

Today is last Sunday of the Year. Wednesday is the day we begin a brand-new year, full of hope and promise, anticipation and expectation. The next two days we try to bruff off the old, tired, worn-out, unrealized dreams, and start looking toward our new goals.

Are you going to make a resolution. I'm never going to eat sweets again. Never going to eat another gram of fat. Going to exercise every day and twice on Sunday. Going to lose 100 pounds by next month.

All made in good faith. Most of them broken by the middle of January.

Paul has written a letter to the church at Colosse, where some problems have arisen because the people there are trying to mix religious thoughts. Paul's attempt to straighten things out.

Paul has made a list of the things the people of Colosse need to do to live a holy life. He begins by reminding them that they're God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved. These words are addressed to Christians everywhere, in every time. They are aimed straight at us, just as they were aimed at the ancient Christians.

"Clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience."

Jesus was truly compassionate. God wants us to put on kindness. Kindness is treating other people with respect and honor. Jesus was kind.

Humility is next. It comes from knowing that anything we manage to accomplish is not through our own efforts.

Next is gentleness. In today's society, gentle people are often looked on as being weak. But Jesus was gentle, and he was anything but weak. Look at the way he treated children, and was concerned about widows and orphans, the less fortunate. Jesus was gentle, but he was also strong. And that's what he wants us to strive to be.

The last is Patience. In today's busy world, we often zip around from one place to another, trying to get done all that we have to do. We're in a hurry, and we get irate when things don't go as smoothly or as quickly as we need them to.

Just bear with me, and I'll eventually get it done. Bear with me and I'll be finished soon. In other words, be patient with me and things will eventually work out.

Over all these virtues that we've just named, we're supposed to put on love. The image I get here reminds me of putting on winter clothes. First you put on longjohns and wool socks; then you put on shirts and pants; then sweaters and jackets.

In God's closet, we're supposed to clothe ourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Then over all of that, to make everything work as it should, we're to put on the coat of love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Just like the wardrobe we've needed here in winter storms, we need all these layers of characteristics in order to act as God's chosen people. And just like the winter clothes we need here, none of them will work alone. We need all of them in order to be properly clothed.

Then Paul tells us to let the peace of Christ rule in our hearts, since we're members of one body and have been called to peace. If we try to live in love with each other, then that love will lead to peace, at church, at home, and in the community.

Sort of as an afterthought, Paul adds the words, "and be thankful." When our kids are given things by other people, the first thing we ask them is, "Did you say thank you?" We need to ask ourselves this same question. Everytime a good friend of mine walks out of a store when she is shopping, her last comment is Thank you.

"And whatever 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." As Christians, we represent Christ at all times - wherever we go and whatever we say and do. What impression do you think people have of Christ when they see or speak with you?

So, back to New Year's resolutions. We've all made them, and we've all broken them. Instead of resolving to lose weight, or exercise more, maybe we should resolve to live the kind of life that God would have us live.

God doesn't really care if we lose weight. God doesn't really care if we exercise every day. But God does care how we live. And God does care how we treat each other.