

The New Wardrobe - Rev N Lachie Macdonald

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[0 : 00] Folks, turn back with me, if you will, to Colossians chapter 3 this evening as we consider the new wardrobe. The rag trade or the clothing industry is a multi-million pound industry.

! The clothing industry is something that takes up a lot of people's time and money. And if you're a family with children who are growing, you'll know that most of your wage disappears on new clothes for children who seem to instantly outgrow what you have just clothed them in.

Indeed, something that some of us gentlemen may hear from our wives is, oh, I have nothing to wear. We think, well, hang on a second. I can see a wardrobe that's full of clothes and a chest of drawers that's full of clothes and a chest that's got even more clothes in it. How can it possibly be that you have nothing to wear? They tell me that retail therapy is a thing. Personally, I think you have to indulge in a bit of therapy after shopping, but we'll not go down that route this evening. They say that a new outfit can bring a new sense of confidence to somebody. It might be a power outfit that they put on for a job interview, that a certain outfit may convey the idea of success, that wearing the right clothes can even improve your performance in daily tasks. We've certainly seen that in recent days in the Winter Olympics, these specially engineered outfits that the athletes are wearing. We might even have heard statements like, clothing maketh the man. That may be the case. It may not. Well, the Bible speaks about three different outfits for every Christian believer to wear. The first of them is found in Isaiah 61 and verse 10, where it says,

I greatly delight in the Lord. My soul rejoices in my God, for he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of his righteousness. As a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. A lovely picture of coming to faith. And this is what happens when we come to Christ. He clothes us with his righteousness. Is that not one of the most beautiful and arresting and solemn truths of the gospel? As though we are sinful people, he who had no sin was made to be sin, that we might be clothed in his righteousness. That as the Lord looks, he sees not the wayward nature of our hearts and minds, but he sees us clothed with the unblemished righteousness of Jesus. Not because we're righteous, but because he declares us so in Christ, the garment of salvation, the righteousness of Christ himself. The second outfit is found in Ephesians chapter 6, and it's the garments of war. Put on the full armor of God, it says, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, Paul writes, take up the shield of faith with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.

Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, and pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers. So we have the garments of salvation. We have the armor of God. The third outfit is found here in the passage that we read this evening from Colossians chapter 3.

[4 : 00] You could say this is the everyday garments for the Christian believer to wear. These are the things that we wear all the time, our ordinary togs, if you will. Every day we should be choosing, selecting to clothe ourselves with what Paul has reminded the Colossian believers of here.

And this whole section is an illustration, really. There's a contrast between what we once were and what we are now choosing to pursue. The way that we once lived in comparison to the things that we now are motivated to chase after. If you go to verse 8, it speaks of some of the things that we are to kill, to mortify, to put off, ridding ourselves of all such things as these.

Anger, wrath, malice, slander, obscene talk, lies. These are all to do with our old self and our old practices. But he says, you have been renewed. Put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. All those other things, all those ugly words, that's your old self.

That's your old person. That's your BC character, your before Christ character. All of those things characterized part of your life and your witness. Ironically, many of these things are now considered high fashion in the world in which we live. But for the Christian believer, these things represent the old way of how we might have lived at one time. And we are to take off these things as we take off dirty clothes.

If I've been out in the garage working on an old, oily, Massey Ferguson 135 or 35 or whatever it is, and I come to the house, I will be stopped at the door. You're not coming in. You're not even getting across the threshold until you take these dirty, greasy, oily clothes off. Not even permitted, sometimes even into the utility room until we've derobed, until we've got rid of these dirty garments. And there's that picture here that we are to take off these things, to turn away from them, to be willingly of our own volition, removing these things from our lives. Because when we come to Christ, we are co-heirs.

[6 : 35] We are now heavenly royalty. And therefore, it would be unbecoming of us to be clothed with these old garments, these old patterns of behavior, these old habits. We are to cast them aside. They are part of the old wardrobe. They're out of date. They're ill-fitting. They're dirty. They're the old rags.

