

Clothes for clean living

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[0 : 00] Now let's read some verses at the end of Romans chapter 13. Romans chapter 13. We'll read from verse 8 to the end of that chapter.

Let no debt remain outstanding except the continuing debt to love one another. For he who loves his fellow man has fulfilled the law. The commandment, do not commit adultery, do not murder, do not steal, do not covet, and whatever other commandments there may be are summed up in this one rule.

Love your neighbor as yourself. Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law. And do this understanding the present time.

The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is nearly over, the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.

Let us behave decently as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy.

[1 : 12] Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature. Especially that last verse.

Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature. As I was mentioning earlier, some of you have just recently come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ or to profess that faith publicly.

Some within the last few days at the mission. Some before that. That is the greatest decision of your life. You have come to place your trust in Jesus Christ and to profess that publicly. You have come out and declared openly that you trust and love the Lord Jesus. Maybe you don't understand all that's involved.

Who does understand all that's involved? But you do know that you love and trust him who gave himself for you. Maybe some of you have rededicated your lives to the Lord Jesus.

[2 : 28] Maybe some of you are more interested than you were before in the things of Jesus Christ. But whatever else we can say is that in all these cases you are in the process of making a new beginning or have made a new beginning.

But it is, after all, only a beginning. A very important beginning. But only a beginning. The Bible teaches us, yes, the tremendous importance of being born again.

Of being converted. Of professing faith in the Lord Jesus and turning in repentance from our sin.

But that is the beginning of the Christian life which is to be lived out until God calls us to glory.

Lived out here in this world. And so here we are being taught by our Lord through his Apostle Paul that there is a certain perspective we are to have on life.

There are certain things we have to do to enable us to build on that beginning that we have made to live the Christian life.

[3 : 46] And there are two things, basically, said in this verse. They sum up all of the Christian life. We are to put on Jesus Christ or to clothe ourselves with the Lord Jesus.

And then we are not to think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature or make no provision for the lusts of the flesh as it is in the Authorised Version.

Two things. One positive and one negative. One thing we are to do and another thing we are to refrain from doing. So I want to think with you about those two things.

First, we are to put on Jesus. We are to clothe ourselves with him. Now, to clothe yourself with something is a very intimate thing.

To put on your clothes as you did this morning, it's a very personal and very intimate thing. You decide what clothes you are going to put on this morning.

[4 : 52] And you put them on. They become, as it were, part of you. They express your personality. And they influence the way other people treat you and so on.

You probably don't think very much or too much about how effective our clothing is and how important it is to us.

But the Bible recognizes that by using pictures like this to speak of the importance of our relationship with Jesus Christ. to clothe yourselves in something means something very intimate. And as it says here, we are to clothe ourselves with the Lord Jesus. It is speaking of a very intimate personal relationship with the Lord Jesus. When you become a Christian, yes, there is the truth that God has chosen you personally and individually.

He has loved you. But also, there is the emphasis that you have chosen him. You have decided to follow him. You have responded to his invitation and to his call.

[6 : 02] It is a very personal and very intimate thing. And so, what we are being called to do here is a continuation of that thing that we have begun to do if we have professed faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

We are to continue that personal relationship with him. You see, as we become Christians, it is not that we just step into a certain community, the community of the church.

We do that. It is not just that we step into a certain philosophy or outlook on life. We do that. But it is especially that we step into a new relationship with Jesus Christ.

And that is the very heart and core of our Christianity and our Christian living. If we want to know how to go on living the Christian life, we must make sure that our personal relationship with Jesus Christ is right.

Now, how do we do that? Well, how do you establish an intimate personal relationship with anyone? You speak to them. You communicate with them. And that is exactly what we do with the Lord Jesus.

[7 : 17] Whether in public or in private, our worship is that. God speaks to us in his word. The Lord Jesus Christ speaks to us through the pages of scripture.

He tells us the things that we need to know, the guidelines that we need to have as to how to live, how to show the kind of love that pleases him, how to abstain from the kind of sin and evil that he abhors.

So we need to get to know this word. That's why at the very center of our public worship there is the reading and proclamation of God's word.

And if what the minister preaches or what the minister says at any point is not what the Bible says, then discard that. but where it is what God's word is saying, then that is the Lord Jesus Christ speaking to you and you are to judge all things by this word.

But of course we grow in grace and knowledge not only by attending public worship and by hearing his word but also by reading it for ourselves. We need to follow up the things that we discover in the public preaching of the word in our own private study in our own reading of the Bible so that here we are asking God to speak to us and in this way we are clothing ourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ.

