

GRACE GAZETTE

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Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

Hebrews 12:12-13

HEAVENLY APPAREL

Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering. Colossians 3:12

There is an old saying which says, "You can judge a man by the clothes he wears." Now while that saying may not be absolutely true, the apparel that a man is covered in is most often a pretty accurate measuring stick of the type of person he is. You don't expect to see a beggar holding a "WILL WORK FOR FOOD" sign wearing a Brooks Brother's suit. Neither would you expect the president of the United States to show up to a state dinner in blue jeans with a hole in the seat. So you can tell a lot about a person and where he is going by what he has on.

Paul uses the language of "putting on" in several instances in his epistles as though it was a garment he is describing. (see Rom.13:12; Gal.3:27; Eph.4:24; 6:11; I Thes.5:8) In fact the literal translation of "put on" here means to clothe oneself. It is the exact word that is used by the LORD when HE taught that we are not to be overly concerned about material things, "*Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on.*" (Matt 6:25) So here Paul is teaching us to let ourselves be clothed with mercy, kindness, humility, and patience.

Now a man can only wear the clothes which are in his closet and are fitted for him and even then he may grow so large as to not be able to easily put them on. (see I Cor.4:6; 13:4) But a man cannot be clothed with apparel which does not belong to him or for which he is not suited.

We often hear some preach to men the duty of being conformed to the image of CHRIST as if it was within their own power bring this to pass. Paul is not in this passage instructing all men everywhere to put on these garments which he describes. Rather he is speaking to those in whom the SPIRIT of GOD has performed a work of grace in transforming them into new creatures. The only ones who can "put on" these garments are those in whose closet the LORD has placed such apparel fitly suited for them. Paul said "*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.*" (Gal 5:22-26) Now this clothing is specifically designed and fitted for the true sons of GOD and they would be out of place to be clothed in anything else. But no man can be clothed in this fine apparel by his own efforts or according to his own will. Paul said, "*work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.*" (Phil 2:12) Someone has wisely said that you can't work out something that has not been worked in. Paul goes on in the same passage to describe the power which brings this outworking to pass when he said "*For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*" (Phil 2:13)

Part of the purpose of GOD in redeeming a people in CHRIST JESUS is that they would be conformed to HIS likeness in all things. In fact the scripture says that they are "predestined" to

this conformity. (see Rom.8:29) If something is "predestined" then it must come to pass. So the LORD is presently at work in HIS elect children to cause them to desire to be clothed in the image of JESUS CHRIST. When they look in the mirror they are disappointed that they see so little of HIS likeness, their hearts are stirred to cry out unto HIM who clothes the lilies of the field.

Their true desire is to put on these garments of finery and godly fashion but they find in themselves no ability to even open the closet door. But by the same grace which put these garments in their closet they are clothed with them. The exhortations of Paul to put on these garments do not fall on deaf ears nor do the people of GOD have to be convinced of their suitability for everyday wear. The operation of GOD's grace in HIS people does not stop once HE has brought them to faith and repentance, nay it is just begun as HE is bringing them to a place of maturity in JESUS CHRIST. So the sons of GOD are exhorted to put on these garments while at the same time HE is clothing them with this same heavenly apparel. We are to put on the garments of :

Compassion. Paul says "bowels of mercies". This has reference to the very deep inward concern that GOD's people should have towards their fellow men in general but most especially to their brethren in the LORD. This was manifest in JESUS CHRIST in that *"we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."* (Heb 4:15)

Kindness. Kindness is akin to compassion towards those who do not deserve it. Kindness is the antithesis of rudeness and vengeance, *"That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus."* (Eph 2:7)

Humility. Humbleness of mind is that which recognizes that everything that we are and possess is a gift from GOD and not the product of our own ability. (see I Cor.4:7) Humility is the springboard of all obedience. HE *"took upon him the form of a servant, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."* (Phil 2:7-8)

Meekness. Meekness is humility applied to our relationships with others. It is the antithesis of pride. A meek man is a servant of others. The LORD JESUS said *"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."* (Matt 11:29-30)

Longsuffering. This is patience and meekness blended into one. It is the epitome of true love. (see I Cor.13:4) *"Be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless. And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation."* (2 Peter 3:14-15)

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