

Putting on “The New Man”

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Chapter 3

3:1

Last week we mentioned that there were 574 instances of the word “if” in the New Testament, and Paul begins chapter 3 with one of them. He wrote this letter to a church of believers in Colossi, thus he was operating with a reasonable expectation that the receivers were either genuine born again Christians or at the very least were those who thought they were on some level. But like in any religious community there are always ...as we discussed last week, those who simply have an adherence to the *shadows* of Christ, but have never effectively died to this world and to themselves...which is the biblical definition of salvation and redemption. Thus Paul begins with an honest attempt to separate the sheep from the goats by saying “*if* you are risen with Christ.”

Because of this sad reality, many of the promises...and therefore many of the directives that are made in this letter are then clearly not for everyone, but only for the genuine redeemed child of God. With that in mind, Paul gets real practical in his instruction to the genuine believer in the midst of them. This is important, especially after all that has been said concerning grace thus far, as one might be tempted to think... in light of our modern definition of grace, that there is nothing we could do that would hold value and blessing. However, the fact remains through it all, that it does little good if Christians declare and defend the truth, but fail to actually demonstrate it in their lives.

Thus the verse begins with “*IF*”...*if you are risen with Christ*. It should go without saying that one cannot be *risen* with Christ unless having also *died* with Him. Romans 6:8 tells us that “... *since we died with Christ, we know we will also live with him.*” Many have tried to skip this essential step and leap right to the good part! We have essentially watered down salvation in our generation to nothing more than some words to recite and an intellectual decision, and mental affirmation. However we need to know that salvation / redemption is not so trite in the *scriptural* rendering!

The directives and promises that appear in the subsequent verses are contingent upon the fact that you have actually and genuinely experienced the crucifixion of the flesh ...that you have shared in the cross of Christ...that you have died to this world and have thus experienced the resurrection of the Spirit in this life! If we have, we ***shall be like Him*** more with each passing day! “*For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be [in the likeness] of [His] resurrection.*” - Rom 6:5.

Paul had already said in chapter 2, verse 12 that “...*you were buried with Christ when you were baptized. And with him you were raised to new life because you trusted the mighty power of God, who raised Christ from the dead.*” Our walk from that point of redemption forward is not by OUR doing, or by our OWN willpower. Rather by HIS doing and HIS power! (Eph 1:19-20) For those still embracing the shadows or are attempting to

walk wholly under their own power, will always eventually collapse ...usually leaving their church and on some level, leaving the faith. But how can they go back to themselves, their desires, and coddling *their* emotions...you know...if they're *dead*?

Paul acknowledges that we still must decide to **apply** this truth and power in our lives! Realizing our death to this world and our spiritual standing in Christ, we have been reborn; we have died and been resurrected spiritually. In light of such, are told now to "seek." That word kind of jumps out at us...especially those who want to channel the mantra "it's all God...it's all God...we do nothing...it's all God!" But behold! There we have it! We are told to actually "seek"...*seek those things which are above.*" The word means to "think, meditate, reason, and enquire into." To "aim for and strive after."

Our faith in Christ has placed us physically in Christ. Therefore, whatever Christ experienced we experienced and often *will yet* experience. When He arose from the dead, we arose with Him. His resurrection means...

- that we have risen with Him.
- that we have conquered death.
- that we are raised to a new life.
- that our old life in this sinful world is over; it no longer has a claim upon us. We are, as stated, raised to a newness of life.
- that we are walking in newness of life, living a life that is dead to sin, but alive to God—alive to righteousness and holiness.

What then would this naturally do to our life priorities? Such a question and answer present a difficult position for many of us, who, though we believe we are reborn, still quite honestly live for ourselves and for the world. We still bow to so many false gods! We have literally deified family, careers, possessions and positions, all things which are not "above". There are some believers who will verbally defend God to any takers, but their personal lives deny the very doctrines they profess to love. "They profess that they know God, but in works they deny Him" (Titus 1:16).

3:2

And just in case we failed to get it from the last verse, Paul hits us again. He reiterates where we should be looking, what we are to be living for, and where our "minds" (NKJV) ...our "affections," (KJV) our "love," should be. The tense of the Greek word found here is in the "continual" form, meaning we are to be **continually** fixed on that which is above! We already know that scripture tells us to "*walk in the Spirit, and you will not fulfill the lust of the flesh.*" Not **stand**, nor **sit**, but **continually moving**, continually walking forward. I wonder how many of us would claim to be seeking heaven, but in reality spend very little time thinking heaven or planning for our eternity there!

