

A Christian's Wardrobe

Colossians 3:12-17

Introduction

As you look around at other Christians, you may notice that there are many different fashions, styles, tastes, etc., for their clothing. And even looking around among those in this Bible study, you'll see quite a range.

You may be surprised to learn that Paul declared what believers should wear nearly 2,000 years ago. And for the smart ones listening right now, knowing that at that time, pants hadn't been invented yet, nor had many other staples of the latest look books, you'll not be surprised to hear that he says we need a wardrobe makeover.

Followers' fashions
Christian couture
Disciples' dress
Believers' bedecking
Religious robes
Saintly swathe
Holy habit
Faithful fit

God wants us to exchange our grave-clothes for grace-clothes. (Wiersbe)

Background Passage

Colossians – 3:12-17 – ¹²And so, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; ¹³bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. ¹⁴And beyond all these things *put on* love, which is the perfect bond of unity. ¹⁵And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful. ¹⁶Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. ¹⁷And whatever you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.

Background

Paul was writing to the Colossians to teach them the doctrines of Christ and how they should live as a result of them. Chapter 3 begins the practical teaching section. Immediately before our focus passage, Paul first tells them what clothing they should take off. Warren Wiersbe calls them those garments our "graveclothes."

⁸But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, *and* abusive speech from your mouth. ⁹Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its *evil* practices, ¹⁰and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him ¹¹--*a renewal* in which there is no *distinction between* Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all.

This entire section is about relating to others. It is different from the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5. What we see here is specifically and entirely focused on how we as Christians are to get along with others. And our interpretation and application of the passage should be centered on that.

The Audience

Paul was writing to the Colossians, looked down upon by the Judaizing Christians because they didn't follow the Jewish traditions as a part of their Christianity. They needed to know they were accepted by God like the other Christians. Paul took this opportunity to encourage them. He called them, "those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved." That would be his words for you, too.

You are God's chosen. You are holy, set apart for God. You are beloved.

How does that make you feel? _____

Do you feel chosen? Holy? Beloved by God? _____

To me, the one word that stands out is "holy." That one's up to you, right? Another word for "holy" is "saint." Look at this passage:

1 Cor. 1:1-3 – ¹Paul, called *as* an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, ²to the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, *saints by calling*, with all who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their *Lord* and ours: ³Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

And then this one:

1 Peter 1:14-16 – ¹⁴As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts *which were yours* in your ignorance, ¹⁵but like the Holy One who called you, *be holy yourselves also in all your behavior*; ¹⁶because it is written, "YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY."

It seems to be both the truth and something you are commanded to make the truth.

Verse 12 – Different Translations

BBE As saints of God, then, holy and dearly loved, let your behaviour be marked by pity and mercy, kind feeling, a low opinion of yourselves, gentle ways, and a power of undergoing all things;

NIV Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

Wey Clothe yourselves therefore, as God's own people holy and dearly loved, with tender-heartedness, kindness, lowliness of mind, meekness, long-suffering;

YLT Put on, therefore, as choice ones of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humble-mindedness, meekness, long-suffering,

KJV Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, **bowels of mercies**, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;

3:12 Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with a heart of mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, **3:13** bearing with one another and forgiving one another, if someone happens to have a complaint against anyone else. Just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you too forgive others. **3:14** And to all these virtues add love, which is the perfect bond. **3:15** Let the peace of Christ be in control in your heart, for you were in fact called as one body to this peace, and be thankful. **3:16** Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and exhorting one another with all wisdom, singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, all with grace in your hearts to God. **3:17** And whatever you do in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. – (NET)

¹²Therefore, as God's chosen ones, holy and loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. ³Put up with one another and forgive each other if anyone has a complaint against another. Just as the Lord has forgiven you, you also should forgive. ¹⁴Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which ties everything together in unity. ¹⁵Let the peace of Christ also rule in your hearts, to which you were called in one body, and be thankful. ¹⁶Let the word of Christ dwell in you with all richness and wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, and singing to God with thankfulness in your hearts. ¹⁷And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. – (ISV)

