

INTRODUCTION:

1) This is what the world sees: It was reported: When Mark Zuckerberg, the youngest multi-billionaire, visited China not long ago, he was interviewed by students at Chinghua University. Among questions of various topics, he was asked why he always wears a gray T-shirt in the public. His reply wasn't something most people would expect. He said: “I have a bunch of gray T-shirt in my closet. They are all the same gray color. So I don't have to spend time to choose which one I will wear that day. I can spend my time on some more important things.” I know not everyone would agree with him.

Most of us would wear things that are appropriate for the nature of activity or the occasion. On this some are more choosy than others. To wear or dress according to occasion and activity is not to show off, but to show respect to the occasion and the people around us. That's why articles were written to help us to do the best we can so we won't be looked at as odd for the event.

2) This is what the Bible sees: When Paul wrote to the early Christians in Colossia, he addressed the topic of “wearing appropriately” as people of God. From his perspectives, what to wear on the outside isn't as important as what to wear on the inside. He emphasized that what we wear on the outside is to impress others, but what we wear on the inside is for the Lord to see. What we wear on the outside is temporal, but what we wear on the inside is eternal. To Paul, the importance of life isn't about how we decorate our body, but how we build our spiritual quality in our hearts. The appearance on the outside can be deceiving, but what is on the inside is genuine.

I want to discuss with you today on how and what we, as Christians, need to wear so we can be called true and honest followers of Jesus Christ.

WE NEED TO KNOW WHO WE ARE: (3:12) The first thing to consider if we dress appropriately is to know who we are. If you are invited to a wedding dinner, you don't want to dress yourself so flashy to catch more attention than the bride and her family. If you are the bride's mother, you don't want to wear a T-shirt and a pair of blue-jeans. We need to wear according to our status or position to show respect to the host and the occasion.

Since we are saved to be children of God, Paul suggested, or even commanded that we need to wear something fit for our status.

1) We are God's chosen people: “Chosen” is from Greek *ekletos*, to call out. It is the first part of *ecclesia*, church. Christians are not ordinary people like all others in the world. We are God's special people, called out to be saved and be His people. This is a precious status, unlike anything in the world. As clydesdales are not ordinary horses or ponies, but a special breed, treasured by the most demanding breeders and own by royal courts, we Christians are a special class of people treasured by God because he has purchased us from our sins by the blood of his son, Jesus Christ.

2) We are God's holy people: “Holy”, *hagios* in Greek, when it is used on people, it doesn't mean we are completely spotless or sinless, but we are set apart for the purpose of God's use. This means we have a purpose, a mission in our life when God called us to be His children. All people in the world has their own purpose for their lives, but we have a purpose of God in our lives. While people in the world will pursue their human purpose of life, we are to pursue the purpose of God in our lives. If we truly believe that God is above all people of the world, and therefore his purpose must be above all human purposes of the world, then we know we can and must live our life on higher level of purpose and performance. Think of it: When a baby was born to a royal family, he is destined to be someone special than many other babies. His life is for the purpose of the royal class, not as any common people. We are born of the holy spirit as children of God, we are different than all others.

3) We are God's dearly beloved: “Dearly beloved”, *hegapemenon* in Greek, comes from *agape*, supreme love. Imagine when you go shopping, say, want to buy some apples or a pretty dress for a special occasion. You will look closely on all apples or the dresses on racks before you pick the one which you see as the best to your eyes and fits needs you love to have. When God chose us to be his children, he has shown us his heart full of love to make us His children, His people. This is about the emotional depth God has on us. He loves us so much to sacrifice his life to save us. He will continue to love us every step, every day of our lives. Paul explained this in Eph. 1:4-5, “For God chose us in him before the creation of the world, to make us holy and blameless in his sight. In love, he predestined us to be adopted as his children through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will.”

DRESS UP IN GOD'S OUTFIT: (3:12-14) How do we dress in God's outfit? Clothe, *endusasthe*, in Greek, or “put on” in KJV, best translated “put yourself into,” like putting a letter into an envelop that all others can see is the

envelop, not the letter inside. In this case, God intends us to “hide” in Christ-like virtues he listed here. So when others see us, all they see is the godly virtues on us, covering our sinful nature. Here are the seven godly virtues:

1) A heart of compassion: Compassion or bowels of mercy, *spanchea*, is the center of all emotion, mostly directed to people who are weak, hurt, wounded or helpless. The best illustration is how the father of the Prodigal Son showed him when he returned home broken and in shame. It isn't about if the son deserved any thing, but it's from the father's heart on his wayward son. This is also how God treated us when we come to him and repent of our sins.

