

**THE OLD LIFE**

Colossians 3:5-11 – Part 3 (end)

**Intro:** This is the third Sunday morning that I have spent on these seven verses of Colossians 3 – verses 5 through 11. But they are verses worthy of all of that time, and even much more. These verses are built upon the first four verses of this chapter in which the Apostle Paul positively declared our union with Christ. We were raised with Him, and consequently *He is our life*. Our ability to live a life pleasing to God is dependent upon this vital relationship that every child of God enjoys with Christ. He not only died for us, but we died in Him. And He was not only raised for us, having accomplished everything that was necessary for our salvation, but we were raised with Him, and now He lives in us.

These are not just what Paul was imagining, but these are facts of eternal reality. A Christian is one who has Christ in Him, and it is only upon the basis of this relationship that it is possible for us to live a holy life, a life pleasing to God. And so, as Paul has said, in verses 1 through 4, we are to seek those things which are above, those things of Christ. That is where our attention is to be focused day after day. The earth and the world about us, are not to be where our hopes are centered. God has saved us to make us like Christ. A growing Christian is one who is becoming more and more like Christ.

Now we learned from verses 9 through 11 last time that when we trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, we put off the old man, and we put on the new man. We may not have known it at the time, but that is when it happened. It did not mean that we could no longer sin, but it meant that sin was no longer our master. The Lord Jesus Christ became our Master, and He has been helping us and blessing us and strengthening us and changing us ever since. Some day the work of salvation will be completed in us, and then we will no longer be able to sin. But that will not be until we are with the Lord.

Now if you do not know the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior, this old, sinful, corrupt life, is all that you have. It doesn't mean that you are what we might call "a bad person," but it does mean that sin is your master and that whatever you may do for yourself by way of self-improvement, you can never do enough to make yourself acceptable to God. Neither could any of the rest of us. Only in Christ can there be perfect and eternal acceptance with God.

A short time ago when our Carolyn was with us, she brought us a copy of a hymn I had never heard of before. The words are wonderful. The second verse of that hymn tells us this:

When Satan tempts me to despair,  
and tells me of the guilt within,  
upward I look and see Him there  
Who made an end to all my sin.  
Because the sinless Savior died,  
my sinful soul is counted free;  
For God, the Just, is satisfied  
to look on Him and pardon me,  
to look on Him and pardon me.

You and I could never deserve what Jesus Christ did when He took our sins and went to Calvary to suffer what we should have suffered. And now those of us who have trusted Christ as our Savior, while the old life remains but robbed of its power, yet now we have a new life, and our new life is Christ Himself. So when we are tempted to sin, we know on the authority of God's Word that we do not *have to* sin. We sometimes do sin, but when we do, we come to God in repentance, confessing to God that we have sinned, "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). In the words of the hymn I just read to you, God looks "on Him (Christ) and pardons me." Oh, that God would help all of us to understand this!

But now as we move on in our text, you will notice that Paul gave us two lists of sins: one in verse 5, and a second one in verses 8 and 9. What is the difference?

Well, in human language we can probably say that in verse 5 we have those sins that are the most disgraceful, the grossest, the most shameful. There has been a great change in America with respect to these sins. In the estimation of many people they are not as bad as they used to be. But let me tell you a secret which you will find in your Bibles. It is this: Man may have changed his minds about sexual sins, but God still considers them to be just as evil and degrading as they ever were! And in that day when people stand before God, God is not going to ask them if they think that sin is sin, they are going to be judged on the basis of the righteousness of God.

Perhaps you heard the story about the lady who was being followed by a police car with its lights flashing, but she didn't stop, and she didn't stop,

but finally she did. When the officer asked her if she had seen him following her with his lights on. She said, “Yes, she did.” And then he asked her why she didn’t stop. She answered, “Because I hadn’t done anything wrong.” That may be the answer some people will give to the Lord when they stand before the Great White Throne when they are asked why they did not believe the Gospel: “Because I didn’t think that I was a sinner.”