«3:12» Ἐνδύσασθε οὖν, ὡς ἐκλεκτοὶ τοῦ θεοῦ, ἅγιοι καὶ ἡγαπημένοι, σπλάγχνα οἰκτιρμοῦ χρηστότητα ταπεινοφροσύνην πραῢτητα μακροθυμίαν, «3:13» ἀνεχόμενοι ἀλλήλων καὶ χαριζόμενοι ἑαυτοῖς ἐάν τις πρὸς τινα ἔχη μομφήν· καθὼς καὶ ὁ κύριος ἐχαρίσατο ὑμῖν, οὕτως καὶ ὑμεῖς· «3:14» ἐπὶ

πάσιν δὲ τούτοις τὴν ἀγάπην, ὃ ἐστὶν σύνδεσμος τῆς τελειότητος. «3:15» καὶ ἡ εἰρήνη τοῦ Χριστοῦ βραβεύετω ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ὑμῶν, εἰς ἣν καὶ ἐκλήθητε ἐν ἐνὶ σώματι· καὶ εὐχάριστοι γίνεσθε. «3:16» ὁ λόγος τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐνοικεῖτω ἐν ὑμῖν πλουσίως, ἐν πάσῃ σοφίᾳ διδάσκοντες καὶ νουθετοῦντες ἑαυτοὺς, ψαλμοῖς ὕμνοις ᾠδαῖς πνευματικαῖς ἐν [τῇ] χάριτι ᾄδοντες ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ὑμῶν τῷ θεῷ· «3:17» καὶ πᾶν ὃ τι ἐὰν ποιῇτε ἐν λόγῳ ἢ ἐν ἔργῳ, πάντα ἐν ὀνόματι κυρίου Ἰησοῦ, εὐχαριστοῦντες τῷ θεῷ πατρὶ δι' αὐτοῦ.

The Wardrobe: Compassion

Paul was writing to the Colossians.

4698 σπλάγχνον splanchnon {splan'kh'-non}

AV - bowels 9, inward affection 1, tender mercy + 1656 1; 11

1) bowels, intestines, (the heart, lungs, liver, etc.)

1a) bowels

1b) the bowels were regarded as the seat of the more violent passions, such as anger and love; but by the Hebrews as the seat of the tenderer affections, esp. kindness, benevolence, compassion; hence our heart (tender mercies, affections, etc.)

1c) a heart in which mercy resides

3628 οἰκτιρμος oiktirmos {oyk-tir-mos'}

AV - mercy 5; 5

1) compassion, pity, mercy

1a) bowels in which compassion resides, a heart of compassion

1b) emotions, longings, manifestations of pity

Bowels of compassion is the best translation of this phrase. You may love from the heart, but you hurt for others in your guts.

Experience helps you be compassionate. Hospital. Marty.

Wisdom makes you compassionate. You realize that often the thing you are getting upset with someone else about, you do, too. Or at least something you have done.

Compassion is putting yourself in the shoes of a hurting person and feeling their hurt. It is seeing things from their perspective.

Those with the spiritual gift of mercy may be able to do this without even thinking about it, but this is something that all believers should do.

What are some challenges to being compassionate? _____

Can you be compassionate toward someone who is actively engaged in evil or hurtful behavior? We should still try to understand their hurt, pain, and need,

but that doesn't mean we should encourage them, condone their behavior, or allow harmful acts to continue.

Where are some places around us where compassion is desperately needed?

Compassion is important, but on its own, it doesn't do much for the hurting person. God wants action, which brings us to the next article of clothing.

The Wardrobe: Kindness

Paul was writing to the Colossians.

5544 χρεστοτης chrestotes {khray-stot'-ace}
AV - goodness 4, kindness 4, good 1, gentleness 1; 10
1) moral goodness, integrity
2) Benignity, kindness

Kindness is a good translation, but magnanimity (generosity) adds an important facet to our understanding. This kindness is when you have something someone else needs and you give it to them.

A beggar can have compassion on another beggar who is hungry, but he can't do anything to help. Someone with food can. This kindness, placed here in order after compassion, is someone recognizing a need and having (and offering) the resources to help.

What resources do we have that others may need? _____

(Christ is one!) (Some that don't cost us any money are: influence, encouragement, experience, time, ...)

One of the great acts of kindness documented in the Bible was done by David:

2 Samuel 4:4 – Now Jonathan, Saul's son, had a son crippled in his feet. He was five years old when the report of Saul and Jonathan came from Jezreel, and his nurse took him up and fled. And it happened that in her hurry to flee, he fell and became lame. And his name was **Mephibosheth**.