[8 : 49] We are continuing that intimate personal relationship which he has already established with us. But there's the other side to it. In any relationship it's a two-way thing.

It's not just one person speaking all the time. That's a very unbalanced relationship. But we ask God we speak to the Lord Jesus Christ in prayer.

And so we ask him to speak to us through his word but we bring to him our concerns and our problems and our troubles and ask him for guidance from his word through the fellowship of his people to understand what happens to us in his providence because we know that from the word of God it's not just that the things to do with the Bible or the things to do with the church are under God's control.

Everything in life is under his providence and he's working all things together for good to those who love him. So we've got to find out we've got to ask him how to look at those things how to understand suffering or persecution when it comes our way how to understand how we're to behave in those circumstances from God's word.

So you see God has established this intimate relationship with us in Jesus Christ and we are to continue if we're clothing ourselves with the Lord Jesus. We're continuing that intimate relationship with him.

[10:18] But then also this expression stresses that it is an everyday affair. Yes, the expression is used by the same apostle the apostle Paul when he speaks in Galatians chapter 3 he says to Christians you have clothed yourselves with Christ.

You have put on Christ when they became Christians. They entered into that new relationship. But here he is saying in the end of Romans chapter 13 you are to clothe yourselves.

In other words yes, you did it when you became a Christian but it doesn't end there. At every point in time you are to be clothing yourselves of Christ. Think of the picture.

You don't just put on your clothes one day and that's it. You forget about it. It is something that you're concerned about every day. You say what will I wear today?

Well in answer to that question for the Christian the answer is always what will I wear today? I will wear Christ. What will I put on today? I will put Christ on today.

[11:26] You see there are other things that we could put on. We could put on our old way of looking at the world and looking at other people. We could put on our worldly suit of clothing.

That suit of clothing that just imitates what the world around us is doing. But every day and every moment of the day there is to be a conscious decision what am I wearing?

I am wearing Christ. I am going to be intimately related to the Lord Jesus Christ. I am going to be seeking his help in this situation. I am going to be seeking to live by his instruction.

So putting on Christ being clothed with Christ is an everyday affair as well as being a very intimate thing.

But also of course this picture speaks of something very influential. Your clothing is influential not only as I suggested already on the attitude that people have to you.

[12:34] You can try that sometime as a little experiment. You can one day say go into a shop where you are not known and you can be dressed very smartly and see what kind of service you get.

And the next day maybe you go in very very scruffily and see the service that you get. People do react differently to the way you appear.

Maybe they shouldn't but they do. But what I am thinking of here is not so much outward appearance nor is it so much what other people think of you or the way they react to you.

What I am thinking of here is the influence of clothing upon yourself. You know what I am speaking about. Sometimes maybe when you smarten yourself up you feel a little bit better.

Well here we are told to clothe ourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ. and when we do that that has an influence upon the way we live.

[13:44] Put it round another way to illustrate it. If you dress up in your best clothes you are not going to go out and work in the garden and get down on your knees and work in the garden because you get them all messed up.

The clothes that you wear influence what you are going to do. You are going to dress appropriately for what you do. You are not going to put on your best suit and go out and play football. you are going to dress appropriately and so that will dictate how you are going to behave that particular day or that particular time.

So if you clothe yourself with Christ that is going to influence the way in which you live. If you are putting on Christ you are going to have certain attitudes to things in life.

It is not like in this case like clothing because you are not going to be changing to a different set of clothes for every situation. You are put on Christ and Christ is relevant to every situation whether you are on your knees in the garden or whether you are on your knees in prayer whether you are playing football or whether you are dressed up in your Sunday best.

It does not matter. Christ if you are put on Christ he is relevant in every situation and you are going to have a different attitude if you put on Christ. I just want to mention some of those things.

[15:05] If you are put on Christ you are going to seek fellowship with his people. The person who has put on Christ knows that he is not an isolated individual.

He is joined together to a whole body of people who also believe in the Lord Jesus and he wants to be with them. He wants to be with people who love the Lord Jesus Christ and so he wants to be together where they publicly worship where they publicly affirm their faith in this word that is read and proclaimed.

He wants to be with them where they are praying for that word to be effective upon others who are as yet uncommitted. He wants to be where they are praying and seeking the blessing of God upon

the world around them.

He wants to be where God's word is instructing him himself. You see if you put on Christ it's going to influence your lifestyle the way you behave you're going to love to be with the people of God having fellowship with them in public worship and in more informal ways if you have put on Christ. But then also if you put on Christ you're going to be influenced by him in every area of life. That's one area in the area of public worship because the Lord Jesus Christ himself while here on earth went to the place of worship which was then called a synagogue as was his custom we're told.

