

# Osaka International Church, Dan Ellrick

2017-08-27, Colossians 3:1-25

Title: Church Clothes

Key Verse: Colossians 3:14



## I. Introduction

Good morning! It is a joy to be here with my brothers and sisters at OIC. I see quite a few new faces, but also many old friends. God bless you all!

Today, we will continue the study in Colossians that began two weeks ago. However, as I looked at the previous messages, I noticed that they did not say much about Colossae, the city from which this letter gets its name. So, let's begin with a little information about it. As shown on this map, Colossae was located about 100 miles northeast of Ephesus in what is now Turkey.

Unlike the other cities Paul wrote to, the ruins of Colossae have not yet been excavated. Last year, my wife and I joined a Footsteps of Paul tour through Turkey and Greece and I took this photo of the ancient city mound, or tell, of Colossae. We can look forward to learning much more about Colossae when the archeologists get around to digging here.

When they excavate, archeologists expect to find the streets and buildings of a major regional city which flourished from the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC until the 12<sup>th</sup> century AD, when it was destroyed by Turkish invaders. Colossae was a commercial city, known for producing a dark red, or possibly purple, wool which was widely traded in the Roman Empire. The main road connecting Ephesus to the Euphrates River area ran near to Colossae, so it was a convenient location for trade.

We also know that Colossae was damaged by a strong earthquake in 60 AD. This information is important because it allows us to infer that Paul probably wrote Colossians in the 50s, before the time of the earthquake, since the earthquake is not mentioned in the letter.

The first half of the book of Colossians focuses on doctrine and emphasizes the supremacy of Christ. Today, as we look at chapter 3, we will see Paul move away from his discussion of doctrine to teach about Christian life, but first, let's read a short passage from Colossians 2 for context.

**Colossians 2:9-12:** “For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority. In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.”

These verses emphasize the divinity of Christ and our identity in Him through faith. Paul uses the image of a new believer rising up after being immersed in the waters of baptism to portray our own spiritual resurrection to new life. Paul continues this thought in Colossians 3:1-14 and explains how we should respond to this amazing blessing from God.



## II. Colossians 3:1-14

1 Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. 3 For you

died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

5 Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. 6 Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. 7 You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. 8 But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. 9 Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices 10 and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.

11 Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all. 12 Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. 13 Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. 14 And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

### III. Message

Put on love. Love is the root and crown of the other virtues that Paul urges us to clothe ourselves with. Jesus' death on the cross is the great proof of God's love for us, and now Paul urges to respond to what God has done by putting on love, love for God and for one another. We will return to this thought in a few minutes.



First, let's look at some of the preceding verses. **Colossians 3:1-2** says, **“Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.”** As men and women included by faith in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, our minds and hearts should no longer be focused on the things of this world, but rather on the things above, that is, on heavenly things, the things of God. This renewal of our hearts is accomplished by God's Holy Spirit working within us, but Paul also urges us to actively pursue the attitudes and actions pleasing to God.

In verse 5, Paul urges us to put to death the things of our earthly nature and, in **Colossians 3:8**, Paul says **“But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips.”** The NIV says, “rid yourselves of all such things,” but many translations say something like, “put off all these.” In the original language, the word used here is the same word used for removing an article of clothing and laying it aside. We are to get rid of any, **“anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language”** in our lives just like we would remove and discard stained and filthy clothing. But we are not meant to remain unclothed. Instead, we are to clothe ourselves with better things.

In verses 10, Paul urges us to, “put on the new self.” Then he continues in **Colossians 3:11** saying, **“Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.”** These words make it clear that regardless of differing nationalities, races, or social status, there should never be any discrimination or prejudice in the church.

Paul continues in **Colossians 3:12**, **“Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.”** The Holy Spirit changes our hearts, without that miraculous change we would be lost in our sins. Yet, we also have work to do in response to what God has done in making us His people. God has given us new clothes, but we need to choose daily to put them on.

By the way, when you got out of bed this morning and got dressed, how did you decide what to wear? When I was growing up in Cameron, Missouri, mom always took my brother and me to worship at Saint



Munchin's Catholic Church.

The church was friendly, but a bit formal; mother always insisted that we wear coats and ties. I think that in many places, Catholic children and also some Protestants still dress up for church. I don't have any photos of my brother and me in our Sunday best, but this photo from St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church in San Antonio, Texas has the right style.