2 Samuel 9 – ¹Then David said, "Is there yet anyone left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?" ²Now there was a servant of the house of Saul whose name was Ziba, and they called him to David; and the king said to him, "Are you Ziba?" And he said, "I am your servant." ³And the king said, "Is there not yet anyone of the house of Saul to whom I may show the kindness of God?" And Ziba said to the king, "There is still a son of Jonathan who is crippled in both feet." ⁴So the king said to him, "Where is he?" And Ziba said to the king, "Behold, he is in the house of Machir the son of Ammiel in Lo-debar." ⁵Then King David sent and brought him from the house of Machir the son of Ammiel, from Lo-debar. ⁶And Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan the son of Saul, came to David and fell on his face and prostrated himself. And David said,

"Mephibosheth." And he said, "Here is your servant!" ⁷And David said to him, "Do not fear, for I will surely show kindness to you for the sake of your father Jonathan, and will restore to you all the land of your grandfather Saul; and you shall eat at my table regularly." ⁸Again he prostrated himself and said, "What is your servant, that you should regard a dead dog like me?"

⁹Then the king called Saul's servant Ziba, and said to him, "All that belonged to Saul and to all his house I have given to your master's grandson. ¹⁰"And you and your sons and your servants shall cultivate the land for him, and you shall bring in *the produce* so that your master's grandson may have food; nevertheless Mephibosheth your master's grandson shall eat at my table regularly." Now Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants. ¹¹Then Ziba said to the king, "According to all that my lord the king commands his servant so your servant will do." So Mephibosheth ate at David's table as one of the king's sons. ¹²And Mephibosheth had a young son whose name was Mica. And all who lived in the house of Ziba were servants to Mephibosheth. ¹³So Mephibosheth lived in Jerusalem, for he ate at the king's table regularly. Now he was lame in both feet.

Mephibosheth had at least two strikes against him. First, he was lame and could not care for himself. In those days, that could easily end in death. Second, he was a direct descendant of the previous king. A common precaution among monarchs, especially in that day, was to completely destroy every potential heir to the throne from the previous king or queen. Mephibosheth was hidden for that very reason, and his exposure here could have easily been a trick to finish off the job.

David's kindness to Mephibosheth is a perfect example of true kindness that we are to put on, and a good picture of God's kindness toward us, as well.

For another side note about kindness, look at these three verses from Proverbs and see if you notice a trend:

Proverbs 3:3 – Do not let **kindness** and truth leave you; Bind them around your neck, Write them on the tablet of your heart.

Proverbs 14:22 – Will they not go astray who devise evil? But **kindness** and truth *will be* to those who devise good.

Proverbs 19:22 – What is desirable in a man is his **kindness**, And *it is* better to be a poor man than a liar.

For some reason, kindness and truth are always paired in Proverbs. Why might that be? _____

The Wardrobe: Humility

The first two garments come from a perspective of strength or even superiority, but the next two will confront any attitude of pride.

5012 ταπεινοφροσυνε tapeinophrosune {tap-i-nof-ros-oo'-nay}

AV - humility 3, humbleness of mind 1, humility of mind 1, lowliness 1, lowliness of mind 1; 7

- 1) the having a humble opinion of one's self
- 2) a deep sense of one's (moral) littleness
- 3) modesty, humility, lowliness of mind

This word has to do with what we think of ourselves, and the gist of it is that we aren't to think too much of our selves. "Littleness of mind" is another good translation, but "humility" fits fine.

We can see in Scripture what God thinks of the humble versus the proud:

James 4:6 – But He gives a greater grace. Therefore *it* says, “**GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.**”

I can't imagine any worse enemy than God, but that's the result of our pride!

And we can also see that Jesus' humility is an example to all:

Philippians 2:5-9ff – ⁵Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, *and* being made in the likeness of men. ⁸And being found in appearance as a man, **He humbled Himself** by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹Therefore also God highly exalted Him...

What is your definition of humility? _____

Is it the same as humiliation? ____ What's the difference? _____

My favorite definition is: “**Recognizing that God and others are actually responsible for all my accomplishments.**” (IBLP)

What do you think about that definition? _____

A lot of people balk at that definition. What if you hadn't gotten off the couch? What if you hadn't studied? What if you hadn't _____?

