

THE NEW LIFE
Colossians 3:12-17 - Part 1

Intro: Fifty to a hundred years ago, and possibly farther back than that, the world defined a Christian as a person who doesn't do certain things – he doesn't drink, nor smoke, nor attend the theater, nor swear, nor listen to nor tell dirty stories. And the list could go on and on like that. And we know from Scripture that there are certain things that a Christian doesn't do, and certain places that he does not go. There are certain negatives to Christian living, but there are also some very important positive things that the world should expect to see in the lives of Christians. The Bible speaks of it as putting off certain things, and putting on other things. It is not enough to stop sinning, but we must be sure that other things, godly things, holy things, are brought into our lives to take the place of the things that we have put off.

However, an alarming change has taken place gradually in recent years which we all need to be aware of. It is this: the distance between the behavior of non-Christians and professing Christians, has grown narrower and narrower. That is not because the Bible has changed, but because some Christians are not paying as much attention to the teachings of Scripture as they should. It is often hard to clearly identify a professing Christian from a non-Christian. And that is because when some professing Christians are with non-Christians, they tend to become like the non-Christian. In fact, there are some Christian leaders that tell us that the only way we can hope to win people to Christ is by showing them that we can do what they do, that we can live like they live, that we can dress like they dress, and that we can talk like they talk. And so some who are not Christians are inclined to feel, and often to say, "Why should I become a Christian when they are no different from what I am!"

Now the important point that we need to consider is this: How does the Bible describe the life of a child of God? We all need to train ourselves to test what we hear and what we read in books with what we are taught in the Word of God. The reason that many Christians, as well as those who merely make a profession of being a Christian, talk the way the world talks, and live the way the world lives, and go the way the world goes, is either because they are not really saved, or because they are not paying attention to what the Bibles teach them, or both!

The Lord Jesus, as He was concluding His Sermon on the Mount, gave

these words of warning:

21 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity (Matt. 7:21-23).

As the Apostle Paul began what is the practical section of his epistle to the church at Rome, he wrote these very clear words:

1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God (Rom. 12:1-2).

Notice that Paul told the Christians at Rome that there was something for them *not to do*, followed by what they were *to do*!

We see the same teaching in his second letter to the church at Corinth when the Apostle Paul wrote these words in chapter 6:

14 Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?

15 And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?

16 And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

17 Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,

18 And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty (2 Cor. 6:14-18).

And then he added what is given in our Bibles in the first verse of chapter 7 which ought to be the last verse of chapter 6:

1 Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting

holiness in the fear of God (2 Cor. 7:1).

The people of the world are going to put all kinds of pressure on us to live the way they live, but that is why we need the teaching of Scripture to help us.

Let me give you one more passage, and this one is from the Apostle John. What I am reading you will find in 1 John 2:15-17. Note carefully what he said:

15 Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

17 And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

Now the Lord was not saying, nor was the Apostle Paul saying, nor was the Apostle John saying, that we are to be self-righteous, acting toward people like we are too good to have anything to do with them. No, what they were saying is that we are not to live like the people of the world live. A true Christian has been born again. He has eternal life. He is a new creation in Christ, “old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Cor. 5:17).

There is a very real sense in which if a person is truly saved, he, or she, is not going to be happy living a life of compromise with the world. We are new creatures. We are forgiven sinners who seek by God’s grace to avoid any further contamination by sin. Our greatest testimony to the world is the testimony of a transformed life. We need to “put off” those characteristics of the life we lived, or could have lived, before we were saved, and “put on” those characteristics that our Lord wants displayed in the lives of his people.

This past week a preacher was executed in one of our penitentiaries because a few years back he killed a doctor and another person who were connected with an abortion clinic. He boastfully declared that when he got to heaven he was going to be welcomed as a great hero. And yesterday I heard on the news that he had left a manual behind teaching others to do what he had done. People read things like that, or hear it on TV, and say, “If that is what a Christian is, I don’t want to have anything to do with Christians.” But is that what a Christian is? Let me read one verse

to you from 1 John. It is found in chapter 3, verse 15. This is what the Apostle John wrote under the direction of the Holy Spirit:

Whoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him (1 John 3:15).

I am not the Judge, but on the basis of this verse I would say that that preacher got the same surprise the moment he died that the terrorists do when they sacrifice themselves thinking that they are going to paradise and to seventy-two virgins. Am I against abortion? Very definitely. If I were talking to a young pregnant woman who was considering abortion, would I try to talk her out of it? I certainly would. Would I block her way to keep her from going into an abortion clinic. No, I wouldn't. We Christians don't fight that way. The Bible tells us, that "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds" (2 Cor. 10:4). Some people may fight against sin with guns, but Christians fight against sin by obedience to the Word of God, and by prayer.

So it is important to put off those sins which have to do with the old life, life before we knew the Lord, and put on those characteristics which will make us more like our dear Savior. We have learned a partial list of what we are to put off in Col. 3:5 and 8-9a. (Read.) Now we are going to learn what we need to "put on." (Read Col. 3:12-17.)