Take them off. And clothe yourself. Be outfitted with these new behaviors. So the first thing that we are to do, Paul says, is to take off certain things, to put off certain things. If I come to the back door with dirty clothes on and I'm coming to preach the glorious and unsearchable riches of Christ, I don't just put my good clothes on over the top of my dirty clothes. What that would do is tarnish both sets of clothes, and it would make a horrible picture. If a fisherman comes in from tailing prawns on the boat all day, or the crofter comes in from the flank with all of the bells and smells of spending a day amongst the livestock, we wouldn't just put our good clothes on over the top of the dirty clothes. That would be crazy. No, we are to take these things off, and we are to adorn ourselves with these new clothes. We have to make a change. And so, in light of that, I want to look at three things just from Colossians 3 this evening with you, and that's to pick, to pardon, and to punctuate. To pick the right wardrobe, to pardon the fashion faux pas that perhaps we make, and to punctuate everything with love. So the first thing that we're to do is pick the right wardrobe. What is the right wardrobe? Verse 12, put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. That's the wardrobe. That's the picture of the garments that we are to put on each and every day. We are the chosen ones, plural. We are those, if we are in

Christ Jesus, who have been chosen by the Lord. What a wonderful thing, that the Lord has selected us, that he has called us to himself, that he has made us new. We say, why has the Lord picked me? And in many ways, we say, well, I have no idea. There is little in me that he might love, and yet he called me still. Such is his grace, and such is his compassion. Paul is saying, listen, because the Lord has picked you, because he has called you, since you are part of his eternal family, dress like it.

Dress the part. Put these things on. Act like the people that you are. Put on these garments as part of your celestial closet, if you will. It shows us how to dress, where to pick the right things. And what's the first on the list there? The first on the list is compassionate hearts, or compassion. Clothe yourselves with compassion. The King James actually says, put on bowels of mercies. And we think, wow, that's not really exactly how I would necessarily choose to describe this. But what it means is, in the ancient world, people believed that your deepest emotions were found in the pit of your stomach, right in the very center of your being. We all believe that, you know, we have those feelings, like, oh, I had a bad feeling in the pit of my stomach. When we get nervous, we get butterflies in our tummy. If we have to stand up and speak in front of a large crowd, we might feel our stomach feeling empty and nauseated under certain experiences. And so we see how it's quite a picturesque meaning of what Paul is seeking to get across here. To feel deep emotions, to clothe ourselves with this heart of compassion. It's the heart of compassion, the compassionate hearts that the ESV uses here is a good description. To have compassion, to be moved in ourselves, to be sensitive toward other people. Not to be cold, not to be indifferent, not to be insensitive, but to be sensitive, to be gracious, to be kind. Well, we're coming to kindness. This is a mirror, I suppose you could say, of how Jesus the Savior himself was. Jesus went around in his public ministry, and he was healing sicknesses and healing disease. And when he saw the multitude, like sheep without a shepherd he had, compassion for them. He was moved by their plight. It's the same word that's employed here, the bowels of mercy, this compassionate heart. It's how Jesus acted. It's how he interacted. It's how he lived.

When he saw the people coming, even though he was looking for a quiet place, even though he was seeking to remove himself from the crowds, he didn't say, oh, Peter, here they come. What a nightmare. No, his heart was moved for them. His heart broke for them, because they were to him like sheep without a shepherd, and he wanted to address that need that was within them. Jesus also said, in the last days, the love of many will grow cold. And isn't that the truth of the world that we live in today? People are angrier than ever before. People are more divided than ever before. They deny God. They reject his word, and yet they cannot see the folly of that. The fool says in his heart there is no God.

[13:05] We are to have compassionate hearts. We are to see the lost, not in a negative manner, but with the same heart of Jesus. A compassionate heart that we might care for them, that we may seek to send them to the one who can save their souls, to point them to the Savior himself, to have compassion for the lost. The second item of clothing that we are to put on is kindness. Now, kindness is linked, it's related to compassion. The literal translation of the word employed here is to have a sweet disposition. How many of us have a sweet disposition? I'm not sure that I always have a sweet disposition.

I've met people, and they definitely don't have a sweet disposition. But, you know, honey will always get a better reaction than vinegar will, as Alistair Begg, I think it was, said. We're to be a people that are characterized by kindness, as we choose to put that on. Kindness, this sweet disposition, should be evident in our interpersonal dealings with people. The Greek word that's used here is a word used to describe a wine that has mellowed with age. It's lost its harshness. It's lost its edge.