Here's a good passage to consider:

1 Corinthians 4:7 – For who regards you as superior? And **what do you have that you did not receive?** But if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?

In Paul's warning to the Corinthians, he seems to suggest the same idea as in the above definition of humility. Even your drive, discipline, and innate skills are all still inherited and/or part of God's design.

In Luke, Jesus warns us not to be proud or expect praise or special treatment when we perform well.

Luke 17:7-10 – ⁷“But which of you, having a slave plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, ‘Come immediately and sit down to eat’? ⁸But will he not say to him, ‘Prepare something for me to eat, and *properly* clothe yourself and serve me until I have eaten and drunk; and afterward you will eat and drink’? ⁹He does not thank the slave because he did the things which were commanded, does he? ¹⁰So you too, when you do all the things which are commanded you, say, ‘**We are unworthy slaves; we have done only that which we ought to have done.**’”

Humility is a hard character quality to have today. There are so many celebrated examples of pride, arrogance, and self-promotion. And even in positive settings we hear so much about self worth and self esteem, often without the critical balance for those important things of proper humility.

Here are a couple of comments from Proverbs about the benefits of humility:

Proverbs 18:12 – Before destruction the heart of man is haughty, but humility *goes* before **honor**.

Proverbs 22:4 – The reward of humility *and* the fear of the LORD are **riches, honor and life**.

(Remember what Philippians 2 says happened to Jesus right after it talks about His being humbled? Exalted!)

Ways to live out humility:

- Praise others
- Not think more highly of myself than I ought to
- Take responsibility for all my actions (not just the good ones)
- Try again after each defeat
- Give credit to those who have made me successful

The Wardrobe: Meekness

Paired with humility, Paul recommends a nice soft robe of meekness.

4236 πραοτης praotes {prah-ot'-ace}

AV - meekness 9; 9

1) gentleness, mildness, meekness

“Gentleness” is a fine translation, but I prefer “meekness.” I suspect that they often avoid that word in modern translations because of the misunderstanding of what meekness means. It's not weakness in any shape or form. Meekness is

strength under control. You can't be meek without being strong. In the old days, when a horse had been broken, it was said to be "meeked." And they don't break sheep!

A good definition of meekness is: "Yielding my personal rights and expectations to God." (IBLP) A functional antonym is "anger."

Do you know anyone who you would describe as meek? What do you think about them? _____

What do others think about them? _____

Is it possible to be meek at work, and yet still "get ahead?" _____

I think Jesus' washing of His disciples' feet is a great picture of meekness. Do you see that in the workplace?

How can meekness be required as a parent? _____

Ways to live out meekness:

- Be slow to get angry
- Not boast
- Not grumble or complain
- Look for ways to help those in need
- Be willing to go last

The Wardrobe: Longsuffering

The fifth article of clothing.

3115 μακροθυμία makrothumia {mak-roth-oo-mee'-ah}

AV - longsuffering 12, patience 2; 14

1) patience, endurance, constancy, steadfastness, perseverance

2) patience, forbearance, longsuffering, slowness in avenging wrongs

Patience is not a good translation. The real focus is on restraining yourself from anger, judgment, resentment, and retaliation. Longsuffering is the best word to describe what Paul is talking about.

hupomone is the temper which does not easily succumb under suffering, makrothumia is the self restraint which does not hastily retaliate a wrong. The one is opposed to cowardice or despondency, the other to wrath and revenge.

Romans 2:1-4 – ¹Therefore you are without excuse, every man of you who passes judgment, for in that you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things. ²And we know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things. ³And do you suppose this, O man, when you pass judgment upon those who practice such things and do the same yourself, that you will

escape the judgment of God? ⁴Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and forbearance and **patience**, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?

A good definition of endurance is: "The inward strength to withstand stress to accomplish God's best." (IBLP)

Given our clearer understanding of endurance, as opposed to patience, what are areas where we need to restrain ourselves from judgment and revenge?

Good ways to live out patience and endurance:

- Change the things I can change and accept the things I can't
- Keep trying until I succeed
- Make the most of my spare time
- Not interrupt
- Not complain if I don't get my way

Verse 13 – Different Translations

NASB bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.

NIV Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

Wey bearing with one another and readily forgiving each other, if any one has a grievance against another. Just as the Lord has forgiven you, you also must forgive.

