

# Dressing for Christ Part 1 – Romans 12

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- [ 0 : 01 ]     Good morning. Welcome here this morning. It's good to be back in your midst and to mingle and to fellowship with you guys.
- Our time in Belize was very rewarding and relaxing as well. And we felt ready to come back and to serve again.
- So the Lord has done His work. It's a little bit hard always to adjust back to some cold. But it's not too bad. So it's good. I haven't been following the series for the last almost two months.
- And so I've been listening to what Peter shared last week. But I'll be continuing in verse 9 like was read for us.
- And the whole section here is on practical living. Living out our faith.
- [ 1 : 17 ]     And I've titled this message this morning, Dressing for Christ. Dressing for Christ.
- And it's going to, I'm going to be doing it in two parts. The passage that was read, there's too much in there to do it today. So we're going to do it over two. But we think about getting dressed.
- It's usually in the physical. And there's lots of controversy over dress. Even in the church and so on.
- But Scripture tells us or teaches us a lot of how to dress for Jesus. And I'm not talking physically.
- If we're dressing for Jesus inwardly, the outwardly will not be a problem. And so here in Romans 12, we have maybe an introduction to some of the things that we are to do inside.
- [ 2 : 29 ]     Or reflect on what God is doing in us. So we've had 11 chapters of doctrine. Of laying the foundation of our faith.
- And showing very clearly that by our faith in Jesus Christ, we are justified. There's no other way.
- And now because of that, as a result of that justification, this is what your life should look like or the qualities in your life.
- And Paul begins to lay out a number of items here. In fact, in verses 9 through 13, he has 12 statements on Christian life.
- And we're going to probably walk through most of them here this morning. So, being justified, we have acted in spirit.
- [ 3 : 43 ]     And now we are to live out the perfection that God has, that work He has done in my heart. Now we're to show that.
- And last week you will have had the gifts of the spirits and using that for the glory of God. Today it is the characteristics of our walk with Christ.
- And as a theme verse, I want to open with Philippians 2. I've used this verse before. Philippians 2.

And verse 12 and 13. He says, Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling.

For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure. That's a background verse that now that we are believers, he says, my beloved, we are to work out that salvation that God has done in our hearts and to allow it to flow out.

[ 5 : 13 ] And he says, God will do it. So our role is, our role is to surrender to the Holy Spirit's leading, to walk in the Spirit, to allow God free course now, to allow these qualities to flow through us.

And so then in Romans, Paul is doing exactly that. He begins in verse 9 with a phrase, Let love be without hypocrisy.

Let love be without hypocrisy. And love is the basis for all of this, for our Christian walk, for it is the love of Christ that has been poured out in our hearts.

And I want to read a few verses in 1 John 4 that illustrate that well. 1 John 4 verse 15 through 17.

It's foundational, the love of God in our life. He says, Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.

[ 6 : 40 ] So that's faith. And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in God, abides in God, and God in him.

Verse 17. Love has been perfected among us in this, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because as he is, so are we in this world.

So the love of God has been perfected in us. This is the work of God when he gives us the Holy Spirit, and we have the love of God residing inside of us.

And in Philippians, he says, Now work it out. Allow it to show on the outside. And maybe a question.

Why is that a struggle? Why does that not just happen? Or does it happen for you? Anyone have an answer?

[ 8 : 03 ] Why do we struggle? Why do we have to work at it? Why does Paul need to write us repeatedly and to list the characteristics of Christ?

Fearful? of? Of rejection? Any other answers?

Our pride? The weakness of the flesh. And hence, a Bible verse, we are to die to self daily.

Daily. So, when we think of getting dressed for Christ, we are deliberately, intentionally acknowledging God, I want to surrender to you today, and I'm pushing the flesh down.

not giving it free course. For it wants to continue to manifest, to live out its ugliness in our lives.

[ 9 : 21 ] It says, let love be without hypocrisy. And we just read that love has been perfected in us. So, let love be without hypocrisy.

Let's make sure it's genuine that I have submitted to Christ. That the love of God in me is the real thing.

And hypocrisy is that it's hypocritical in that there's other motives. Possibly.

Showing love to one another with wrong or ulterior motives leads to more evil and to more ugliness.