There are probably many who feel a sense of relief because they have not committed any of the sins mentioned in verse 5. But what about this second list in verses 8 and 9?

We may look upon these as things everyone does, and so things which are not bad enough to bring the judgment of God upon us. After all, who doesn’t get made once in a while? Who hasn’t harbored malice in their heart toward another person? And blasphemy, even if we take this as only meaning using the Lord’s Name, most people have cursed something or someone else at some time in their lives. However, the context would suggest here that it means blaspheming another person. I will discuss this more in a moment. And what about foul language, or telling a dirty story? And lying – everyone has told lies. And so we tend to feel that we have a good excuse because most people do these things, and have done them more than once!

But you will see that the Apostle Paul, writing under the direction of the Holy Spirit, made these sins in verses 8 and 9 a continuation of the sins in verse 5. Sin is sin. Some sins may be worse than other sins, but sin is still sin, and all sin brings the judgment of God. So, if you got by verse 5, no one gets by verses 8 and 9. And when you consider what the Lord said about adultery, that expands the charge of guilt. I am referring to His words which are recorded for us in Matt. 4:27 and 28:

27 Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery:

28 But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

So a list of sins does not have to be very long before it hits us. The Bible tells us very truthfully that “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). There is not a just man on the earth who has not sinned because we have sinful hearts. Sin has its roots in our hearts, and then manifests itself outwardly.

If anything, Paul seemed insistent upon believers taking immediate action upon the sins in the second list. Note what he said. (Read verses 8 and 9.)

As we think about verses 8 and 9, the heading I will give it reflects how people are inclined to think about it:

## **I. THE LIST OF “LITTLE SINS” (Col. 3:8-9a).**

The verb in Greek which is translated “put off” is an imperative. So this is not optional for us who know the Lord, nor does it mean that we ought to cut down on the frequency with which we are guilty, nor to do something to make these sins less like they really are. Paul meant what one writer has called “total abstinence” (Moule, p. 212). There can be no compromise with sin, none whatsoever! Don’t do it, and to use the Apostle’s word here, “now”! Not tomorrow, or next week, or when you can get around to it, but “now”! This is the first thing that we must recognize. Paul is calling for an immediate break with these sins on the part of every believer, and not with just some of these sins, but with “all” of them. I am not excluded, and neither are you! But we need to remember that though we may class these sins as “little,” they can only be “put off” by the enabling power of God – not in our own strength.

Now let’s look at these sins.

First we have two words which may look very much alike to us because they both have to do with what we call, losing our temper. But in the Greek there is a difference to be noted. “Anger” (ὀργή) is the person who gets mad and stays mad. We would speak of him as “an angry person.” “Wrath” (θυμός) on the other hand who gets angry quickly, but gets over it just as soon. Anger is not necessarily a bad trait because God gets angry. He is “angry with the wicked every day” (Psa. 7:11). But with us it is usually sinful because it is selfish in nature. I am sure that unjustified anger has often been a problem with us. We get angry because of something that won’t work, or because of what somebody says to us or about us.

“Malice” (κακία) is one who holds a grudge, a person with a vicious disposition. It is wishing that something bad will happen to someone. Obviously it shows a lack of forgiveness.

“Blasphemy” is brought over into the English directly from the Greek, and it means saying something evil about either God or man, but the context here seems to emphasize saying something bad about someone else, Christian or non-Christian. It is gossip often that is intended to drag a person’s name in the dust.

“Filthy communication” (αἰσχρολογία) comes from a person we call “foul-mouthed,” who delights in abusing others and corrupting others with dirty language. You would never expect to hear such language from a Christian, but sometimes we are surprised, or may surprise ourselves. Have you ever noticed how much easier it is to remember a dirty joke than a clean joke?

Finally, “lie not one to another.” It is always wrong to lie to anyone, but the Apostle Paul seems to indicate that lying to a fellow-Christian is especially despicable.