[16:44] It was his settled disposition to join with the people of God. That's one area but there are others. If we have put on Christ we have put on humility for the Lord Jesus Christ was humble.

He came down from the glory of heaven the eternal son of God emptied himself and he took the form of a servant.

He came to serve to take the lowest place to be the one who would be despised and rejected by men not the one who was going to exalt himself to come being born in the most important palace in the world and to have servants wait on him hand and foot and to be exalted and praised and flattered by men.

No, he came to serve. He came down amongst the poor and the needy and he labored with his hands and he labored in the word and he spoke amongst people who were poor and who were foolish and who were wayward and he reached out to them.

He served them and supremely he served the world. He served sinners as he gave himself dying upon the cross in the place of sinners. He said I've come not to be served but to serve and to give my life as a ransom for many.

[18:07] Now if the Lord Jesus did that if he had that attitude and if you have put on Christ and are called today now to put him on to live that kind of life you are going to live a life that is humble a life that is serving not the life that exalts oneself but the life that humbles oneself and says well how can I seek to serve others how can I seek to show the same kind of patience that God has shown with me in his serving of me through Christ how can I show that towards others when everybody else around you is losing their head can you keep your head and keep cool and keep calm and be patient with people who are sinful just like you and seek to serve instead of always seeking that you should be the one who would be served but then also following on immediately from that if you have put on

Christ you have put on love his service is of course the supreme expression of his love and our lives if we have put on Christ ought to be characterized by love his kind of love we have heard the good news that Jesus saves he has spoken to us he has shown his great love to us now are we going to seek to show that same kind of love to others that's what we're being challenged with here we are called to a life of witnessing to the Lord Jesus Christ by how we live not bringing shame on the name of the Lord Jesus but seeking instead to live a life that is Christ like that is attractive and being prepared to speak for him to seek to win others for the Lord Jesus these are some of the things we're called to in love but again as we've noticed before of course it's not just a matter of words your life has got to back it up people have got to see that you really do love them and that's why you're concerned for them we may say well we've had a glorious opportunity while there's been this mission on to invite people along there to hear the word of

God and we may feel oh well now I didn't take that opportunity and it's passed well if you didn't take it it is passed but there's no use crying over spilt milk as they say the word of God is being preached every week in Aberdeen in churches throughout this city it's being preached here let's bring along our friends our acquaintances to hear the word of God because you see it is the Holy Spirit of God applying the gospel of Jesus Christ that makes the difference that's the great thing and the people of God seeking to work in obedience to him bringing people to hear that word that's what happened at Petaudry it doesn't need to be a stadium it doesn't need to be the greatest living preacher who preaches God will work wherever his word is honour and wherever his people are serving and praying so then to put on Christ it's influential it's influential upon yourself but then to put on Christ is also of course protective your clothing acts as a protection and those of you who are at Petaudry will know that on a cold night even at the end of May beginning of June you need plenty protection against the cold well as we're told here to put on Christ we're being reminded that we also need protection you see Christ came to give himself to save us from sin and death and hell and the power of the devil himself and when you become a Christian the devil doesn't just give up and say oh well I've lost him here he doubles his efforts to seek to undermine your faith to seek if he can

even to destroy you he will do everything in his power to attack you so what do you do and the devil comes perhaps sometimes just sneaking up to you and he comes in a moment of weakness or self doubt and he says oh what you've decided was very foolish to do that to profess faith in Christ you're never going to keep that up you're too weak you'll never keep this up when he comes to you and he says well there's lots of clever people in the world you see who don't believe these things you're very foolish to do that it's not very clever to take this step that really means identifying with something that others will laugh at and look down on here come with all kinds of temptations and all kinds of doubts will be insinuated into your mind what is your defense then you have no natural defenses against his wild he's too powerful and too clever but there is one that is more powerful and more clever than he and that is the

Lord Jesus Christ and so each day you put on the Lord Jesus Christ you put him on in this sense in the sense in which you put him on to begin with you say I am no longer standing in my own filthy sin I am clothed with Christ as God looks at me he doesn't look at my filthy sinful rags anymore he looks at the Lord Jesus Christ his own dear son who has enveloped me and who protects me from all the attacks of the evil one it is God who justifies who is he that condemn is our answer to the devil when he comes sneaking up to us with all these insinuations and all these temptations and all these doubts the Lord Jesus Christ has achieved his work it is recognized on all hands that the Lord [24 : 28] Jesus Christ lived and that he died and there is good evidence in the word of God that he rose again from the dead these are historical facts upon which your faith is based and those who trust in the Lord Jesus Christ are justified by him clothed with his righteousness treated as innocent as not guilty in the sight of God and so the Lord Jesus is your protection your protection from the evil one as he comes to you in the times of weakness as he comes to you in the times of trial as he comes to you in the times of suffering you look to the Lord Jesus Christ who is your righteousness who is your peace with God and the devil flees from you but then we must also look at the negative aspect of this clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature we may paraphrase it don't prepare for sin put on

