

A Prayer

Make me a channel of your peace;
where there is hatred let me bring your love;
where there is injury your pardon, Lord,
and where there's doubt true faith in you.

Make me a channel of your peace;
where there's despair in life let me bring hope,
where there is darkness only light,
where there's sadness only joy

O Master grant that I may never seek
so much to be consoled, as to console,
to be understood as to understand
to be loved, as to love with all my soul.

Make me a channel of your peace;
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned
in giving to others that we receive
and in dying that we're born to eternal life

Sebastian Temple after a prayer of St. Francis of Assisi

Bible References

CEV Contemporary English Version
NRSV New Revised Standard Version
The Message Eugene H. Peterson

Hutt City Uniting Congregations
2011

GOD'S WARDROBE



A Series of Reflections for Lent
By Doug Rogers

Why do a Lenten study?

Lent is a time of remembering

Since the fourth century the 6 weeks prior to Easter were set aside as a special time of prayer and fasting. As we spend time in reflection over this period our minds go to what Jesus did, not just in that last week, but also in his actions toward others. This in turn may challenge our lives and our attitudes to those around us.

Lent is a time of preparation

Above all Lent prepares us for the coming of Easter that we may truly enter into the spirit of that festival in grief for the suffering of Christ, in joy for the message of new life, and in response to the command to serve Christ in the World.

Lent is a time of commitment.

It gives us time to reflect on our needs and hence all that we have. There has come to be a custom of "giving up for Lent". But prayer and fasting is less about giving up than seeking God's will and may be a call to "take up for Lent" in new service for our Lord.

This series of studies seeks to help you to prepare for the coming of Easter. It seeks to act as a guide but in your meditations allow God to lead you as you travel the way of love that led to the Cross.

About The Series

Do you sometimes stare at the wardrobe and complain, "What am I going to wear?" Hard as it is to choose the clothes we should wear today Paul urges us to wear Christ closer than the clothes we wear. But what does that mean? How can we be dressed in the Spirit? Those are the questions these studies seek to answer. Taking the words used in Colossians by the New Revised Standard Version and that of the Message we look at 4 aspects of Christian behaviour and how the fruit of the spirit may be shown in the way we appear much as if they are worn as garments.



The Hebrew greeting "Shalom!" shares a hope for a wholeness in life – for all to be as God intended them to be.

📖 Psalm 62:1-12

- ⇒ Where does the Psalmist say we should put our trust?
- ⇒ What is the wrong place to look for peace?
- ⇒ Where can we find security?

📖 Read Romans 14:14-21

Paul sees the church family divided and calls them to "live in peace".

- ⇒ How can the peace be disrupted in our church family?
- ⇒ How can strengthening our faith help bring peace to the fellowship?

Jesus blesses those who make peace. A popular song has the lines "Let there be peace on earth ... and let it begin with me."

- ⇒ How can peace begin with me?
- ⇒ What steps to peace can be made in our family, our workplace, our church?
- ⇒ How can being thankful help us bear one another and lead to peace?



Conclusion

Our clothes say a lot about who we are but our spiritual clothes talk of the action Spirit in our lives and our relationship with God.

- ⇒ Do you plan to buy new clothes soon?
- ⇒ What spiritual clothes will you be wearing?
- ⇒ Which mark of the Spirit will you ask God to clothe you in this year?

Study Four - Clothes For A Victory

A few of you in Sardis have not dirtied your clothes with sin. You will walk with me in white clothes, because you are worthy. Everyone who wins the victory will wear white clothes.

Revelation 3:4-5 CEV



Often the Bible emphasises clean clothes or white. How often I have had to go and change because I drip my breakfast down my front!

- ⇒ How can our wardrobe from God become stained and dirty?
- ⇒ How can they be washed clean? (see Acts 22:16)

At the end of the chapter we are told how to gain the clean clothes by a simple invitation.

📖 Read Revelation 3:14-22

- ⇒ What must we do to gain the clean clothes?
- ⇒ For whom does Jesus wait at the door?
- ⇒ What do you understand by “winning the victory” in Christ?

Peace Bear with one another Quick to forgive
Thankfulness

- ⇒ What links these words?
- ⇒ What are the similarities?
- ⇒ How would you distinguish them?
- ⇒ Can you think of stories that show these attributes?

Colossians 3:12-15

NRSV

As God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful.



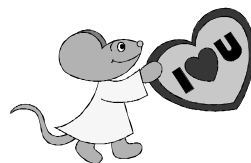
The Message

So, chosen by God for this new life of love, dress in the wardrobe God picked out for you: compassion, kindness, humility, quiet strength, discipline. Be even-tempered, content with second place, quick to forgive an offense. Forgive as quickly and completely as the Master forgave you. And regardless of what else you put on, wear love. It’s your basic, all-purpose garment. Never be without it. Let the peace of Christ keep you in tune with each other, in step with each other. None of this going off and doing your own thing. And cultivate thankfulness.

Study One - Clothes For A new Life

Let the Lord Jesus Christ be as near to you as the clothes you wear.

Romans 13:14 CEV



The clothes we wear are important. We take time choosing them each day. What is the weather going to be like? Should I dress casual or formal? What colour shall I choose? Who else will be there? Or maybe it is just the first thing to hand from the wardrobe.

Paul sees the need to be just as careful in choosing what we wear spiritually—how we show the spirit in our lives.

⇒ How can Christ be as close as the clothes we wear?