And while we were in bliss, I'm going to use this as an example, we saw some of the more traditional Mennonite people joining an evangelical church for the purpose that they would be free to leave the steel wheels and the horse and buggy behind them and they could do their heart's desire and drive vehicles and have cell phones.

[ 10 : 50 ] Well, that desire is hypocritical. it is not enough. The love of God has not been perfected in our hearts.

And so as we as a body of believers, we need to extend love genuinely one to another because it flows from God's throne.

love and that we can feel that love between us, that it's genuine, it's real. We can sense when it isn't.

And so Paul begins with the foundation of this, let love be without hypocrisy. reality. When it's not real, it's only a matter of time before it will be exposed.

And then he follows through and says, abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. And to abhor is to strongly dislike.

[ 12 : 10 ] I think that's very mild. To be in horror of. That doesn't echo to me.

And it's to have no desire for evil or for sin. That it just goes against the grain.

And how does that come about? The hatred for sin. And we can be sorry for our sin.

We can also be not truly sorry for sin, but hate the consequences of sin. We can maybe enjoy strong drink, but hate the hangover that follows.

And then be sorry for that. But what does it take to hate the sin? And maybe that was a poor example.

[ 13 : 26 ] We would have our own examples in this. God's grace. It takes an understanding and a heartfelt awe of God's holiness.

A grasp of God's holiness in my life and to see who I am in light of that. and to realize that every time I sin, I fall short of His holiness.

And I hate that. I have no desire to go there. And so that is the root of abhorring what is evil.

It starts with recognizing God's holiness. holiness. And brothers and sisters, getting an appreciation for the depth of God's holiness deepens as you walk with Him.

It deepens as you get to know Him. It deepens as you read your Bible day out. and we grow closer to God's character, to Him understanding.

[ 14 : 57 ] And our abhorring will increase. Amen? Is that right? It is.

So based on that love, He now starts in verse 10, and He says, Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love.

So an admonishing encouragement to be affectionate to one another in brotherly love.

love. And that word affectionate has its root in the Greek word love, philos. It means a brotherly love.

It's a love of, it's not a sexual love, but it's a brotherly love that binds us together, a friendship love. And Paul is encouraging us, we are to be kindly, affectionate in that way to one another with brotherly love.

[ 16 : 12 ] It's again back to allowing that to flow. So this is a quality of the Holy Spirit, and we are to allow it to flow, to surface, to live it out, allowing it to have free course, being tenderly affectionate.

We are the family of God. We are brothers and sisters. The spiritual connection between us is deeper than flesh and blood.

God. It is. And you can go across the world and be connected with believers, and the Spirit of God does that.

And part of the reason I felt refreshed in the past month was to meet many believers across the world, and to realize God is fully at work and maturing and calling people to himself.

And it's that connection and we have that as brothers and sisters in the Lord. And he follows through with that and he said, giving preference to one another.

[ 17 : 46 ] In honor, giving preference to one another. So, to honor the next person is to lift them up, is to set them ahead of ourselves.

Now, is that possible in the flesh? Not willingly. Our flesh wants to be number one.

We want to be elevated. As an example, we know the story of Esther and Haman.

He was the enemy of the Jews. And what was he seeking? He was seeking honor and position before the king.

And much to his delight, when one night, when King Ahasuerus is not able to sleep, and he's reading through the records of the king, and an account where Mordecai has saved his life by revealing a plot of two of his servants to kill him.

[ 19 : 07 ] And the king brings Haman out, and he says, what shall the king do for him whom he delights in? And Haman thinks, the king has great favor in me.

He says, put a royal robe on him, and put him on a horse, and parade him through town, and have people bow the knee. And then the king says, I want you to do that for Mordecai.

And we can just see Haman's face fall. Here's his enemy, who he counts as an enemy, and he is to honor him.

He is to honor him. In the church, we are to honor one another. And it takes an absolute dying to the flesh to do that.

To glory, to bless, to be happy when someone else gets credit for a job well done.

[ 20 : 22 ] And it is of the Lord that we're able to do that. And so that's, Paul reminds us of this, that we are to give honor, or in honor, give preference to one another.

putting the other person ahead of ourselves. Lots of little instructions here on Christian living.

The Christian's dress code, I would say. Verse 11, not lacking in diligence. And a couple words in there.

lacking has to do with being sluggish, or another word is slothful. And sluggish meaning slow to act, and slothful is even slower.