NET bearing with one another and forgiving one another, if someone happens to have a complaint against anyone else. Just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you too forgive others.

ISV **Put up with one another** and forgive each other if anyone has a complaint against another. Just as the Lord has forgiven you, you also should forgive.

<3:13> ἀνεχόμενοι ἀλλήλων καὶ χαριζόμενοι ἑαυτοῖς ἐάν τις πρὸς τινα ἔχη μομφήν· καθὼς καὶ ὁ κύριος ἔχαρίσατο ὑμῖν, οὕτως καὶ ὑμεῖς·

The Wardrobe: Forbearance

The sixth article of clothing.

430 ἀνεχόμεαι anechomai {an-ekh'-om-ahee}
middle voice from 303 and 2192; TDNT - 1:359,*; v
AV - suffer 7, bear with 4, forbear 2, endure 2; 15
1) to hold up
2) to hold one's self erect and firm
3) to sustain, to bear, to endure

Bear with, or forbearance is the right idea here. I love the ISV, “Put up with one another.”

R. C. H. Lenski says that this means, “holding out when burdens are heaped up. These need not be insults and injuries, they may be labors for us; they may be faults, thoughtlessness on the part of others.”

Romans 15:1-2 – ¹Now we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength and not *just* please ourselves. ²Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to his edification.

NRSV We who are strong ought to put up with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves.

1 Corinthians 6:1-8 – ¹Does any one of you, when he has a case against his neighbor, dare to go to law before the unrighteous, and not before the saints? ²Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is judged by you, are you not competent to constitute the smallest law courts? ³Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, matters of this life? ⁴If then you have law courts dealing with matters of this life, do you appoint them as judges who are of no account in the church? ⁵I say *this* to your shame. *Is it so, that* there is not among you one wise man who will be able to decide between his brethren, ⁶but brother goes to law with brother, and that before unbelievers? ⁷Actually, then, it is already a defeat for you, that you have lawsuits with one another. **Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be defrauded?** ⁸On the contrary, you yourselves wrong and defraud, and that *your* brethren.

What would happen if everyone in the church put on the garment of forbearance? Church conflict would nearly completely go away, and all that energy could be applied to the mission of spreading the Gospel!

Our incredibly and destructively litigious society has programmed us to look for things to get upset about. Are you looking for something to get upset about? Or are you willing to suffer hurt or even loss in order to keep peace?

What are some examples of situations where we have a choice to forbear or to make an issue out of it? _____

What are the outcomes of the two paths? _____

Good ways to live out forbearance:

- Be easy going
- Don't get upset when things don't go your way
- Don't look down on others who are not as mature as you
- Be committed to your church, class, and ministry
- Recognize your own failings
- Let it lie

The Wardrobe: Forgiveness

The seventh article of clothing.

5483 χαρίζομαι charizomai {khar-id'-zom-ahee}
AV - forgive 11, give 6, freely give 2, deliver 2, grant 1, frankly forgive 1; 23

- 1) to do something pleasant or agreeable (to one), to do a favour to, gratify
1a) to show one's self gracious, kind, benevolent
1b) to grant forgiveness, to pardon
1c) to give graciously, give freely, bestow
1c1) to forgive
1c2) graciously to restore one to another
1c3) to preserve for one a person in peril

Forgiveness is a very good translation, and all the major translations use that word to convey Paul's seventh garment for believers.

The Bible has tons to say about forgiveness. Doesn't this verse sound a lot like Colossians 3:

Ephesians 4:32 - And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, **forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.**

Over and over again in Scripture we are told to forgive others, and it is nearly always set against the forgiveness we've been granted by God, which is ALWAYS for greater evils than we will ever experience by the hand of someone else.

A good definition of forgiveness is: “Clearing the record of those who have wronged me and allowing God to love them through me” (IBLP)

Lenski applies this passage this way: “The moment you have a complaint against anyone, graciously forgive. Bury it at once in genuine forgiveness.”

Does Paul ever say in our passage that the complaints are valid? They may be, or may not be. Either way, we must forgive.

Lu 17:3-4 – ³“Be on your guard! If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. ⁴And if he sins against you seven times a day, and returns to you seven times, saying, ‘I repent,’ forgive him.”

Forgiveness may be one of the hardest things we will ever do. But we still must do it!