2) A heart of kindness: *Chrestoteta* in Greek, means light-weighted, both in words and actions, like speak softly or touch lightly. This is in opposite to harsh words or heavy strikes on people who may have fallen in sin or offense who may deserve harsh criticism and heavy-handed punishment. Jesus invites us to learn from him in Matt 11:29-30, “Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

3) A heart of humility: *Tapeinothrosunev* is a compound word that means “to take a lower position.” This is about our attitude to others how we relate to them: We are willing to take a lower position, less important. Jesus gave us a very good example when he took on a servant's position to wash the feet of his disciples. People in the world tend to look down on others and try very hard to elevate their own position even if they don't deserve it. But we are children of God and disciple of the Jesus, and we need to learn from him to be humble. In Phil 2:3, Paul taught us how to put this in action, “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than you.”

4) A heart of gentleness: *Proteta* in Greek, means soft, but not weak. The first three is about what we need to have on the inside. This is about how to show them on the outside, in this case, showing the soft-side of our Christian life. It is particularly in our speech, we always need to be gentle. In Proverbs, King Solomon advised us: “A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.” (15:1)

5) A heart of patience: Many of us admit that patience is something we don't have enough supply. *Makrothumia* means to endure mistreatment, wrong done to us for a long time. Most of us are nice when things go well with us. But we often explode when we are ill-treated or been done wrong to.

6) A heart to bear and forgive: “Bear with one another and forgive whatever

grievances you may have against one another.” (3:13) Christians virtues is in a crescendo movement, one is on a higher pitch than the one before. This is about what we need to do when we have grievances against others: To bear and to forgive. This is more than just being patient, but to erase the offense, to forgive the pain and injury. As Jesus bore the pain and suffering and forgave those who crucified him to the cross, (Luke 23:34) we are to bear and forgive those who have inflicted injury on us.

7) Above all, a heart to love: “And over all these virtues, put on love which binds them all together in perfect unity.” (3:14) “Put on” *enduo*, like to wear some clothe that will cover our naked and often shameful body, so we are to be wrapped up by the above virtues and the highest virtue is love. Proverbs 10:12 says, “Hatred stirs up dissension, but love covers all wrongs.” We see and experience this everyday that: we forgive and are forgiven because there is love between us.

#### REWARDS ON OUR BEST DRESS-UP: (3:15-17)

1) The peace of Christ dwells in us: “Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body, you were called to peace.” (3:15) This is the first reward God will give us: when we are wrapped with His virtues, his peace will rule our hearts. This isn't about peaceful environment without conflicts, not about smooth sailing without storm, or everything we do will be successful. This is about the strong and stabilizing power of God in our hearts no matter what may happen around us on the outside. What is in us is much greater and stronger than what is around us.

2) The word of Christ brings us wisdom: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom.” (3:16) If we are humble enough, we will realize often times, we don't have wisdom to make the best decisions in life. Here God promises us to give us wisdom when we spend time to learn the word of Christ. This isn't the same as wisdom of the world which mostly make people selfish, tricky and greedy. If we allow to be enveloped in the virtues of God, we will be protected by the wisdom of Christ in all that we do.

3) We will be filled with thanksgiving: “Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.” (3:17) In your past year of longer, how often you can give thanks to God from the word you said, or deeds you do? Many of us are on the opposite side: We regretted often the wrong words we said, and the

bad actions to did. We face those times because of our human nature and the carnal power in us. But when we surrender our lives to the control of Jesus, put on the virtues of Jesus, let his word indwell in us, his power will take control of everything we say or do. That is exactly what we want to happen: He is our Savior and Lord of life.

### THESE WE CAN DO:

1) Adopt a new approach: Instead of spending time, money and efforts on what to wear on the outside everyday to impress people, we need to adopt a new approach to focus on what we grow on the inside, the virtues of God in us. We all know that doing things to impress people isn't what we Christians should do. We should do things to impress God. So, don't spend time, money and efforts in dressing up the best you can. Rather than, we should devote our time and efforts to pursue Christian virtues. When we go to heaven, all the nice clothes we have worth nothing. We can't bring anything to heaven. Pay more attention on growing our inside qualities.

2) Change to a new wardrobe: Although I personally don't care much on what to wear or building a wardrobe of nice and expensive clothes, I don't mind others do so. But instead of accumulating nice and expensive clothes, let us make a change on building Christian virtues or character. Keep the list in this message on your desk or the fridge as a reminder each day. Instead of spend time in choosing the clothe to wear each morning, spend that time to reading the Word of God, digesting His word and absorb it as spiritual nourishment each day, so you will be able to build a much better wardrobe for eternal value. Yes, we still live in the world and need to dress appropriately for occasions. But our life isn't all about this world. We are here today, but look forward to that day to be with Jesus in glory.