these garments of grace.

**Compassion** - This word means having a heart that is moved to action by the pain or need of another. This is the same word used in Mark's gospel to describe Jesus' heart attitude toward the people to whom He ministered: "He had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd" (Mark 6:34).

**Kindness** - Showing kindness to others springs from a heart that sees the welfare of others as being of great importance.

**Humility** - One commentary gives this excellent description of humility: "Humility has nothing to do with self-depreciation or self-disgust...The humble know who they are in relation to God and other persons....They flaunt neither their strength nor weakness, but take their place in God's kingdom without fanfare." (*The Communicator's Commentary, Vol. 8*)

**Meekness** - Meekness is not weakness. It is *strength under control*—the control of God's Spirit—for the glory of God and the good of others.

**Patience** - This word is translated "longsuffering" in some Bible versions. Patience refers to the quality of self-restraint that is *slow to retaliate* and *quick to forgive* when provoked.

So, we all might benefit from examining our lives from time to time and asking, "How am I dressed? Am I wearing my garments of grace—compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience?"

In Christ, I am "chosen," "holy," and "beloved." What I do flows from who I am. So, knowing who God has made me to be in Christ, may I choose daily to put on these garments of grace.

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