

JJ<sup>1</sup>

Ready or not, a new year begins tomorrow. New Year's is accompanied by all kinds of thoughts and feelings. We look back at the year gone by with thankfulness and regret. We look forward into a new year with concern and hope. What puts so much of looking back and looking forward together are New Year's Resolutions. Maybe you've already got your heart and mind set on one or more resolutions.

When you think of it, any kind of New Year's Resolution is some kind of makeover. These resolutions span the whole spectrum of life: attitude, health, work, relationships, even wardrobe. Our culture really loves makeovers. There are all kinds of shows about all kinds of makeovers from hairdos to whole homes, even lives! Even one of our local news channels has a regular makeover segment which usually involves hair, makeup and clothes. Those who have received these makeovers often talk about how different and better they feel. As nice as that all is, isn't it just superficial? It's all just surface stuff. The stuff you show the world. It's not getting down to the real you. Maybe that's why most New Year's Resolutions fall flat on their face within the first couple months of the year.

But what if I told you that there were resolutions out there that were real and lasting? What if I told you these resolutions aren't just a possibility, but a reality? Is that something you'd want? Are those resolutions you would want to pursue? Then you're in luck! Well, luck has nothing to do with it since luck isn't a real thing. Today we're going to talk about reality. Today we're going to talk about the reality of who you are and what you have in Christ. Today we're going to talk about **REAL RESOLUTIONS**, not just for a New Year, but for eternity!

Everything Paul writes about here in his letter to the Colossians he writes also about you. He writes about who you are in Christ—each one of you! “Therefore, as God's elect, holy and loved...” For Paul to say that you are one of God's elect reminds you of the amazing reality that God chose you before he even created the world to be his own child forever. It's the reality that God loved you with an eternal love before you ever had a chance to do anything good to earn that love. It's the reality of a love that chose to love you, even though he knew how wicked and unloveable you'd be, not only because of your sinful nature, but also with the evil you think and display every day of your life.

<sup>1</sup> JJ is the acronym for *Jesus Juve*, which is Latin for “Jesus Help”. It is a short prayer used by many ministers and sacred musicians at the beginning of their work.

It was that love that sent Christ into this world for you and for all. In Christ, we see perfect compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. And he did all that so he could offer himself as the sacrifice for all your evil so he could say to you personally, "I forgive you!" And he did that for you when he called you to himself when he gave to you his gift of faith so that his peace would rest on you and control your heart. That peace he gives you is the peace in knowing that you are no longer God's enemy, but dearly loved child. It's the peace of knowing that Jesus' holiness is your holiness, and you can stand before God your heavenly Father confident that that is what he sees when he looks at you!

In addition to all this, everything else Paul writes in these verses also applies to each one of you because this is who you are in Christ! These are all **REAL RESOLUTIONS** for you. In a way, you could say it's a brand-new wardrobe that you've been given. Paul writes: <sup>12</sup>Therefore, as God's elect, holy and loved, clothe yourselves with heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. <sup>13</sup>Bear with one another and forgive each other if anyone has a complaint against anyone else. Forgive, just as Christ forgave you. <sup>14</sup>And, in addition to all these things, put

on love, which ties things together in perfect unity. <sup>15</sup>Let the peace of Christ control your hearts, to which you were also called, in one body. And be thankful. <sup>16</sup>Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, with gratitude in your hearts to God. <sup>17</sup>And everything you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.



In other words, you've already got a whole new wardrobe to wear, so wear it. Understand that some of this wardrobe is fashionable to the world, and some of it is not. While the Designer, the Lord, is the best in the business, some try to improve on his work, others think they can make their own version and say it's just as good (though it's just a cheap

knockoff), still others reject him and his work outright.

But you, friends, be resolved to wear this wardrobe every day of your lives. Take them out and wear them to God's glory, giving Him thanks and serving your neighbor. These are **REAL RESOLUTIONS** for your every day lives.

Clothe yourself with “heartfelt compassion.” Be willing to stoop down to help someone in need simply to help them, not because it will make you feel better about yourself or might impress others.

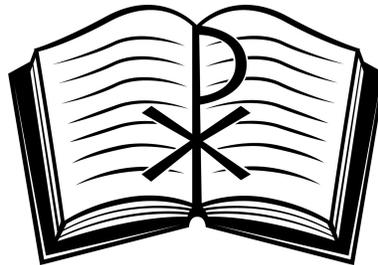
Clothe yourself with “kindness.” Consider someone else’s needs and feelings ahead of your own.

Clothe yourself with “humility.” This is something both praised and despised by our world. The world says it’s good to be humble, but so often it’s the loud and boastful who receive so much praise and attention. Instead, you are to have the mind of Christ and always put the other person above and ahead of yourself. It’s a constant encouragement to say to yourself, “Forget me, myself and I.”

Clothe yourself with “gentleness.” To be gentle actually requires great strength. It’s the strength to be gentle with someone so that you can help them instead putting them in their place by force. It’s like a bodybuilder who has the strength to dead-lift a heavy weight but can also set it down so gently on a fragile surface that no damage is done.

Clothe yourself with “patience.” This really is explained by what Paul says next: “Bear with one another and forgive each other if anyone has a complaint

against anyone else. Forgive, just as Christ forgave you.” You can’t practice this in a vacuum. That means, you can’t be patient, forbearing and forgiving if you just avoid the persons and situations that cause strife in your life. That’s not what it means to “let the peace of Christ control your hearts.” Paul isn’t describing that perfect setting where there isn’t any tension or strife. That’s an impossible situation to create so long as one sinful human being is around one or more other sinful human beings. He also isn’t describing the absence of conflict that would result by avoiding people or a certain topic. That’s not peace. That’s just cowardice!



When Paul says, “let the peace of Christ control your hearts,” he’s telling you to let Christ’s peace be the referee and umpire of your heart. Christ’s

peace is what conquers all conflicts because his peace is what has ended the conflict between you and your holy God. When you recognize all that God has forgiven you, then you too can practice patience with others and forgive them, just as you have been forgiven by Christ.

And what ties all these **REAL RESOLUTIONS** together is the putting on of love. And Paul is not talking about the warm fuzzies. This is *agape* love. This is love that is a matter of the will. This is love that is practiced by making a determined decision to love someone

despite all that is unlovable about that person.

These **REAL RESOLUTIONS** grow all the more and become all the easier to put on each day as you also “let the word of Christ dwell in you richly...” And for the word of Christ to dwell in you “richly” not only means that Christ’s Word should be abundant in your heart and life, but to also recognize the great benefit that comes through his Word because the riches of salvation come through that Word! And then you use those riches to encourage one another, both here in worship and in your daily lives with one another.

To summarize it all, Paul writes, “And everything you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.” And really, what better New Year’s Resolution can there be than that!?

Friends, if you have New Year’s Resolutions, great! If they are good and honorable things, may God bless you in them. If you’re like me and it’s the same thing year after year, keep at it! Yet never forget the **REAL RESOLUTIONS** God gives you to wear as a new wardrobe every day of your life. They aren’t the world’s empty variety. They come from God and are yours right now. Not only that, God

also empowers you to carry them out. And what’s also so amazing is that these aren’t just resolutions for a new year, these last into eternity! God bless us all in another year of his grace! Amen.

SDG<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> SDG is an acronym for *Soli Deo Gloria*, which is Latin for “To God Alone Be The Glory”. This is a statement of humility used by many ministers and sacred musicians at the end of their work to let themselves and others know that it isn’t about getting glory for themselves, but about giving all glory to God.

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