

## **DESIGNER CLOTHES**

### **Colossians 3: 12-17**

If you have been with us during the last two weeks, you know that we have talked much about revival. Two weeks ago we saw that true revival was seeking the activities of heaven, setting our minds on them and doing all that we can to bring them down among us. And do you remember any of those activities? There were four. Praise is going in Heaven at this very moment. So is prayer. Jesus is interceding for you and me. Holy living is going on in Heaven for sure. And finally, service to God is happening right now in Heaven. And last week we learned that if we are to bring these things down to earth there is a starting place – we must put to death our old nature, our fleshly nature. Another way Paul describes it is that we put off our sins. But however you say it, we must repent and forsake our sin. And we took a look at the broad categories of sin, the sexual sins, covetousness, and the sins of temperament and the tongue. And I want to remind you of what we said concerning all of these with respect to revival. If we will not forsake sin, we will not have revival. For revival comes at a price! It is that simple. And sadly, that's the reason that so many believers never experience revival. They just don't want it bad enough to pay the price

Today we are going to learn that there is more to revival than just forsaking our sin. For when we put off our sins we must put on something else. Most of you women and all of you teenagers perfectly understand the meaning of the phrase “designer clothes”. But for the men my age or older, let me explain it you. Designer clothes are garments that are popular, clothes that everybody, well, at least a whole lot of people, love to wear. Clothes that you pay an arm and a leg for retail, and clothes that Janice Griffin and Laurene Glover and Liz Abrasley fight over at Dirt Cheap. For designer clothes are distinctive. They make you look great. And whoever wears designer clothes, wherever they come from, wears them with pride.

Did you know that God has a line of designer clothes for you and me as believers in Jesus? He surely does. And let me tell you, when you wear them you are distinctively different! You are the most attractive person you could ever be. And you are the most influential person and the most joyful person, all because of the clothes that God has given you to wear. And when you wear them day in and day out, you know that revival has truly come to your soul.

Turn in your Bibles, please, to Colossians 3:12-17, and let's read about our designer clothes. In vs 12-14 Paul lists for us the pieces of our designer outfit. Every day we are to put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, which is gentleness, and longsuffering. We are to be patient with one another and forgive one another, and above all we are to put on love. These things make us distinctively different in a lost and dying world. And we

are going to look at them in detail in another message. But today I want us to notice the great motives for putting on these qualities every day. What reasons do we have for taking on all of these Christ-like graces in our lives? First of all because of **who we are**. Look at vs 12. “Therefore”, Paul says. Therefore what? Paul is referring back to vs. 9-10 (read). Paul says, “When you were saved you put off the old nature and put on a new nature, the nature of Christ”. So who are we? We are children of God, blood bought and forgiven by our Savior, Jesus Christ. And Paul says that now it’s time to start wearing your new clothes that comes with the new nature that your Heavenly Father has given you.

But there is another motive for putting on our new clothes that we must explore for a few minutes. Not only because of **who we are**, but because of **where we stand**. Where do you stand as a child of God? Well, first of all Paul says that you are **chosen by God**. Look again at vs. 12. Paul says, “Therefore, as the elect of God...” The Colossians were the elect of God. They were chosen of God, chosen to be saved. The root of the word “elect” is the same as the verb form of the word that Paul uses in Eph. 1:4 when he writes that the Ephesians were chosen from the foundation of the world. And the meaning of the word is to select. God selected those whom He saves out of the mass of lost humanity, and the selecting had nothing to do with anything that you and I might do to merit our selection. Neither was God’s choice based on His foreknowledge of our choice to believe in Jesus. It was by His sovereign choice alone. And the faith that we exercised in Jesus when we were saved was totally by His grace.

