

New Clothes for a New Year – December 27, 2020

Introduction — he stepped off the elevator onto the hospital floor, looking very distinguished. About 60 years old, with brown hair and a brown beard and moustache and a little overweight, he wore a gray tweed sport coat, with dark pants and a checkered tie. He walked up to the nurses' station and introduced himself, “my name is Dr. Balch, and I came to visit Mrs. Smith.” The nurse pointed him to the room, and began to tell him about Mrs. Smith's exact condition in precise medical terms, and Dr. Balch told the nurse to stop!! He said he was a pastor, with a doctorate in counseling, and Mrs. Smith was one of his church members— he didn't understand all of the medical lingo!! The nurse laughed, and said, “I'm sorry, but you look like a doctor— i mean, a medical doctor!! A specialist or something....!”

The old saying goes, “the clothes make the man.” What we wear can sometimes be a kind of “uniform” that tells others who we are and what we do. For Instance, a lot of preachers wear a robe during worship, and a suit, or at least a sport coat and tie when they are visiting or “working” — that's what I'd often do. It's sort of the preacher's “uniform.”
— a doctor wears his or her white coat in the hospital — it's a doctor's “uniform.”
— you can always tell a marine dress uniform or a navy dress uniform — marine blue vs. Navy white.

In a similar way, the Bible tells us that when we choose to be Christians, to follow Jesus Christ as lord and savior, our outward actions & behaviors should demonstrate our inward spiritual experience, and should say something about who we are, and what we believe. We should "put off" the old behaviors and attitudes that characterize the "old life" or the non-Christian lifestyle, and "put on" the "new clothes" of the Christian life-style. By the way —how did you do for Christmas?? Get many gifts?? Get any clothes among your gifts??? New shirts or blouses? Sweaters? As you think about wearing your new clothes in the new year, let us remember what the apostle Paul said about “taking off” the garments of the “pagan” or non-Christian nature, and “putting on” the clothing of Christ:

I. Take off the “pagan” or non-Christian nature:

---it would be highly inappropriate for a nurse or a doctor to dress in dirty blue jeans, an old sweatshirt, and ragged tennis shoes to perform surgery, — wouldn't it??

— it would be inappropriate for an auto mechanic to put on a tuxedo with tails when he was going to work in a greasy garage — wouldn't it??

— then it is inappropriate for us as disciples of Jesus Christ to do and act some of the ways others in our world— those who don't know Christ— might act. We must

Be careful to discard “inappropriate” behavior or “clothing” for Christ's sake.

A. We must do away with sensual impurity — 3:5

1) This is a sex-obsessed world that we live in now. I read a newsletter by a 20 years ago a united Methodist evangelist, who mentioned that since the Clarence Thomas supreme court hearings, this country has learned a lot about the problems there are today with sexual harassment. He wrote, “is it any surprise that all kinds of sexual harassment goes on nowadays, when kids are fed all kinds of suggestive images by tv & music everyday?!?” Are things better, 20 years later??

2) as Christians, we need to “put away” the temptations and teasings of our “sex-saturated society” and determine that we will live for Jesus Christ and his values— respect for women and men, not using them as objects for lust, and respecting the sanctity and privacy of a couple's bedroom.

B. Grasping greed is an attitude that is inappropriate for a Christian — 3:5b. Coveting — an overpowering desire to have & seek for material things— is really: idolatry. It is setting up material things as a “god” in one's heart. “in a materialistic and highly... Competitive society in which success often is judged in terms of the things that people possess, the follower of Jesus Christ must beware lest he or she be captured by the same secular & earthly scale of values.” 5

C. An evil disposition must be discarded also — 3:8. “Christ Jesus came into the world to do more than `save our souls.' by the gift of his Holy spirit he seeks to Christianize our disposition” --- our attitudes & temperament. “It is necessary that we be willing & eager to forsake all of those traits & attitudes which are disruptive and harmful both to self and others.” Let us ask

Christ each day for a transformation in this area of life, & pray the same for each other!!

D. All dirty language and lying speech (3:8-10) must be cast aside as unworthy garments. There is no proper place in the conversation of one dedicated to Jesus Christ for profanity, dirty jokes, and falsehoods. With the help of god, we need to be clean and truthful in speech at all times. Just as the apostle Paul encourages us to “take off” the old self, he also encourages us to “clothe ourselves” for Christ:

ii. So, put on clothing for Christ— (read vv. 12— 17)

A. Put on the character of Christ — 3:12. The verbal picture of Jesus’ character— “compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience” — are attitudes and actions that the Holy Spirit seeks to reproduce in our lives, if only we will pray for them to happen, and seek for that to happen.

B. Put on the example of Christ — 3:13. Christ’s example— to forgive, to turn the other cheek, were profoundly explained in the Sermon on the Mount. It should be no surprise, then, to see Jesus on the cross pray for those executing him, “father, forgive them” “to be a true follower of Christ requires that we repudiate the right to retaliate in a vindictive manner toward those who Treat us unfairly.” 5

C. Put on the love of Christ — 3:14. The love of Christ was not syrupy, shallow, cheap, shoddy emotional thing that people often call “love” today. The love of Christ was expressed in terms of kindness, thoughtfulness, helpfulness, and self-sacrifice. Jesus practiced a persistent, unbreakable spirit of goodwill even toward those who crucified him. The Holy Spirit can help us love others in this manner.

D. Put on the peace of Christ — 3:15. The peace of Christ is not just the absence of war and tension. We need that in this world, to be sure— but the “peace of Christ” is the result of “harmonious relationships” Jesus seeks to bring people into a right relationship with God, with others, and toward themselves.

E. Put on the word of Christ — 3:16. This means to read god’s word, and meditate on it, and sing the psalms and the great hymns, both old hymns & new songs, with ‘gusto’ & feeling!! Not just “at church,” either— at home, in the car, wherever you can sing to the lord, or turn from other things to god’s word. A long time ago i heard that the average Christian watches 10 hours of television a day, but reads the Bible for less than one hour — a week!! Don’t let that be true of you— because “we become what we spend time doing.”

F. Put on the thankfulness of Christ — 3:15-17. In 3 verses, Paul gave thanks & emphasized the importance of giving thanks. Jesus gave thanks to God on many occasions; he was a grateful person. But, for us, this attitude & habit is not natural & easy — it must be developed and cultivated. Try thanking God as you walk in the yard, or to the car today. Thank God regularly, and often.

G. Put on the name of Christ — 3:17. Acknowledge Jesus Christ as lord [i.e., in control] of every aspect of your life by doing everything as if he were present and you were doing it as a service to him.

Conclusion — you have heard me before encourage everyone to put on the character of Christ — and the peace of Christ and the love of Christ !!! Also, put on the witness for Christ A missionary to china 100 years ago, told the story of a Chinese pastor who always instructed new converts to Christ to witness as soon as possible. Upon meeting one young Christian, he asked, “brother, how long have you been saved???” The young man replied, “three months.” “and how many have you won to the savior?” asked the pastor. “O, i am just a learner,” said the young man. The pastor shook his head and said, “young man, the lord doesn’t expect you to be a full-fledged preacher yet, but he does expect you to be a faithful witness. Tell me, when does a candle begin to shine— when it’s already half burned up???” “no, as soon as it is lit,” said the young man. “That’s right– so let your light shine right away!” 1

Let your light shine now!! Let your light shine today, and tomorrow, and the next day!! Let your light shine every day, every year, from now on!!!!

Make “telling the good news” your new year’s resolution!!!