The bite has been taken away. It is just mellowed. It's nice. It's pleasant. One of the greatest examples of kindness in the Bible is when King David treated Mephibosheth with kindness. You remember?

Mephibosheth was the grandson of Saul. Saul and David at odds with each other, at one another's throats. Hostility was between them. Saul dies. Saul's son Jonathan dies. Jonathan's son, Mephibosheth, was a cripple, couldn't walk. And one day David has this idea, I wonder if there's anyone in the house of Saul that I might show the kindness of God to. And he said it out loud, and somebody heard him and said, well, there's Mephibosheth. He's a cripple. Bring him to me, says David. Bring him to me. I'm going to restore to him all that his grandfather lost. I'm going to restore to him all that his father lost. I'm going to let him eat at my table every single day. I'm going to feed him royal food.

I'm going to treat him like he's my own. He showed kindness to Mephibosheth. Previously, there had been hostility and enmity and segregation. But just as the sun melts ice, so kindness dissolves hostility, doesn't it? Kindness has drawn more people to Christ than zeal has.

[16:02] kindness. Kindness draws more people to Jesus than eloquence does or learning does.

Kindness is the language that deaf people can hear and that blind people can see. And when we wear, when we choose, when we opt, when we select kindness as a garment, it's quite the fashion statement. It's noticeable because in the world in which we live, it's rare.

It's rare and it's getting rarer. We are to put on the garment of kindness. We are to develop a disposition of sweet kindness, something that is enjoyable, something that speaks even without words. So our first two items of clothing, compassion and kindness. Thirdly, we have humility. If you have the King James Version, you'll see that it says humbleness of mind. Helpful. That's what humility is. It's a humbleness of mind.

It's thinking in the right way about ourselves. It's having a realistic view of ourselves. In the classical Greek, there wasn't really a word for humility. It shows up later in the Greek texts, and at that point, it showed up as a derogatory term because the Greeks never esteemed humility.

They saw it as not a virtue, but as a vice. Humility was something negative. The Greeks esteemed pride. They admired success. They looked up to domination. So it took the Christian faith to take a vice and turn it into a virtue. It took Christianity to make humility fashionable. Paul takes this word of disgrace and makes it a word of grace. And the reason he does this is because Jesus himself made humility fashionable, if we can use that word. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, Christ said, for I am gentle and lowly in heart. In me, you'll find rest for your souls. Gentle and lowly in heart. Humility doesn't mean walking around with our heads down.

[18:39] It doesn't mean denigrating ourselves. That's actually an inverted kind of pride, actually. Biblical humility is having an accurate estimation of yourself. I am more sinful than I ever dare believe, and yet in Christ more loved than I'd ever dare hope. True biblical humility is putting the Lord first, others second, and ourselves third. Whereas the world that we live in says, put yourself first, others second, and, well, maybe God, if that's your kind of thing.

What is the greatest command? Love the Lord your God with all of your heart, mind, soul, and strength, and love your neighbor as yourself. Humility is putting others before ourselves.

Humility is a biblical garment, and it's something that we have to strive toward. The Bible doesn't say feel humble. It doesn't say imagine yourself to be humble. It says be humble. It says humble yourself. That's something that we actually do. It is an act of our will to choose humility, to put on humility, to put God first and others second and ourselves third. That is biblical humility. We have compassion. We have kindness. We have humility. The fourth garment is meekness or gentleness. They are interchangeable. Most people think of meekness as kind of somebody who's a bit docile, maybe softly spoken, maybe a wee bit flinch, maybe a wee bit spineless, maybe a wee bit fearful. But if that's what we think meekness is, we're wrong. That's not the idea of biblical meekness. Meekness is not a picture of weakness. What meekness is? Meekness is strength under control. Meekness is strength under control. Jesus himself has all dominion, all power, all authority, and yet he had a humility and he had a meekness. He had a strength that was under control. It was used by the Greeks to speak of wind.

A soft wind, a soft breeze. Now, living in the Western Isles and on the west side of the Western Isles, you know how powerful the wind can be. You know how destructive the wind can be. And yet when it's controlled, when it's used in the right way, as it were, it becomes a huge blessing. If there's no wind on the day that you're out cutting your peat and the midges are out, it's a fearful reality.