We have said before that election is a great mystery. Theologian J.I. Packer calls it a mystery. Pastor John MacArthur calls it a mystery, a paradox, and antimony. Warren Wiersbe says that election is a marvelous doctrine that has confused some and confounded others. And it is a mystery because the Bible also plainly teaches that Jesus Christ died for the sins of the whole world. Is. 53:12; John 3:16; 1 Tim. 2:4 says that God desires all to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. And there is no harmonizing of these two truths in our finite minds. John MacArthur says, “God’s sovereign election and man’s exercise of responsibility in choosing Jesus Christ seem opposite and irreconcilable truths – and from our limited human perspective they are opposite and irreconcilable”. But, beloved, so is the Trinity just as irreconcilable. How can one God be Father, Son, and Holy Spirit at the same time? No man can tell. And so is the Bible’s teachings on the Christian life irreconcilable. One the one hand Paul urged the Thessalonians to increase more and more in love, and on the other hand he says that progress in the Christian life is all of God. He wrote to the Philippians, “For it is **God** who works in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure” (Phil. 1:13). So go figure. But in the mysteries of both the Trinity and the Christian life we believe what the Word of God teaches but what we do not understand. That’s faith.

So what is the solution to this great mystery of election verses human responsibility? Theologian Packer offers the only solution that makes any sense. He says that we should just let the two truths live side by side, as

they do in the Scriptures. And I would add that we can rejoice in both. We rejoice that we can honestly and boldly proclaim to every person who draws breath, “Jesus died for your sins on the cross, wants to save you, and if you repent of your sins and believe in Him you can be saved”. What a priceless truth for anyone who is without Jesus! God said in Rom. 10:13, “Whosoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved”. And “whosoever” means anyone, and if you are here without Jesus Christ in your life, it means you.

So we rejoice that the gospel invitation is for all mankind. And we also rejoice that we can honestly and boldly proclaim to those who are saved, “You are saved because God loved you and chose to save you in Christ before the foundation of the world”. And what a great comfort that is to us who belong to Him. For our salvation was secured before we were ever born, and we surely cannot lose what we did absolutely nothing to gain in the first place.

Well, the Colossians were chosen, but Paul also says that they were **cherished**. They were holy and beloved. Now, the word “holy” means that they were separated unto God. Moses writes that Israel is God’s special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth (Deut. 7:6). And Peter writes that believers in Christ are God’s own special people (1 Peter 1:9). Have you ever seen a little girl who carries a rag doll around with her wherever she goes? And I mean that rag doll is truly ragged. It is nasty, the stuffings are coming out of it on every side, and it would be trash to everyone else in the whole world. But not to her!! It is her special treasure and she loves that doll with all of her heart.

Child of God, that’s what you are to God. He has set you aside as His special treasure and He loves you with all of His heart. We have seen already how the teaching of election is a great mystery. But friends, there is no mystery that can ever approach the immeasurable mystery of God’s love for His own. John writes in 1 John 3:1, “Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God...” And the original language means that God’s love for His children is a foreign kind of love. It was a love that was never seen nor heard of before when God sent His Son Jesus to die on the cross for the sins of the whole world. Let me try to give you just a glimpse into God’s great love for you.

When Adam and Eve rebelled against God in the Garden of Eden and ate the forbidden fruit, God had every right to cast them to hell forevermore, but in His grace He provided a means of atonement for their sin. And we who are the sons of Adam are just as guilty as he in our rebellion against God and deserve the same fate. Paul wrote in Romans 3, “There is none that is righteous, no not one. There is none who understands, there is none who seeks after God.....There is none who does good, no, not one....there is no fear of God before their eyes”. Friends, Paul is talking about you and me. There was **absolutely nothing good** in you that caused God to love you. To the contrary, God loved you while you were His enemy and shed the blood of His only unique Son Jesus on the cross in full payment of your sins.

