

A CLOSER LOOK AT SIN

Colossians 3:8-11

Intro: It would be difficult to find a passage in the NT that is clearer on the Christian life than the one that is before us here in Colossians 3. Last Sunday I read to you that great passage on the Christian life that is contained in Paul's letter to the church at Rome. In my reading on this chapter I came across a statement in Griffith Thomas' commentary where he was quoting another older expositor, a native of Switzerland, who lived back in the 19th century. Godet made this statement about the basic difference between all other religions as compared with the Christian faith. His statement as recorded by Dr. Griffith Thomas was that "paganism says, 'Become what you ought to be'; Christianity says, 'Become what you are.'" I am positive that this is a contrast between all other religions as compared with our relationship to Jesus Christ in the Gospel.

False religions know nothing of a vital, living relationship with its founder. I would call your attention to what Paul wrote in the latter part of verse 9, and what he continued to say in verse 10. He was following up on what he said in verse 8: "But now year also put off all these . . . ," and then he added in the latter part of verse 9, "seeing ye have put off the old man with his deeds," and then going on in verse 10, "And have put on the new man which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him." Paul did not say this about just some of the Colossian Christians – we might think that it applied only to the more spiritual among the Colossians. No that is not the case. He said it in such a way as to indicate that every believer had put off the old man and had put on the new man, and he went on in verse indicate in verse 11 that what he was saying was true of all believers so that "Christ is all, and in all."

Now let me ask a couple of question. The first is, "What is the old man?" And the second question is, "What is the new man?"

The answers are, the old man is what you and I were before we were brought to Christ. It was our old sin nature, where all of these sins came from. The new man is what we are in Christ. As Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 5:17,

17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

Before we were saved our lives were dominated by the old man, our old

sinful nature, the nature with which we were born. In Christ you and I who know the Savior have become new creatures. We have a new nature, a nature that loves God and that wants to please God.

When did we “put off” the old man, and “put on” the new man. That took place when we were saved. Did that mean that we can no longer sin? No! But it does mean that we no longer *have to sin*. How did this come about? It came about as a result of our relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul expressed this in Galatians 2:20 where we read,

20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

When Christ died, all who believe in Christ died with Him, and in Him. When Christ was raised, we were raised with Him, and in Him. Now you and I can truly say with Paul that “Christ liveth in me.” This is not just a lot of fanciful thinking; this is the truth of the Word of God. Remember what we learned in Colossians 3:3-4:

3 For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

4 When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.

Remember that the verb “appear” means *to be manifested*. When the Lord was here on earth, most people did not know Who He was. But when the Lord comes, then we will see Christ in all of His glory, and we will be transformed suddenly into the same glory. And we will appear as we have been known to God from the very first day that we were saved.

So in the words of Godet, we will then be what we are now. God sees us in Christ. We count on our union with Christ to be absolutely true, and it is the power of our relationship with Him that we can be a holy people.

Remember how Paul described his ministry in Colossians 1 25-29. Let me read to you what he said there. Perhaps it will make more sense to all of us now. (Read Col. 1:25-29.)

Now let me read part of what I read to you last week, and see if it doesn't take on more meaning for all of us. I will read only verses 11 through 14 of Romans 6. (Read Rom. 6:11-14.)

Notice that last verse, verse 14: “For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.” The Law tells us what

to do, and what not to do, but it doesn't give us any help in obeying what God says. But thank God we "are not under the Law, but under grace." Being under grace is being in Christ. He is our life. He is our strength to do God's will, and to delight in it. It is because we are in Christ that we have the authority to say "no" to sin. What Paul said about himself and his relationship to God and to Christ, is what we all have the authority to say. Listen to these words which he wrote when he was writing about the appearances that the Lord made to His own after His resurrection, and before His ascension:

9 For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

10 But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me (1 Cor. 15:9-10).

It is ridiculous to think that a person who is not a Christian, could live the Christian life. Only by the power of Christ, and by the power of God, and the power of the Holy Spirit, can any of us hope to be able to say "no" to sin, and "yes" to the will of God in daily life.

So to mortify our members which are on the earth, and to put off the old man, and put on the new, means that can say "no" to sin, and be strengthened by Christ to will and to do of God's good pleasure.. If we are trusting in ourselves, failure is certain. But our only hope of living godly lives, is to take our stand on what Christ did when He died on the Cross, and we were united with Him in His death and resurrection.

So, when the temptation to sin comes along, and we will face it in some form every day, preach the Gospel to yourself. As Jerry Bridges reminded us all so well, and so truthfully, every blessing we ever have experienced, or ever will experience, is traceable to the Gospel. It is no wonder that Paul prayed, as he did in Galatians 6:14,

But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.