The tongue is certainly involved in the last three sins mentioned here, but can be involved in all of them. Remember what James had to say about the tongue. Read James 3. The person who cannot control his or her tongue, is usually out-of-control in every other part of their lives.

Now let’s look at:

## **II. PAUL’S ARGUMENT FOR HIS TEACHING (Col. 9b-10).**

When a person becomes a Christian, as I have brought out before, he puts off the old man, and puts on the new man. It is like a change of clothes. We get rid of the old rags of sinful corruption, and put on the robes of holiness. The point is that not only is our heart changed in salvation, but our outward behavior undergoes a great change also. And if there is no change outwardly, then we need to be concerned about whether or not there has been a change inwardly.

But not only is there an immediate change (although not perfect), yet at the same time we are being “renewed in knowledge.” This is an expression meaning that we are growing in our understanding of the truth of God and growing in our likeness to the Lord Jesus Christ. Here salvation is spoken of again, as in 2 Cor. 5:17, as a creation. And God exercises more power in the salvation of a sinner than He did in the creation of the universe in which we live.

So the change took place at salvation, but inwardly and outwardly we need to continue to grow in the likeness of Christ. Paul said in Rom. 8:29,

29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

We have been saved to be conformed to the image of Christ, that is, to be made like Him. And in no way could our Lord ever have been guilty of the sins mentioned in either list here in Col. 3.

But how does verse 11 tie in with all of this?

### **III. THE UNIVERSAL APPLICATION OF THE GOSPEL (Col. 3:11).**

First, this means there is only one Gospel. There is only one way of salvation. There is only one way of salvation. It makes no difference among nations. It makes no difference along religious lines. And it makes no difference along cultural lines. It makes no difference along social lines.

But, second, this would also mean that there were not some standards of holiness for one group, but some other standards for another group. A good illustration of this is what Paul wrote to Titus about the Cretans. Paul had left Titus in Crete to ordain elders in every place. See Titus 1:5. But later in the chapter Paul quoted one of the Cretans who said this:

12 One of themselves, even a prophet of their own, said, The Cretians are always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies (Titus 1:12).

Lying was a way of life to them. They were deceptive by nature. They were savage and cruel in character. And they were lazy gluttons. They lived to eat.

Now let me ask a question. Since Titus was to find elders in every place where the Gospel had gone, in the light of what the Cretans were, how could he find men who would meet the qualifications? Would the Lord lower His standards? Absolutely not! Never! What the Lord had done for Paul, and what He had done for Titus, He would also do for the Cretans. And this still has to be true wherever the Gospel goes. The standards are not lowered, but the believers are by God's grace brought up to the standards set by God in His Word.

So, going back to Col. 3:11, whether a man was a Jew or a Greek (a term used for anyone who was not a Jew, and so it the equivalent of a Gentile), whether he was religious or not religious, whether a person was an uncultured Barbarian or an cruel and uncivilized Scythian, or whether he was a slave or a free man, the same Word of God applied to all and the same standard of holiness had to be maintained. Standards were never changed, nor were they ever lowered. “For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him.” And then Paul added in the following verse: “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Rom. 10:12-13).

And this ties in with the last part of Col. 3:11: “. . . but Christ is all, and in all.” So whether a believer before he was saved, was a Jew or a Gentile, religious or irreligious, educated or cruel, slave or free, Christ was sufficient (“all”) for all of them, and “in all” of them.

**Concl:** Let me add one further word, and I am finished.

Sin has in our day produced all kinds of divisions – between blacks and whites, between rich and poor, between men and women, Democrats and Republicans, and on and on. The one unifying power in all the world, is the Gospel. Enemies become friends when they are drawn to Christ. Social, cultural, ethnic distinctions don’t keep people apart when they are drawn to Christ, but we become one in Him. And the more we grow in Christ, the more we are renewed, the closer our fellowship is in Christ. God does not change the Gospel, but He changes human hearts by the power of the Gospel and by the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit.

Sin has separated us, and it will continue to separate us. But Christ draws us to Himself, and then to each other as each of us is conformed more and more to His own blessed likeness.