What is the thing in your life that immediately comes to mind when I say you need to forgive? _____

How long ago did it happen? _____

Who is hurting today because of that event? _____

Forgiveness is the only way to free you from that event. And you will be the only one hurting until that happens.

Forgiveness is something that may have to happen daily or even more often. We can forgive, but we may never forget. So we have to fight the temptation to pick up the offense again.

Andy Andrews: “I look at anger management as a waste of time when you consider what people are trying to get from it. People want release from the rage and anger that is boiling inside of them. The idea is flawed from the beginning. Why would you want to manage something like that? Why would you want to go to a class to learn how to keep anger, resentment and rage inside of you and manage it? It simply cannot be done. Someone needs to start talking about anger resolution and how you get rid of it instead of managing it. And that is what the Sixth Decision is all about, choosing to forgive.

It is what Abraham Lincoln did with the South as well as his political enemies. Instead of harboring his discontent internally, he forgave them and went on to become one most endearing U.S. presidents.

So the question is, “How do we release that anger, the rage and the resentment?” We do it by making a decision to forgive. Understand that forgiveness only has value when it is given away. Through the simple act of granting forgiveness, you release the demons of the past and create a new beginning.

Read the sixth decision, found at http://www.andyandrews.com/downloads/pdf/AA_SevenDecisions.pdf (Also found in chapter 8 of his excellent book, *The Traveler’s Gift*.)

How can you tell you have not forgiven someone? Often it’s easy – we continue to think about them and / or the thing they did to us. But another way is to imagine what we would think / do if we were walking down a crowded

hall and saw them coming toward us. If your gut tightens up or you know you would turn around and find someplace to hide from them, you haven’t forgiven them.

Here are some practical ways to practice forgiveness:

Luke 6:27-36 - ²⁷“But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ²⁸bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. ²⁹Whoever hits you on the cheek, offer him the other also; and whoever takes away your coat, do not withhold your shirt from him either. ³⁰Give to everyone who asks of you, and whoever takes away what is yours, do not demand it back. ³¹And just as you want people to treat you, treat them in the same way. ³²And if you love those who love you, what credit is *that* to you? For even sinners love those who love them. ³³And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is *that* to you? For even sinners do the same. ³⁴And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is *that* to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, in order to receive back the same *amount*. ³⁵But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil *men*. ³⁶Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.”

Good ways to live out forgiveness:

- Be quick to forgive
- Not cover up my own wrongs but be quick to ask forgiveness
- Not seek revenge
- Respond kindly to those who hurt me – Do something nice!!!
- Not take up offenses for others

Verse 14 – Different Translations

NASB And beyond all these things *put on* love, which is the perfect bond of unity.

NIV And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

BBE And more than all, have love; the only way in which you may be completely joined together.

NRSV Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

KJV And above all these things *put on* charity, which is the bond of perfectness.

NET And to all these virtues add love, which is the perfect bond.

Above all, clothe yourselves with^a love, **which ties everything together in unity.**

ⲥⲓⲗⲁ ⲉⲡⲓ ⲡⲁⲥⲓⲛ ⲉⲃⲉ ⲧⲟⲩⲧⲟⲓⲥ ⲧⲏⲛ ⲁⲓⲁⲡⲏⲛ, ⲟⲩ ⲉⲥⲧⲓⲛ ⲥⲏⲛⲃⲉⲥⲙⲟⲥ
ⲧⲏⲥ ⲧⲉⲗⲉⲓⲟⲧⲏⲧⲟⲥ.

The Wardrobe: Love

The final, eighth, article of clothing. Paul approaches this last garment as the final piece that makes the whole outfit work. It's much like many ladies who have spent so much time getting ready to go to the fancy event and look at themselves in the mirror and think, "It's just not quite right. I need something to tie it all together."

26 agape agape {ag-ah'-pay}

AV - love 86, charity 27, dear 1, charitably+2596 1,
feast of charity 1; 116

- 1) brotherly love, affection, good will, love, benevolence
- 2) love feasts

Agape love is often defined as the type of love God has for us. It is sacrificial, unconditional, and unilateral. It has even been described as a love that prizes the other. It is a love that is always giving and striving for the best of others.

And note that Paul says that love is the most important of the eight, and, in fact, all the others are found in love.