Christ don't prepare for sin make no provision for the lusts of the flesh as it is in the authorised version what are these lusts of the flesh or these desires of the sinful nature well we can point out just three areas there's pleasure there's power and there's possession there's pleasure that inordinate craving for satisfaction of the physical appetites there's things like gluttony and drunkenness and it's interesting that the Bible puts those two together gluttony or drunkenness an inordinate desire for food not just because we're hungry but just because we have this craving for it millions in the world are starving we are indulging in gluttony there's also drunkenness this inordinate desire for again what is a good gift of God just as food is but a desire for it for this physical craving to satisfy this craving that is within it there's also of course sexual lust of which the Lord

Jesus Christ spoke in that passage that we read in the sermon of the mount see it's not just the actual outward acts oh yes we all abhor things like rape but Jesus says the person who has looked lustfully he has already committed adultery or even rape in his mind and so God's word again exposes the sin of our hearts it may just be something very common and ordinary like laziness not gluttony or drunkenness or sexual lust may just be laziness that's another desire of the flesh the body saying oh I'm just too tired I can't be bothered doing this I can't be bothered going out to church I can't be bothered reading my Bible so you give in to the craving of the flesh that's pleasure but then also there's power another craving of the flesh the desire to dominate others and to be superior that again is a craving of the flesh the sinful nature it may be at work it may be at home it may even be in the church to dominate others to always be the boss to always be in charge forgetting that you put on

Christ if you're a Christian and he is meek and lowly in heart he's the one who came to serve and then of course there's also possessions and today this is a tremendous temptation of the world around us we live amidst such affluence and where the standards of the world speak not just in terms of getting things but in having status and prestige by those things that you have that's really it isn't it it's not just that we have those things or we desire those things but it gives us this edge maybe over other people or it puts us up alongside of them if we've got things well as Christians again we've got to be aware of these things that are desires of the sinful nature what ways in which ways may we wrongly make provision for these wrong desires the expression that's used here means that we think about it beforehand we're making preparation we're making provision for these

wrong desires now what does that mean well I think it means two things it means first that we can make excuses we all know that we're sinners but God's word does not justify sin ever now when we recognize that we are sinners we can do so in a sense that is non biblical we can say yes I'm a sinner but everybody's a sinner and we start to make excuses for ourselves the Bible makes no excuse for sin but we do we've already got if you like a ready-made explanation or excuse for our particular sin or for any particular sin excuses come in various ways excuses maybe in terms of our own weaknesses we may say well you know I really am a hot-tempered person you know I'm really I've got a short few you know and we make excuses by saying well that's our nature that's our kind of character that's our kind of personality well you may have a hot temper you may have a short few but there is no excuse in

God's word for sin committed on that basis you are to seek to control that short temper that short few we may say about things related to the sexual area well well I'm a much more sexual person than others so really again a bit of excuse has got to be made in that area but again God's word makes no such excuse yes we may all vary in all these different areas and some may feel the pressure of temptation at one point some at another but there is no excuse made we may have yes a predisposition to a sin in a certain area but that does not excuse us in that area of sin we may say well I really need a drink to calm me down or to pick me up we have all kinds of excuses the world around us has all kinds of excuses as to why we need to have an alcoholic drink and we say we echo those things sometimes if that's our area of temptation we say we need it but God's words say that it is wrong to simply have this craving yes there's a right use of all these things as we know but it's wrong to have this craving and to seek to make excuses for it we may say even in that area that [32 : 38] I mentioned the area of laziness which we may think is an unimportant one in the Bible it is not sloth is one of the sins just the same as the others we may say well really my body needs a rest you know well yes our body does need rest but how much rest does it need yes we need to unwind how much unwinding can we do some people must be totally unwound some of us are like that some of the time I'm quite sure so again we've got to consider these excuses that we make in the light of what God says in his word we may make excuses in these terms in terms of our weaknesses we may make excuses in terms of our sin we may say well our particular sins they're not really bad ones it's a wee bit like Lot remember when he was told by God to flee from the cities of the plain he said well I can't go all the way to the mountains but there's a city here it's just a little one let me stay here well God in his wisdom allowed Lot to stay there but we discover that very quickly Lot had to even leave there but you see that's the point you see we make an excuse for our sin because we say well it's not really as bad as other people's sin but the question is not what we think or what the standards of the world is but what does God's word say if it is sin it is sin there's no excuse for it in terms of its size or its comparison to others we have to seek to fight it it might be that one place where you are under attack from