📖 Read Colossians 3:12-15

⇒ When we meet someone new what clues do we get to who they are?

⇒ Can clothes tell us anything?

⇒ What do you think Paul means by asking us to dress in the attributes of the spirit?

📖 Read Matthew 22:34-40

⇒ What to Christ is the most important commandment?

⇒ Can we be commanded to love?

Three of the words that Paul uses in his list of clothes for the new life are:

Compassion Kindness Love

- ⇒ What links these words?
- ⇒ What are the similarities?
- ⇒ How would you distinguish them?
- ⇒ Can you think of stories that show these attributes?

📖 Read Mark 4:26-29

In this parable Jesus tells of a farmer who simply plants the seed and then leaves it to grow.

⇒ Are there times when we need to leave things in God's hands and wait patiently?

⇒ Does leaving it to God mean we do not have to do anything at all?

📖 Read Titus 2:1-14

Titus gives instructions to a number of groups of people in the Church. Self control is repeated as a virtue for all ages.

⇒ How is self control or patience and discipline said to be important for each group?

⇒ How can faith and love lead to patience?



*“Patience serves as a protection against wrongs
as clothes do against cold.
For if you put on more clothes as the cold increases,
it will have no power to hurt you.
So in like manner you must grow in patience
when you meet with great wrongs”*

Leonardo da Vinci

Study Three - Clothes For A Cross

When he learned from the centurion that he was dead, he granted the body to Joseph. Then Joseph bought a linen cloth, and taking down the body, wrapped it in the linen cloth, and laid it in a tomb that had been hewn out of the rock. He then rolled a stone against the door of the tomb.

Mark 15:45-46 NRSV



It is as important as a wedding dress to choose the clothes in which a person will be buried. I have known people choose a smart suit, but also a favourite rugby jersey or casual sweater. Making that last gesture choosing their burial clothes can be very moving. Jesus last clothes were traditional, a linen cloth. Matthew makes a point of the cloth being clean (Matt 27:59).

⇒ After such a horrific death, is it surprising that Jesus had such care taken over his burial?

Earlier Jesus' clothes had suffered a different fate.

📖 Read John 19:23-24

⇒ Why do you think the soldiers stripped their prisoners?
⇒ How would Jesus, his friends and family feel?

There are stories of how the robe became owned and revered by people over many years.

⇒ Would this clothing have been special to you or just a piece of cloth?

These garments are also said by Paul to be needed in the Christian's wardrobe:

Patience Discipline Quiet Strength
Even tempered

- ⇒ What links these words?
- ⇒ What are the similarities?
- ⇒ How would you distinguish them?
- ⇒ Can you think of stories that show these three attributes?

In Colossians Paul uses the word agape for the love as the basic garment we are to wear. In the New Testament, however, four Greek words were used for love. Eros was sexual attraction. Storge was the rough and tumble of a family – even when a child says, "I hate you!!" Philia is that love we have for friends and neighbours. Agape was used for love of God and the way God cares for all people.

- ⇒ How can we show love?
- ⇒ How can we fail to show compassion?

📖 Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-13

- ⇒ What is the most important attribute of love to you?
 - ⇒ Do you agree with Paul that, "For now there are faith, hope, and love. But of these three, the greatest is love".
- 1 Corinthians 13:13 CEV



*"If you want others to be happy,
practice compassion.
If you want to be happy,
practice compassion"*

Dalai Lama

Study Two - Clothes For A Wedding

So we will be glad and happy and give him praise. The wedding day of the Lamb is here, and his bride is ready. She will be given a wedding dress made of pure and shining linen. This linen stands for the good things God's people have done.

Revelation 19:7-8 CEV



Getting ready for a wedding is a happy occasion. But it is not just the bride who asks the question, "what shall I wear?"

📖 Read Matthew 22:1-14

- ⇒ What sort of preparations did the father make?
- ⇒ What do you think angered him about the man who wore the wrong clothes?

The writer Jeremias points out that rather than the wrong type of clothes it can be understood that the guest was wearing dirty clothes. When challenged he stays silent. Had he slipped in uninvited and was ashamed or was his presence meant as a deliberate insult? Or was he simply unprepared when the invitation came?

- ⇒ Can you think of times where you have worn inappropriate clothes?
- ⇒ What lead to you doing this?
- ⇒ How can we be better prepared for Christ's invitation?

Another three garments from the list spoken of by Paul are:

Humility Meekness Being content with second place

- ⇒ What links these words?
- ⇒ What are the similarities?

- ⇒ How would you distinguish them?
- ⇒ Can you think of stories that show these three attributes?

To many humility is putting oneself down. This is not a virtue. The Greek words can mean insignificant and weak or mild and friendly, gentleness. The opposite pride, however, is putting oneself first instead of thinking of others, while Jesus talked of the first being last and the last first.

📖 Read Proverbs 18:12

- ⇒ How can you see pride leading to a fall?
- ⇒ Can you think of times when someone's humility has led to great honour?

📖 Read Matthew 11:28-30

The yoke was a timber beam linking two oxen together so that a field could be ploughed. Sometimes slaves would be yoked together to do some heavy labour. The team had to work together otherwise they could not move forward.

- ⇒ How can Jesus say his yoke is easy?
- ⇒ Why is it so humbling to take such a yoke?
- ⇒ Is being yoked with Christ a giving up of who we are?



*"To become truly great,
one has to stand with people,
not above them"*

Charles de Montesquieu