So when temptation comes along, you and I need to take our stand on Christ Who died to save us from sin's penalty, but also from sin's power. We can always be victorious in Christ. It may not all come at once, but as we seek Christ and as we think Christ, we will be mortifying our members

on the earth, and putting off the old man, and putting on the new man.

Now Paul has given us two lists of sins here in Colossians 3. The first is in verse 5; the second is in verses 8 and 9. Why two? I don't know that I have the answer to that question, but I haven't been satisfied entirely by any of the explanations I have found in the several commentaries that I have consulted. Putting both of these lists together, I am sure that Paul did not mean that he was giving us a complete list. All sins are evil, and deserving of divine judgment, but even the Lord in speaking to Pilate just shortly before His death indicates that some sins are greater than others. I am referring to what we are told in John 19:10-11. Pilate was irritated with the Lord because the Lord did not respond to him. And so we read these words:

10 Then saith Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?

11 Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.

All sins are bad and an offense to God. But some are worse than others. I am sure that we would all agree that the sins in verse 5 appear to be greater than the sins in verses 8 and 9. I have called my message this morning, "A Closer Look at Sin," because it appears to me that some people would be inclined to excuse themselves because they had not actually committed any of the sins in verse 5. However, anyone who tries to say that the charge of sin does not apply to him, or to her, is just demonstrating how ignorant they are of their true condition before God. Covetousness is one way that lust can be described, and even if a person has only thought lust, the Lord said that that was a form of committing adultery. See Matthew 5:28.

But perhaps at least some of the sins Paul mentioned in verses 8 and 9 would come more in the category of what Jerry Bridges calls "respectable sins." Probably the one exception would be "filthy communication," which is translated in the NASB, abusive speech. The NIV calls it "filthy language." But the point of these lists is that nobody is sinless except for our Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible tells us that when Samuel was looking over the sons of Jesse to determine which one was God's choice, Samuel was ready to take Eliab, and go. But then we read in 1 Sam 16:7

7 But the Lord said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or

on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.

Sin tends to make all of hypocrites. We like to put on a good front, but what God sees in our hearts, all of us, is a vindication of His Word that “all have sinned” – no exceptions. So when you look a little deeper into any of our hearts, apart from Christ, we all have sinned. The sins of verses 8 and 9 are just as offensive in God’s sight as the sins of verse 5. “There is not a just man upon the earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not” (Ecc. 7:10). So we need to be just as careful against the lesser sins as we are against the greater sins.

And notice that Paul said that “all” of these have to be “put off.” You and I are not to be satisfied if we rate ourselves over 50 percent. They “all” have to go. Why? Could we lose our salvation by compromising with sin, any sin? No, but sin affects our fellowship with God and with each other, besides affecting our testimony to the world.

Grammarians do not always agree on the two words which Paul used here for anger or wrath. But “anger” has to do with an outburst of wrath, while “wrath” has to do with a person who boils internally, and continues in such a state, perhaps with an unforgiving or unreasonable attitude.

“Malice” is the attitude of mind where a person has an attitude in which a person harbors a desire for revenge, and is only waiting for the opportunity to carry it out. “Blasphemy” is not used here against God, but toward people, with an attempt to attack their character. “Filthy communication is abusive speech. Paul seemed to be presenting here a growing antagonism of one person for another, which can result in lying. The child of God should be unfailingly truthful. But a course of action as Paul pictured it in his words goes from bad to worse. Sin not only affects our fellowship with God, but also our fellowship with each other. Such behavior is not to be excused, but to be condemned and corrected. One reason that the child of God needs to seek Christ and to think Christ is because the Lord Jesus was never guilty of such action, nor will He ever be. And we are to be like Him.

Now we come to verse 11.

There is not one standard for Greeks and another for Jews. Nor one for the circumcision and another for the uncircumcised. Not one for the

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barbarian, and another for the Scythian; nor one for the servant and another for the free. So it is not the case that the standards for the people of God vary according to the culture in which they live. Right is right, and wrong is wrong. Standards are determined by God, and we perfectly demonstrated in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ on earth. “Christ is all, and in all,” *i.e.*, in all believers. Christ is sufficient for believers wherever and whoever they are.

The divisions which Paul mentioned here are national, religious, cultural and social – “neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian; bond nor free. “Christ is all (the sufficient One), and in all.” The One Who is sufficient for some, is sufficient for all. All who are in Christ are divinely enabled to mortify their sinful members, and to put off the old man. God is no respecter of persons.