Obviously we can't go through all of these verses in a single Sunday, or even two. We need to focus our attention on what the Apostle Paul said here, make sure that we understand, and then go to work under the blessing of the Lord to make sure these are descriptive of each one of us. The oldest among us need these verses, and so do all down to the very youngest.

But first I want to call your attention to:

I. THE WAY THE APOSTLE PAUL ADDRESSED THE COLOS- SIAN BELIEVERS (Col. 3:12a).

He called them, "the elect of God, holy and beloved." These words can only be applied to those who know the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior. And perhaps this is a good place to remind you that the Bible was not written to unbelievers, to non-Christians, telling them how they should live. No, the Bible was written to people who knew and loved Jesus Christ as their personal Savior from sin. No person can live the Christian life who is not

a Christian. Knowing Christ comes first. After that we are to learn from the Bible how the Lord wants us to live. Even we cannot obey the Bible in our own strength. It is by the enabling power of the Holy Spirit that anyone can live to please God. I hope that is clear to everyone. If you don't know the Lord, your first need is not to know how you should live, but you need to know that you need Christ as your Savior. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and ye shall be saved" (Acts 16:31).

But let's look at the words Paul used in addressing the Lord's people.

A. "The elect of God" (Col. 3:12a).

This means those whom God has elected, selected, or chosen. There always has been, and there always will be, as long as time lasts, people, certain people, whom God has individually chosen to be saved. In 1 Thess. 5:10 Paul described "the elect of God" in this way:

9 For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,

10 Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.

This does not mean, as it is sometimes explained, that God planned to save a certain number of people, but it means that He chose particular individuals for salvation.

One of the most complete statements on election is found in 2 Thess. 2:13-14 where Paul was speaking to a certain group of believers telling them what God had done for them. Election is God's personal choice of particular people. But here is what Paul said in 2 Thess. 2:

13 But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:

14 Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Our salvation is the result of what God has done. He chose us before there was any creation at all. Then in time He called us by the Gospel. We believed the truth about ourselves and about His Son, and so we were saved, saved to obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Or, as Paul stated it in Rom. 8:28-30:

28 And we know that all things work together for good to them

that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

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.

30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified (Rom. 8:28-30).

Then linking one more passage with our text for today, please turn to Eph. 1, and we will look at verses 3 and 4:

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:

4 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him ...

Note here when God chose us, and that holiness was God's purpose.

This leads me to the second term that the Apostle used to identify his readers. He called them:

B. "Holy" (Col. 3:12a).

This basically means a separated people, or a people set apart for God. And then it means a people sanctified, or made holy. God's elect are set apart from the rest of humanity as a people whom He has claimed for Himself. And consequently this leads on to the third word in this series:

C. "Beloved" (Col. 3:12a).

All of these three words have reference to what God's people are to God Himself. We have been particularly chosen by God ("elect"), and for God ("holy"), and because God in a special way loves us. This is why the Apostle called them, "beloved." There is no reason in us as to why God should love us. But the fact of Scripture is that He does. And it is equally a mystery as to why He would want us for Himself. But all of this is behind His gracious choice of us to be the heirs of salvation.

Now these three terms give particular power and persuasiveness to:

II. WHAT GOD WANTS HIS PEOPLE TO DO (Col. 3:12).

“Put on.” The Apostle Paul wrote this, but the message came from God. It is true that a Christian is a person who doesn’t do certain things. There are many things that a Christian does not do. But that is only half of the story. The Lord takes away the corruption and shame that sin has caused in our lives, not to leave unclothed, but to give us what we could never produce on our own. You see, as we learned in verse 4 of this chapter, Christ is our life as the people of God, and all that will ever please God in us comes from God! And I am referring now to the qualities mentioned in verses 12 through 16 especially, qualities which enable us to do what we are told to do in verse 17.

And I want to suggest to you that all of these qualities of character are to be found in their perfection in the Lord Jesus Christ, and in Him alone. We see them in Paul and Peter and in John, just to name of few, but not in their perfection. They are to be seen in their perfect form in our Lord Jesus Christ. And this is why the Apostle Paul was so insistent in this epistle (and elsewhere in his writings) that we let nothing come between us and the Lord Jesus Christ! He is our Example, and He is a perfect Example. But He is more than our Example. He is our Life, and that is what makes the Christian life so completely described in the epistles of the NT, possible for you and for me. The more we become like our Lord, the better we will be and do God’s will for us.

Concl: So don’t just “put off.” Do that, but also be sure that you are putting on “bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind,” and on down through the list. When we give attention to the details set before us in this chapter, we soon learn that this is the way to blessing, to joy, and to peace even though we live in a world that is getting more and more displeasing to God as the days come and go. May God so work in us, and put in our hearts such an overwhelming desire to please Him, that it will be obvious to others that Jesus Christ is first among all those we love.