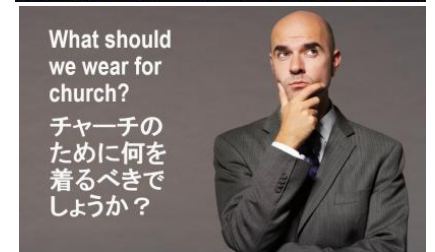
Mother explained to us that God is Holy and therefore we should dress in our best clothes to go to church. So, on Sunday mornings, mom would tell us, "Wear your church clothes," and my brother and I knew that meant that we should put on our very best clothes.

Later, when I finally came to real faith in Jesus through the ministry of Calvary Chapel in California, I was introduced to a different perspective on church clothes. Instead of emphasizing the holiness of God by wearing coats and ties, they emphasized that God is our Father and that we are His adopted sons and daughters. This emphasis on our intimate family relationship with God was reflected in how people dressed for Sunday service. Most people came to church in the same clothes that they would wear for lunch with their family at home.



So, which is the right way to dress for church? Is it better to follow the casual, at-home style which so many churches in America have adopted? Or is it better to put on our best coat and tie for church?

I think it is mostly a matter of church culture and personal preference. Some people wear casual clothes to church, others are more formal. But, if we think about it, there is another and deeper meaning in the question, "What should we wear for church?"



When we hear this question, most of us probably think of going to a church building for a Sunday worship service. That is not surprising, but from a biblical perspective, the church is not a building. Furthermore, I think the Bible speaks of clothing in the figurative sense more often than it speaks of clothing in the literal sense.



In the Bible, the church is always the gathering of the believers, not the building they gather in. These brothers and sisters in Kampala, Uganda remind us of this truth; they gather under a tree to worship. They don't have a building, but they are the church.

What is more, we are the church every day, not just on Sunday. And, we are the church everywhere we go, not just when we go to a particular building for a worship service. So, how should we dress for church? I don't think Paul would answer that question with descriptions of shirts, pants, dresses, and shoes.

After urging us to clothe ourselves with, "**compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience**" in **Colossians 3:12**, Paul stresses in **Colossians 3:14**, "**And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.**"



We can imagine putting on these virtues of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, one by one, almost like the layers of a kimono, and then binding it all together with love, perhaps like an obi that holds everything in place.

Except, we do not layer these virtues on our bodies, but, instead, on our hearts.



What should we wear for church? Compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, and love. If we begin each day with prayer for God to fill our hearts with these things, then we can learn to be the church. It doesn't matter all that much what we wear to a worship service once or twice a week, but it is very important for us to prepare our hearts daily to be the church to a lost world. As Jesus taught in **John 13:35**, **“By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”** Love is the mark of the church by which the world sees that we follow Jesus.

In the rest of Colossians chapter 3, Paul gives some practical instructions for Christian living. As we read verses 15-25, think about how a heart clothed with love might carry out these instructions.

#### **IV. Colossians 3:15-25**

15 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. 17 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.

18 Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. 19 Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them. 20 Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. 21 Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged. 22 Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to win their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. 23 Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, 24 since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. 25 Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for his wrong, and there is no favoritism.

#### **V. Conclusion**

To some extent, Paul's words reflect the social realities of his time; for example, at that time, slavery was common and women often had no choice regarding who they would marry. It was necessary for Paul to give practical instructions that fit with the conditions of society, otherwise his instructions might have been impossible for many of his readers to follow. However, when we look at the chapter as a whole, Paul's emphasis on compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, and love clearly establish a moral foundation for seeking constant improvements to social conditions. In particular, we already saw how Paul wrote in Colossians 3:11 that there is no slave or free in the church. Paul does not approve of slavery, he simply deals with it as a reality of his time.

We won't take the time to discuss all of the ideas in these verses today, but I do want to draw your attention to the closely-connected statements in verses 17, 23, and 24.

**“And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus....  
Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord....  
It is the Lord Christ you are serving.”**

In closing, let me summarize. Let's strive to clothe ourselves daily with God-pleasing virtues, especially love, and whatever we do, let's do it in the name of the Lord Jesus, as working for the Lord, because it is our Lord Christ we are serving. **Let's pray.**