But a little breeze comes up and the day is transformed. The wind can be hugely destructive, but it can also be hugely helpful for us as well. It was also used, this word was also used to describe horses. A horse that had been broken, a horse that had been tamed. You know that a horse is a powerful animal. A horse can kill somebody easily, but under the control of somebody who understands the animal, a trainer or a rider, well, it can be put to great use, either pulling or plowing or lifting or whatever it might have been. Meekness is where people have power, God-given power, but that is under control, controlled by the Lord. It's linked to the humility that we put on. There's a man in the Bible who's named as the meekest man who ever lived, Moses. He wrote Numbers, so I don't know what to think of that, but Numbers 12, 3, now the man Moses was very meek above all men which were upon the face of the earth. Now, we know that Moses could get angry. We know that Moses could get a little bit out of hand, but when controlled by the Lord, amazing things were done through Moses. He was a powerful force for good and yet called the meekest man on the face of the earth. Meekness is power, it is strength under control, employed in the right ways. So we have compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and then fifthly, patience. Patience or long-suffering. It comes from two words formed into one. Macro means large or long, and thumos means heat or passion. So the idea is like a long fuse, takes a long time for you to get heated up. Like a diesel engine, takes a long time to warm up, not like a petrol engine that's warm very quickly and liable to overheating. This long-suffering is letting your engine idle whilst you feel like ripping through the gears from one to six.

[24 : 02] 1 Corinthians 13 tells us that love is patient and love is kind. Being patient with people is a biblical virtue. It is a principle that is made evident to us perfectly in Christ himself, who was patient and who is patient. Now, Jesus got angry, didn't he? Jesus got impatient, you could say, as he went into the temple, and he overturned tables, and he drove them out with a whip. He did it twice in his ministry. And yet the Bible tells us, be angry and do not sin. Be angry and sin not. We can be angered by certain things. We can be impatient to rid the world of certain things. Absolutely, but we are to have long-suffering. We are to be patient within that. And so that's the wardrobe that we are to pick.

We are to pick the right wardrobe. And the right wardrobe for the Christian believer is to put on a compassionate heart, to exercise kindness, to embody humility, to exercise meekness, and to show patience, to run cool. So we're dressed in the right way. So we're to pick.

Secondly, we are to pardon. We're to pardon. What we recognize is that whilst we choose to put on these garments, whilst we choose to cultivate these characteristics within our own lives, there will be others who will struggle with that. There may even be wolves in sheep's clothing.

And so what does it say in verse 13? It says, One another. One another. One another. One another. It's a word that is employed again and again and again in the Bible. We are to encourage one another. We're to be together with one another. We're to be patient with one another. We're to recognize that not everybody moves at the same pace. Not everybody is having the same experience that we are having. Not everyone has had the same experience we've had.

Not everybody is at the same place that we are at. And so we are to bear with one another. And you know what? It's easy to bear with one another if we are putting on these garments day by day.

[26 : 45] Compassionate hearts. Compassionate hearts. Kindness. Humility. Meekness. And patience. It becomes very simple. Very easy. Very natural. To bear with one another and to forgive when others wrong us. And yet so often we put off humility and we put off meekness and we put off patience and we put off kindness and we put off compassionate hearts when somebody wrongs us. And we want vengeance.

And we think of retaliation. No, no, no, says Paul. Not the way. If you are putting on out of your own volition compassionate hearts and if you are wearing kindness and humility, if meekness and patience characterize your character, then you will be able to bear with one another. It won't actually tip you over the edge. We are to leave it to the Lord. Vengeance is mine, he says. I will repay.

Instead, we are to love. We are to love one another. It's not always easy to love people, is it? Sometimes people are very difficult to love. But we are to love and forgive one another, even when things are difficult. You've all heard the story, I'm sure, of Corrie ten Boom, Holocaust survivor. She'd gone to Germany to preach the message of forgiveness, God's forgiveness. And in the crowd, she spots one of her prior captors, a man who was brutal, a man who was vicious. And as she speaks about the forgiveness of sin, she sees him smiling. And it's hard for her. And at the end of the meeting, he comes and he thrusts out his hand, telling her that he has been redeemed, that he has been saved, and he wants to shake her hand. And you can imagine the turmoil that Corrie ten Boom was in at that moment, really feeling like she could not do it. And silently praying to the Lord, I can lift my hand. I can do that much. But you supply the feeling. She said, and so woodenly, mechanically, I thrust my hand into the one stretched out to me. And as I did, an incredible thing took place. The current started in my shoulder, raced down my arm, and sprang into our joined hands. And then this healing warmth seemed to flood my whole being, bringing tears to my eyes. I forgive you, brother, I cried with all my heart. It sets you free when you forgive. If anyone has a grievance against anyone else, forgive as the Lord has forgiven you.