3:3

"For you **died**..." "...you are **dead**." It funny how for many of us our confessed redemption has really only had a marginal...a **minor**, effect upon our lives and living. Yet *dying* and the *being resurrected from the dead as a new person*, well...that sounds kind of extreme doesn't it? Like *profound*...!

Before we came to know Christ, all of us were under both the **slavery** to sin, as well as the **Covenant of the Law**. They together simply resulted in a life of bondage. The only way out of this prison sentence, was through the death of the one in the covenant. In other words, the only way out is by dying! You only leave that prison in a spiritual body bag! However...through death, all legal agreements are off. For you can't sue a dead man, nor keep a dead man in prison.

Now that we have “died” through Christ, we are truly free. Sin and the Law have no more claim on our lives, and we now can truly turn our attention toward Jesus Christ and the “things above.” (Note Rom 6:2 & 6:6)

The word “hid” tells us that we are “kept” in Christ. His very life becomes our life. We are profoundly and eternally “protected.” He has truly “got us covered.” (Gal 2:20) Now, *if we allow Him*, He will actually *live out through us*, ...through our lives. He will manifest, perform and carry out His plans and He will do it *through us!* Can there be any more powerful and awesome experience in this life?

3:4

“...*Christ, who is our life*...” Now we are taken to the ultimate question. **Is Christ our life?** Not just the possessor and giver of life, but the very essence of life itself? Do you embrace Him and His kingdom pursuits like you do, *say*, with something like oxygen? Because that is what is being presented here. Are your priorities, decisions, and pursuits all run through Him, his plans for you and his priorities for the furtherance of His kingdom on earth? When you “appear with him in glory”, what kind of welcome do you want, and what kind of welcome do you expect?

Imagine for a moment your arrival. There you stand before the Creator of the Universe...the One who gave you breath. And Jesus Christ steps up with you to the judgment seat. Not the judgment of non-believers, the Great White Throne judgment, but the Bema Seat judgment, the believer’s judgment of their works. Be truthful, what will really take place in those next few minutes?

3:5

Jesus Christ wants to be more than a ticket to heaven for us, He desires to produce new a life and behavior in us. But the ball is in our court; we must now act upon the power that is available to us, the power that lives within us. We must “turn the key and push the accelerator,” or it makes no difference how big and powerful the engine is. We have been given “all we need” and now He is asking us to act upon such. To “put to death” the things on this list, albeit surely not an exhaustive one. For you know, *as I do*, that we each have our own personal list. We are called upon to “kill” these things. Death is permanent and complete!

The 2023 list is far more lenient. We have somehow built a new paradigm wherein we no longer have to say “no” to anything that pleases us. We did this by just rewriting the operators manual. And yet here is the original instructions... “*put to death your members*...” “members” means your body and the parts of it. In the practical realm we may at times stumble, yet a true believer does not continue in sin.

Sadly, I have witnessed black and white scenarios wherein a confessing believer decides to act, to move, to *do* something that is clearly a sin, often one that they themselves in the past acknowledge was a sin. The reasons behind their decisions are legion, but of course none of them matter. They move ahead in some act, and remain in it and fail to ever repent of it. So the weeks turn to months turn to years and that sin still remains...*and usually by that time a whole lot more in domino effect*. In God’s eyes, that sin is as if it was committed yesterday. But they have found comfort despite its existence. What is the verdict upon such a person? Ahhh... but what about my grace?

The apostle Paul answered a very similar question in Romans 6:1-2, “*What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?*” The idea that a person could “trust in Jesus Christ” for salvation and then go on living in sin as before, is absolutely foreign to the Bible. Believers in Christ are new creations (2 Corinthians 5:17). The Holy Spirit changes us from producing the acts of the flesh (Galatians 5:19-21) to producing the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). The Christian life is a changed life because the Christian is changed.

1Jn 3:9 “Those who have been born into God’s family do not make a practice of sinning, because God’s life is in them. So they can’t keep on sinning, because they are children of God...” Clearly it is not possible to remain in a sin and still carry the title of Christian...

