

Colossians 3:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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

Analysis

Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering. "Therefore" (oun, οὖν) draws practical implications from new identity (vv. 9-11). "Put on" (endysasthe, ἐνδύσασθε) continues clothing metaphor, aorist imperative demanding decisive action. Believers must actively clothe themselves with Christian virtues matching their identity.

Paul addresses them with three titles: "elect of God" (eklektoi tou theou, ἐκλεκτοὶ τοῦ θεοῦ, God's chosen), "holy" (hagioi, ἀγιοι, set apart), "beloved" (ēgapēmenoi, ἡγαπημένοι, divinely loved). These establish the basis for obedience—identity motivates conduct. The virtue list includes: "bowels of mercies" (splanchna oiktirmou, σπλάγχνα οἰκτιρμοῦ, deep compassion), "kindness" (chrēstotēta, χρηστότητα), "humbleness of mind" (tapeinophrosynēn, ταπεινοφροσύνην), "meekness" (praütēta, πραΰτητα, gentle strength), "longsuffering" (makrothymian, μακροθυμίαν, patient endurance).

Historical Context

Greco-Roman culture prized pride, dominance, honor, and vengeance. Humility was considered weakness; meekness was despised. Paul's virtue list inverted cultural values, reflecting Christ's character (Matthew 11:29). Early Christianity attracted many precisely because it offered dignity to the humble and weak,

valuing character qualities that enabled communal harmony rather than individual advancement through competition and domination.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. Which Christian virtues on Paul's list do you find most difficult to embody consistently?
2. How does knowing you're elect, holy, and beloved enable you to practice humility, compassion, and patience?
3. What would change in your relationships if you actively 'put on' these virtues daily?

Interlinear Text

Ἐνδύσασθε οὖν ὡς ἐκλεκτοὶ τοῦ θεοῦ ἄγιοι καὶ
Put on therefore as the elect G3588 of God holy and
G1746 G3767 G5613 G1588 G2316 G40 G2532

ἡγαπημένοι σπλάγχνα οἰκτιρμῶν, χρηστότητα
beloved bowels of mercies kindness
G25 G4698 G3628 G5544

ταπεινοφροσύνην πραότητα, μακροθυμίαν
humbleness of mind meekness longsuffering
G5012 G4236 G3115

Additional Cross-References

Ephesians 4:32 (References God): And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

Ephesians 4:2 (Love): With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;

1 John 4:19 (Love): We love him, because he first loved us.

Colossians 3:10 (Parallel theme): And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:

2 Peter 1:10 (Parallel theme): Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:

1 Thessalonians 5:15 (Parallel theme): See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men.

Jeremiah 31:3 (Love): The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.

2 Corinthians 6:6 (Love): By pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned,

Ezekiel 16:8 (Love): Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I sware unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord GOD, and thou becamest mine.

Galatians 5:6 (Love): For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.