Satan that one place that is your besetting sin that one place that is the arena for the Christian fight in your life are you going to accept that challenge and are you going to fight there clothed with the Lord Jesus Christ or not that's the great issue but then of course we may make excuses in terms of other people's sins against us we may do that directly sometimes you know tit for tat oh so and so did this to me I'll do this to him that's the sort of brutal frank way of doing it but maybe we don't come out so blatantly and say it but it's there in our heart we harbour resentment because of what somebody's done or said about us maybe it's direct like that you can't make an excuse in those terms vengeance is mine I will repase is the Lord we are not to take vengeance in that personal sin but it may be not in a direct sort of personal way like that at all it may be simply this you've had a bad day everything went wrong right from breakfast in the morning the kids argued and fought with each other your wife or husband shouted at them everything went wrong you went to work and the people who worked for you and under you didn't do what they were supposed to do or your boss thought that you were doing something you weren't doing or whatever everything seems to be going wrong and so you say oh well to pot with this I'm going to do such and such a thing I'm fed up I'm going to go and do the thing that I know I shouldn't do whatever it is and you make an excuse because of the kind of day you've had or because of the kind of way other people have treated you again it's an excuse you're failing at that particular point in the battle so we make excuses but we can also make preparation we can also make provision for the desires of the flesh we can be very cunning and deceitful about this can we not those people perhaps who have a short fuse they know they do but they can be quite cunning we can all be like this as to knowing when to let it blow you

don't do it when some people are there but you let it blow when other people are there maybe just for your own family it blows out there but not for people outside so you see we're cunning and deceitful about it we thought about it beforehand maybe sometimes we wouldn't even do it if there was more than one person there no other witnesses nobody ever able to confirm oh yes such and such is a terrible temper because of only your word against that other person we can be very cunning and deceitful we can also have things like we've mentioned already the problem of drink or of alcoholism we can make an excuse and we can have already in a sense provided for our sin we can say well there's nothing wrong with alcohol it says so in the Bible there's nothing wrong with having a drink in the house there's nothing wrong with having it in the house or of course there's nothing wrong with those things but the question is your motivation in doing it are you preparing beforehand are you making preparation for that sin what about making preparation in the sense of the area that we've considered earlier that the

Lord Jesus spoke of the area of sexual lust making sure that you'll be in a certain place to see a person a certain person who turns you on you make preparation beforehand for those things you see that's the kind of thing that we're being taught about here not to do not to make preparation beforehand not to prepare yes temptation will come to you it may come as a roaring lion to you it may come subtly insinuating itself up to you it'll come but what we're being taught here is not to be making preparation for it not opening the way up for it we put on the Lord Jesus Christ we are going to be resisting those temptations now as we've looked at this second area it's perhaps been discouraging we've seen something of the depravity not just of the human heart in general but our own hearts and I hope you've not been sitting looking at somebody else or thinking in your mind if somebody else says oh yeah that applies to them let's apply it to me let's apply it to you yourself and so isn't it a bit discouraging because there we see that God sees us exactly as we are with all this deceit all this depravity all this wrong desire in our hearts but the person who has come to Christ has put on

Christ the person who has come to Christ has made a new beginning the person who has come to Christ has Christ dwelling in him the person who has come to Christ has Christ fighting for him and so in every situation we say what is the mind of Christ here we come to the Lord Jesus we confess our sin and we say I'm weak show me the right way show me where my motives are wrong my thinking is wrong and clothe me with your righteousness and with your wisdom and with your thinking and so we've got to do this day after day after day every step of the way until he brings us to that place where there'll be no temptation where there'll be no wrong desire where the things that we will desire will be totally the things that please him and the things that are for our eternal well-being let us pray our gracious and loving heavenly father oh lord you know our hearts teach us to know our own hearts to know the deceitfulness that is there teach us to turn from ourselves in loathing to the

Lord Jesus Christ who is able to help us is able to change us who is able to keep us is able to use us in his service poor and wretched though we are and so we pray your blessing to follow your word today here amongst us and wherever it is proclaimed today throughout this city throughout this land that your people would be built up and that others would be drawn to the service of this Lord who loved us and gave himself for us let us pray amen thank you