

## Clothed With Compassion

*A Gift For You, Really*

*“Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience” – Colossians 3:12*

I felt the weight of the wrapped treasure in my hand and a wave of excitement washed over me. I had done it. I had successfully snuck a gift from under the Christmas tree, smuggled that gift to my room, and with no Mom or Dad in sight I was going to open it. What a rush. Who could imagine what I was holding in my hand. My mind raced with possibilities, hoping, of course for a new toy. I was confident that, whatever it was, it was going to be the best thing I had ever opened.

This scene takes place near Christmas, sometime in the hazy glow of the 1980’s, and I was a girl on a mission. Had I been able to read, I would have already understood that this gift was going to be a disappointment. The tag on this gift read DAD, not RACHEL. As my little fingers carefully slid behind the tape to unwrap what was surely going to be the most amazing gift ever, I was crushed to reveal the most practical and boring of all dad gifts...a value pack of white t-shirts.

You might not believe this, but to this day I can remember how deflated I felt. I can’t remember if any planning went into my clandestine operation or what happened after I overcame my disappointment with this gift, but the memory of opening that gift to reveal t-shirts for my dad still evokes an overwhelming sense of disappointment. This gift didn’t fit me and was ultimately a disappointment because it wasn’t meant for me.

This is the memory that came to mind as I was meditating on Colossians 3:12 because I can relate to my younger self as I read this verse. The gift of salvation and the ongoing sanctifying work that is being done in the lives of believers is such a beautiful gift, but there are times that I hear a little whisper in the back of my mind question if this gift is really for me?

Do you ever feel like that when it comes to the gifts that we receive in Christ? I mean, do you ever read titles in the Bible like: “forgiven,” “loved,” “holy” and question if those titles are *really* for you and if you can *really* claim the gift of salvation? Or do you feel like little Rachel, a surreptitious imposter who took a gift that wasn’t really hers?

If you can relate to this, let’s be encouraged together by Colossians 3:12:

*“Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience”*

This verse reveals to us a perfect gift that has been given to us by our loving Father. Who is this “gift” for? Let’s read the tag: “God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved.” This is who we are in Christ. Chosen. Holy. Dearly Loved. These titles put us in the right posture as we receive this gift because we realize that as believers, we are all these things, and they are completely undeserved.

This gift of salvation doesn’t just change our status before God, but through the ongoing work of sanctification we *clothe ourselves in* the characteristics of Jesus, becoming more like him. The

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first in this list is compassion. I like how this reads in the King James Version where it is translated as “bowels of mercies” which is a more literal translation of the Greek that incorporates the words for “inward parts” and “compassion.” This is a depth of *care that comes from deep within us*.

The next is kindness or *meeting needs God’s way, free of harshness*. Then humility, which is the result of *comparing ourselves to God, not others*. Followed by gentleness. Gentleness is not a popular character trait because it has become synonymous with weakness, but when we look to the original Greek, we can see that this type of gentleness *expresses power that is divinely constrained*. And finally, in this verse we have patience or the *ability to wait sufficient time before becoming angry*.

This is a picture of what we look like when we clothe ourselves in Christ. When we view ourselves as God does: Chosen. Holy. Dearly Loved. These things that we put on do not feel like a gift meant for someone else, instead they are received with humble excitement. I *get to* have a deep care for others because I remember who first cared for me. I *get to* be kind and gentle in my interactions because I know who was first kind and gentle with me. I *get to* restrain my anger because I know who restrained his anger towards me.

I can’t go back and console young Rachel in her disappointment with her ill-gotten, ill-fitting gift. But as I read Colossians 3:12 today, I am reminded of a better gift and overwhelmed with a different feeling altogether. As you go about your day, remember who you are in Christ. Chosen. Holy. Dearly Loved. Accept the gift and the reality of those titles and look for ways to clothe yourself in these characteristics that were demonstrated to us through Christ.

- 1) The passage in Colossians 3:12 describes us as "chosen, holy, and dearly loved." Does this resonate with you? Why or why not?**
- 2) How can we cultivate the characteristics of the gift we receive in Christ (compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience).**
- 3) The passage says "we are clothed" in these characteristics. What does that metaphor mean to you? How is it different from simply trying to be good people?**



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