Ephesians 4 says it slightly differently. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ. God forgave you. So we're to pick the right word, and we're to pardon the sins of others, bearing with one another. And just as we conclude very briefly, verse 14, and above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony or unity. Ancient clothing always had a sash, always had a belt that was used to kind of hold all the elements of the person's outfit together. And what Paul is saying is here, look, love is the thing that binds all of these different attributes together. If you choose to put on compassion and kindness and humility and meekness and patience and then choose love, then it will bind it all together in perfect unity, the belt of love. You know, it's difficult to feign compassion, isn't it?

It's difficult to feign kindness or to feign humility or meekness or patience or forbearance or forgiveness. We can't fake these things. But because of love, we can clothe ourselves with these things.

[31:02] And so Paul is saying to us, take off your grave clothes and put on your grace clothes. These are your new wardrobe as a Christian believer. And when we take off our grave clothes, the old person, the old habits, the old ways, and when we put on our grace clothes of compassionate hearts and kindness and humility and meekness and patience, and when we bind all of that together with love, the Lord will do amazing things through us. Everything is here. Everything that we need is set before us. The exhortation is there. The question that we have to answer is what outfit will we put on? What clothes will we choose to wear? Let's pray. God, our Father, we thank you for this exhortation from your word to be those who choose your way over ours, who choose to put on the things that you have called us to. And so, Lord, we pray that you would help us as we select compassionate hearts, moved by the plight of those who are lost and those whom we interact with, that we would choose kindness, that we would show love, and that we would have that sweet and mellow disposition toward others. Lord, that we would have the right estimation of ourselves, that we would worship you first, that we would put others second and ourselves third, that the power that you give to us, the gifts that you bestow upon us, the talents that we are given, that we would use them in a controlled manner to bring blessing to others, that we wouldn't use them destructively, but that we would use them, that others may be edified, that others may be built up, or that we would show patience. So often we are impatient. Help us to learn patience.

And Lord, we recognize that if we put these attributes on, these garments of the Christian faith, and we bind them together with love, that it will be easy for us to bear with one another, to forgive the sins and the grievances of those against us, and bring glory to your name. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Folks, we're going to conclude by singing to God's praise from Psalm 93 in the Scottish Psalter, Psalm 93 in the Scottish Psalter, on page 354 of your Psalm books, page 354, the Scottish Psalter, and Psalm 93. The Lord doth reign, and clothed is he, with majesty most bright, his works to show him clothed to be, and girt about with might. The whole Psalm to God's praise, and we'll stand if we're able, and sing together.

The Lord doth reign, and clothed is he, with majesty most bright, his works to show him clothed to be, the world is so established, that it cannot depart.

The Lord doth reign, and clothed is he, with majesty most bright, his face, the full earth from everlasting yard. The floods, O Lord, have lifted up, they lifted up, their voice, the floods, O Lord, have lifted up, their wings, that made a mighty noise, but yet the Lord, the Lord, have lifted up, their wings, that made a mighty noise, but yet the Lord, that is, O Lord, have lifted up, the Lord, have lifted up, their wings, that made a mighty noise, but yet the Lord, that is on high, the Lord, that is on high, is more of might by far, that noise of man.

The Lord, have lifted up, their wings, that made a mighty noise, but yet the Lord, that is on high, yet the Lord, that is on high, is more of might by far, that noise of many, the Lord, have lifted up, their wings, that made a mighty bellows are.

[36:17] Thy testimony is heavenly woman, faithful, His heavenly world In faithfulness excel And holiness Forever, Lord, Thine house become a dwell.

And now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority before all time and now and forever.

And all God's people say, Amen.