Paul’s “short list” of issues begin with:

“fornication” - “any illicit sexual intercourse”

“uncleanness” - “other illicit sex”

“passion” - “illicit sexual thoughts”

“evil desires” - “illicit desires and longings”

“covetousness” - “the desire for more...”

3:6

What more can really be said here? God *is* gracious and seldom kicks our feet out from under us immediately upon a sinful act. But clearly He will not sit back forever and let these things continue. If He will not let it continue unabated in non-believers, why do we think He will let it continue in His own children? (Heb 12:25)

3:7

These things of the world are to be left behind. For you now, *complete and whole IN Him*, are living IN Him and He in you!

3:8

The language of our text today embraces a “put on” and a “put off” scenario...like a coat or a hat. This is clearly our part and our responsibility. Thus we cannot sit in our sin and blame God or even believe that he is just winking at our sin under the umbrella of grace. So let me ask you: **What are you wearing today?**

Paul has called us to “put to death” those things which are contrary to Christ and a holy walk in Him, and he gives no allowances or reasons to take a pass on this matter. He paints a picture of who we *used* to be...our “old man,” the “old us.” We are told that if this old man IS dead, then stop wearing his clothes! His clothes are the attributes, the qualities, the ungodly traits of our old lives without Christ. We are to be different now and we have been given the power through the Holy Spirit to see such occur. Paul is saying that if the man be new, then let the clothes also be new!

This really breathes new meaning in the old saying “the clothes make the man.” But for us we could rather say, the “man makes the clothes.” What “man” is living in you? Are you comfortable in the old clothes of your past, the “clothes of the world?” These questions are a very important self-test of where I am in Christ, ...or out of Christ!

For if I am a new man, the old clothes are something I am no longer comfortable in. They are something I long to rid my life of. But if I do, am I ready to put on the clothes of the “new man;” the clothes, the attributes and qualities of Jesus Christ? Because unless we move to the new clothes, we can create a vacuum in the space of where our old man and his ways used to reside. That vacuum can start pulling all sorts of new vices and behaviors in to replace the old, many of which are no better than what we got rid of!

The words “put off” speaks within the same terminology used in the taking off of clothes. No arguments...no reasoning, no excuses...just get rid of these things. Paul goes on with his list...all issues that are quite practical. Note these things because ...*again*, for many, Christianity is merely a concept and intellectual nugget. But that position can only be held in denial of scripture.

“anger” - a “stewing” type of anger...a bitterness
“wrath” - a “blow-up” kind of anger
“malice” - vicious character; intentional violence
“blasphemy” - evil speaking and lies toward and about God
“filthy language” - foul language

3:9

Who is this “old man”? Paul is describing the old life, our old ways, our *past*. (See Eph 4:17-24) We are told that in Christ...*in salvation*, our “old man” is dead. Not just sick or marginalized...but actually *dead*. This is our positional standing in Christ. Yet many of us still feeding this dead man, dressing him up and conversing with him. In verses 5-7, we as believers are called to “put off” sensual sins of the flesh. Now we are directed to do the same with the outward “social” sins of the flesh. If the old man IS dead, then we are to get rid of his stuff.

Jesus called Lazarus out of the grave wrapped in his “death clothes.” “*Lazarus, come forth...*” While Lazarus had been given new life, he had to then act upon that gift and step out into his new life. I’m sure he didn’t continue to wear his grave clothes, but rather put on new duds! He certainly would have been thought extremely weird if he just kept wearing dead mans clothes! A reborn individual is *supposed* to be different than the world of “dead men walking.” When we act contrary to Christ, we illicit only confusion in those around us. We leave a trail of lies...we say we are something but live contrary. Jesus called the devil “a liar and the father of it”. When we lie, we cooperate with Satan.

3:10-11

We have been more than changed. For we now, in our redeemed born again state, we are a literally a new person, and one with a new nature. We have been reborn and transformed. “renewed“ (gr) means “changed, grown, made new.” We are “renewed in our knowledge.” In other words, if reborn, we innately know this stuff don’t we? The redeemed individual is hungry for the Word of God knowledge of the one who has created him. Hungry to know what the one we love wants *of* us and *for* us! “after the image of Him...” speaks of our desire for practical sanctification. (as opposed to the positional one we have in Christ at the moment of our re-birth) This is a process that takes a lifetime! But, as the old saying goes, the journey is the destination. It’s not a light switch, it’s a dawning of a new day. (Rom 8:29) Every day, “*putting on the new man...*”