And if you've seen a sloth and you watched him move, it takes a lot of patience because he moves so slow. And it's literally slothful, extremely slow to move.

[ 21 : 48 ] And diligence has to do with our zeal, so to interest ourselves with what's at hand.

so we are not to be slow in getting ourselves interested in the Lord's work. Not lacking in diligence.

And you know, when we are excited about something, for us, are we slow to act? If we're gung-ho about it, absolutely not.

We're excited. And we're going to do it. We're all about that. It's all we know at that time. And so we are, that's the work of the Lord.

That's the excitement we should have. When we have opportunities to serve, whether it's within the church organization or outside, but when there's opportunities to serve God, what is our response?

[ 22 : 54 ] Are we eager? Or do we pull back, hoping maybe somebody else will do it? Have we been there?

Here we're getting encouraged to not be sluggish, but rather to be eager, to step forward, and it goes well with last Sunday's message, to use the gifts that God has given you, and to be eager to do that.

And it's for God's glory, not for ours. The next phrase is in verse 11 again, so not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit.

And it literally means to boil with heat. fervent. To be hot for the Lord, on fire for God, is what the phrase means.

You know, in Revelations 3, the last, the seventh church that he addresses, God says, you're neither hot nor cold, but lukewarm.

[ 24 : 15 ] warm, and he says, I hate lukewarmness. God wants his children to be on fire. And we discussed in Sunday school this morning that the spirit of God empowers us.

The power of God is present. You know, sometimes when we have new believers, and they're fervent, they're on fire, and usually it often comes out of their mouth very readily, and sometimes we're uncomfortable with that.

And we would like to maybe even shut them down a bit. And, you know, if we've lost that, maybe we need to examine.

Am I on? It needs to be appropriate and directed in the right paths, but nonetheless, the spirit of God is alive, and it quickens us.

It wants us to live it in the same way that we're excited about our walk with God, and we're living it out that way.

[ 25 : 42 ] And then followed through in the third phrase in that verse, so not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.

So it's a follow through of that, serving the Lord, that we're seeking to be active where we can. And so not waiting, maybe, you know, maybe it'll all be taken care of by others, but rather seeking opportunities.

Where can I be involved? So this is also a characteristic of Christ, serving the Lord.

I want to read in a few verses, just to back that up a bit. Hebrews 10, 24, and 25. He says, and let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, serving the Lord.

good. So we are to consider one another, stirring up love and good works. And then he says, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much more as you see the day approaching.

[ 27 : 16 ] And so even the gathering of the church on Sunday or on Wednesday or on whichever day, but we are to exhort to good works, to encourage, to challenge, to keep us motivated.

Taking the opportunities as they come and making the most of them. In verse 12, he continues and he says, rejoicing in hope.

Rejoicing in hope. The Holy Spirit brings joy. joy. We have an eternal hope in what the Lord has done for us.

He has promised us eternity. After this life, we have eternal life here and today in the Lord. And it brings hope.

It's based on the Lord's promise, on His finished work, not on what I have done. And so, because of that, no matter what I am facing, no matter what my circumstance is in life, we can rejoice in the hope that we have in the Lord.

[ 28 : 42 ] Our earthly circumstances cannot diminish what God has promised. And we are to focus on that.

And so, bringing that out, that as a believer, we are to rejoice in hope. Patient in tribulation. And we had that extensively in chapter 5, verse 3 and 4, that we are to glory in tribulations.

Why don't we turn there and just reread those two verses? In chapter 5, in 3 and 4, he says that not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance, and perseverance character, and character hope, and our hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is given to us.

tribulation, tribulation, God uses it as a process to mature us, to produce the desired character.

And it's bearing up under pressure as we face trials in this life.

[ 30 : 09 ] life. And so we are to be patient in that, and he's reminding us again here in chapter 12 of Christians to bear up and to see it through.

And then the last phrase there in verse 12, continuing steadfastly in prayer. prayer. Now, prayer is the medium in which we communicate with God directly.

We access his power in talking with God. And he talks back to us through his word, but as his children, we need to be in prayer continually.

He says continuing steadfastly without giving up. It's a pattern of our life to pray and to access God's throne.