Imagine a 50 year old man who has lived in a garbage dump in Calcutta all of his life. He is filthy in body and also filthy in soul. He has beaten and robbed countless people who have brought their garbage to his home. And he also hates Americans. He hates us because of the propaganda he's heard about American imperialism and American greed. And one day this man murders someone at the garbage dump. He is arrested, tried, and sentenced to death. But an American millionaire hears about his story and his heart is touched with pity and he determines to help him. And so he immediately catches a plane to Calcutta with his family. Now, keep in mind this Indian man hates him, and he knows it. But before the American even meets him, he goes to the Indian court and proposes an exchange. He will give his only son up to die in the Indian man's place, and he will take the man back to America to live the rest of his life with him. And the court agrees, and so he hands his son over to the authorities, and he dies in the Indian's place by the customary method of stoning. His father goes to the stoning to support him as he dies, but half way through the gory sight he turns his back on his son and walks away, even as his precious son cries out, "Daddy, please don't leave me. Daddy, where are you going?"

Dear ones, that is but a feeble attempt to describe to you the love of God for you as His child. For God loved His only Son with a love so much more perfect than any human love, but forsook Him and turned away as He died on the cross, solely because of His love for you. And if you want real, lasting revival in your life, then just stop every single day and drink in the wonder of it all, and the flame in your soul for God will never die out!

But I want us to explore this matter of being separated unto God for a few moments, of being holy. Have you ever wondered why God has set us apart from the rest of the world? Well, first of all, we must understand that to be separated from the world does not mean that we are to be isolated from the world. Jesus prayed to His Father in John 17, "Father, don't take them out of the world, but keep them from the evil one" (Jn. 17:15). Rather than being isolated from the world, we must actively penetrate the world with the precious gospel of our Lord Jesus.

And that brings us to the reasons that God has set us apart, has made us holy. First of all we are to be holy that we might be His witnesses and that our lives glorify Him. Is. 43:10 says, "'You are My witnesses', says the Lord, and My servant whom I have chosen". Peter says that we are set apart to show forth the praises of Him Who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light (1 Peter 2:9). And beloved, you can proclaim how great God is and how much you love Him all day long, but if your walk doesn't match your talk you will do more harm than good.

And secondly, God has set us aside that He might bless us. "And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from doing them good..." (Jer. 32:40). And beloved, there is no greater blessing in all the world than just to know that God has chosen you to represent Him before men, He Who is King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

It's been almost 30 years, but I still remember it. I had a class in seminary taught by one of the most popular professors on campus, Charlie Grigsby. It was a large class, probably 75 or so students. Well, one day Charlie had to be out of class. We probably had a visiting speaker that day, but what I remember distinctly is that Charlie needed someone to get the class started – to tell the class of his whereabouts, to lead in prayer, and then to turn the class over to whoever was to speak. And for some reason Charlie asked me to do it. Now, it probably took me all of three minutes to do what he asked me to do, maybe less. But brothers and sisters, it was a big deal to me. He could have picked anyone, but he set me aside to represent him. And I was honored! And Charlie even wrote me a thank you note for doing it.

Beloved, you and I have been set aside for something infinitely greater than representing another human being, who is just like us. God has set us aside to represent Him! And do you know what our “thank you” note is? Well, there's the joy of hearing Him say, “Well done, good and faithful servant”. And then there's the crown of righteousness, and then there's the crown of life, and then there's the crown of rejoicing (1 Thess. 2:19), and we will receive all of these at the Judgment Seat of Christ if we've been faithful to Him.

Our time is gone for today, but if you truly belong to Jesus Christ I want to remind you again of **who you are**. You are God's child, with a new nature that you put on the moment you were saved. It is the perfect nature of Jesus. And I also want to remind you of **where you stand**. You are chosen by God and you are cherished by God. And beloved, for these two reasons God calls us to put on the godly clothing that He has designed for us. Mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, longsuffering, patience, forgiveness, and true, Christ-like love. These are the marks of true revival. I ask you, do these qualities mark your life day by day? Or do you need revival?

Maybe you are here and revival is not what you need. You need Jesus. You see, you can't revive something that has no life to begin with. And you may be here still dead in your trespasses and sins. You have never been forgiven, and you are lost and headed for eternal hell. Friend, if that is your case, today I invite you to come to the only One Who can remedy your hopeless situation, the One Who died for you, Jesus Christ. And if you come to Him, I promise you, you will find the forgiveness and peace that you've wanted for so long.