4886 sundesmov sundesmos {soon'-des-mos}

AV - bond 3, band 1; 4

- 1) that which binds together, a band, bond
 - 1a) of ligaments by which the members of the human body are united together
- 2) that which is bound together, a bundle

5047 teleiotev teleiotes {tel-i-ot'-ace}

AV - perfectness 1, perfection 1; 2

- 1) perfection
 - 1a) the state of the more intelligent
 - 1b) moral and spiritual perfection

With these adjectives Paul sets love as the virtue that is the perfect bond for believers. The translations that use "unity" are accurate with respect to the result of love. Look at an earlier spot in Colossians where Paul introduces the metaphor of clothing and how love "knits" believers together.

Colossians 2:1-2 – ¹For I want you to know how great a struggle I have on your behalf, and for those who are at Laodicea, and for all those who have not personally seen my face, ²that their hearts may be encouraged, **having been knit together in love**, and *attaining* to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, *resulting* in a true knowledge of God's mystery, *that is*, Christ *Himself*, ...

What is Paul saying with the last part of the verse? Three options:

- Love is the virtue that ties all the other seven together, like a belt that ties the rest of your clothing together. It fits the metaphor.
- Love is the virtue that binds Christians together in unity. It's a good thought, and certainly the entire list of garments is focused on relationships – how to get along with one another.
- Love is the virtue that, when fully worn, brings a Christian to spiritual maturity.

I'm not sure which one is right. If I were to have to make a choice, I would go with Paul's sticking within his metaphor.

Paul suggests that love will help believers do all of the things he has commended as garments covering our relationships. Especially note the most recent two: forbearance and forgiveness. True love will certainly help believers get along. Also note what Peter said:

1Peter 4:8 – Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins.

Just as last week we relied so much on God's incredible forgiveness to help us understand how little He is really asking us to do, this week we can look to Him as the ultimate lover. "Greater love has no man than this, that he give his life for his friends. You are my friends..." (John 15:13-14)

1 John 4:10-11 – ¹⁰In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. ¹¹Beloved, **if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.**

One more way to better understand the true nature of love is to look at things that are the opposite of love. What is the opposite of love? _____

Answers might include: hatred, indifference, selfishness, stinginess.

In our study of love in 1 Corinthians 13 in 2010, we focused on verse 7 as the core message of the chapter: "bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things"

"Love protects" – Love protects the integrity of the relationship. I'm not looking to put something in the negative column. I'm looking to put something in the positive column. I'm looking for a way to keep love alive.

"Always trusts" – Love looks for a generous explanation.

"Always hopes" – Love assumes there's a good explanation.

"Always perseveres" – Love always looks for the good.

In every relationship at some point along the way, there is a gap between our expectations and how people behave.

Examples: Showing up on time, doing chores, never doing something again...

The expectations are usually set by parents, upbringing, culture.

In every one of these gaps, we either choose to believe the best, or we assume the worst.

Have you and your spouse gotten into a cycle? When you choose to assume the worst, even if there's a history to back it up, you have contributed to the demise of the relationship. Every time, even when it seems to be justified, that you go negative in your attitude, tone, expression, response, you contribute to the demise of your love relationship. Even when it is justified.

No one wants to disappoint the one they love. Whenever you communicate disappointment, you say, "No matter what you do, you will never measure up." Every time you overtly or covertly communicate that, you push them further and further away.

Fill the gap with "believe the best." And choose to communicate that.

If you consistently communicate disappointment, they are scared of you. No one wants to feel like they disappoint someone they love.

Or you can communicate: "I trust you. I accept you. You have not disappointed me."

Last week I gave you a good way to know if you may not have forgiven someone – how would you feel if you saw them coming down the hall? Would you want to run and hide or could you pass by with a sincere greeting? This week, let's talk about how to know if you love someone. **How do you feel when the phone rings, or you see an email or a text from them? Are you eager to hear from them?**

What is your biggest challenge when you hear Paul's instruction to love? ____

What relationships in your life do you need improve by expressing true love?

Good ways to live out love:

- Put others' needs before your own
- Assume the best, even when you might suspect malice
- Actively look for opportunities to be a blessing to others
- Share what you have
- Not expect anything in return for your generosity

Conclusion:

Warren Wiersbe says, "When love rules in our lives, it unites all these spiritual virtues so that there is beauty and harmony, indicating spiritual maturity."

Based on God's direction in these passages, I need to _____.