It's the power of the Christian is to be tapped into God that way, to share our burdens with him, to cast our burdens upon the Lord in prayer.

[ 31 : 29 ] God and he fills us with his Holy Spirit. And so that's a very important aspect of our life. And he's reminding us here to demonstrate a prayerful life in our relationship with God.

And then moving on to verse 13. I know we're, we could do a sermon on each one of these. I fully realize that, but decided we're going to clump these together.

So we have two more here. Distributing to the needs of the saints, and then and lastly given to hospitality. So caring for the poor, helping those in need.

the, it's interesting that our flesh, or we could say the world, is intent on getting or receiving.

Christians are to be intent or set on giving. it's the opposite. The, the world or our flesh would give me, give me, give me.

[ 32 : 49 ] And God says, we are to give. We are to, to share the grace of God. And, and, and physically, financially, are, are ways as well to do that.

You know, we cannot keep what we receive in this world. Is that correct?

In the physical? Whatever you accumulate here, you cannot keep. You're going to leave it behind. But on the contrary, we cannot lose what we give here in this world.

For we are laying up treasures in heaven. we cannot lose what we give. It's, it's almost in a statement of, of irony, of ironic, in that it doesn't make sense that way, but it does.

As, as we share God's blessings here on earth, our treasures are building in heaven, and we cannot lose them. They, there is no corruption there, as scripture tells us.

[ 34 : 01 ] So as, as we see, in the context here it says, the needs of the saints, it's brothers and sisters in the Lord.

And so, we are to look after each other. That does not mean that we don't help the non-believer as well. There's opportunity, but we are to focus first with each other.

and, and even this morning in the bulletin with a fundraiser for Henry and Tammy, that is giving to the needs of the saints. It's helping in a need where they need help.

And so we always, always have opportunity to help one another. And, and we are to respond that way. Why is this so important?

It's a theme throughout the Old and the New Testament. to give to the poor, to help one another. And, and it, it is because God's heart is to help us.

[ 35 : 10 ] And we are to share those blessings. Given to hospitality. We're going to end with that one.

It's to, to share, and not maybe necessarily with, with finances now, but to share with, with things that God has blessed us with.

Hospitality is to open up our home. It's to open up time for others. It's to give of self.

and, and to, to bless others in that way. You know, I came, came across a quote by William Tinnard, and he's, he's gone on to be the Lord probably 600 years ago, and, but he was a Bible translator back then.

He said, a home can never be happy when it's selfish. A home can never be happy when it's selfish.

[ 36 : 24 ] Christianity is the religion of the open hand, the open heart, and the open door. The open hand, sharing of your possessions, the open heart, giving of yourself.

Take time for each other. And the open door, open your home. Invite them in. Share a meal. These are all ways where, where we can connect and, and lift each other up.

And, and so, this is important to God. It demonstrates the character of Christ. And these are ways that we are to be dressed for Him.

We're going to stop with that one, and, and Lord willing, we'll continue in the, in the rest. The, the remainder of it speaks more of, of, to pay back, to, to avenge ourselves with others, but rather leave it to God.

And so, we'll focus on that. And, I want to close with, with two verses in Ephesians 5. The first two verses in Ephesians 5.

[ 37 : 53 ] Therefore, be imitators of God as dear children, and walk in love as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.

We are to imitate God. We're to imitate Jesus Christ, and that's what He demonstrated. He loved us, He gave Himself for us as an offering and a sacrifice.

and Romans 12, you will have that last Sunday likely, that we are to present ourselves as a living sacrifice. And, and these are ways that we're to do it.

a sweet-smelling aroma to those around us. May the Lord bless you as, as we, as we continue to grow and to, to assess ourselves.

Am I allowing the Spirit of God free course to demonstrate these areas that were mentioned this morning? And, and that would be our heart's desire that, that that would happen.

[ 39 : 10 ] Let's close in prayer. Father, we've been reminded this morning of what you've done for us.

We bear your image, we bear your name, instructed us how to walk. But, Lord, I'm so grateful that we don't do this in our own strength, faith.

But, Father, you're desiring to work this out in us. Lord, teach us to surrender to your will.

Teach us to, to allow the Spirit whom you've given us to have free course. and, and, Father, we know that through this, you are glorified and many others are drawn to Christ.

This is your greatest glory. We thank you. We pray your blessing in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen.