

SERMON NOTES
Colossians 3:1-17
“Living the New Life”

Intro:

- When we accept Jesus Christ as our Savior and are born-again through faith in Jesus Christ – *everything changes – or does it?*
- **We become a child of God**
- *We are forgiven and clothed with the righteousness of Christ*
- **We are indwelt by the Holy Spirit**
- *We are crucified with Christ, raised with Christ to newness of life, and are seated with Christ in the heavenlies*
- We are rescued from the dominion of darkness and are brought into the kingdom of Christ
- **We have been freed from slavery to sin**
- *We are a new creation in Christ – the old has gone – the new has come – everything changes at the new birth*
- ***If you have received Jesus Christ as your Savior, then Christ has set you free from the controlling power of sin and death and Satan through His victory achieved on the Cross – and the Holy Spirit lives within you to empower you to live a new life of freedom and holiness***
- **So -- if born-again Christians are new creations in Christ, why do so many born-again Christians live such worldly, carnal, defeated lives?**
- *Christians profess a new life in Christ – yet many still struggle with pornography and sexual impurity // or with addictions to alcohol or tobacco or compulsive overeating // or with severe depression or mental illness or suicidal tendencies or eating disorders // or with anger and abusive tempers and bitterness and unforgiving spirits // or with pride and rebellious attitudes and critical spirits and ungodly speech // or with materialism and greed and envy and anxiety*
- *If conversion changes everything – why is so little changed in the lives of some born-again Christians?*
- ***Does the Gospel have divine power to set people free from the controlling power of sin – or not?***
- Could it be that we do a better job of teaching the Gospel to non-Christians than to Christians – *that we do a better job of teaching the unsaved how to be saved than teaching believers how to live the Christian life?*

- Saved by grace – and sanctified by following the rules – is that what we practice?
- **The Christian life is the process of becoming what we are in Christ – the process of living like and behaving like and talking like and thinking like the new persons we are in Christ – so that our new life reflects our new identity**
- *In the Gospel, the indicative always precedes the imperative*
- Simply put, that means this: ***You are a new person – now live like a new person***
- **And just as you became a new person by relying on Christ alone for salvation – so also you live like a new person by relying on Christ alone**
- *How can we become the new person we are in Christ? How we can live the new life?*

I. SET YOUR MIND ON YOUR NEW IDENTITY IN CHRIST (3:1-4)

Colossians 3:1-4 ¹Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, set your sights on the realities of heaven, where Christ sits at God’s right hand in the place of honor and power. ²Let heaven fill your thoughts. Do not think only about things down here on earth. ³For you died when Christ died, and your real life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴And when Christ, who is your real life, is revealed to the whole world, you will share in all his glory.

- **The Lamb that was slain is not only the source of our forgiveness – the Lamb that was slain – and resurrected -- Jesus – is our very Life**
- *Many Christians trust the death of Christ for forgiveness – but don’t rely on the Life of Christ for Life and Holiness*
- Instead, we try to generate spiritual vitality through our own efforts
- *But it’s impossible for us to generate life – **Jesus is the Life – He imparts His life to us – He lives His life in and through us***
- Major Ian Thomas “*“The Saving Life of Christ”*”: *“The One who calls you to a life of righteousness is the One who by your consent lives that life of righteousness through you...*
“If you will but trust Christ, not only for the death He died in order to redeem you, but also for the life that He lives and waits to live through you, the very next step you take will be a step taken in the very energy and power of God Himself.
*“If you are to know the fullness of life in Christ, you are to appropriate the efficacy of **what Christ is in you** as you have already appropriated the efficacy of **what Christ has done for you.**”*

- *We cannot generate spiritual life by means of our moral lifestyles*
- *We cannot generate spiritual life by means of practicing the spiritual disciplines of reading the Bible and praying*
- *We cannot generate spiritual life by means of our church programs*

- ***Jesus is the Bread of Life – Jesus is the Life-Giver – Jesus is our Righteousness and Holiness and Redemption – we can't become righteous or holy by our own efforts any more than we can redeem ourselves or raise ourselves from the dead***
- *We are spiritually alive only as we are united with Christ – only as we are crucified, buried, and risen with him – only as He lives in us – only as we feed on Him – only as we abide in Him*

- ***Just as we trust the death of Christ for us to reconcile us to God – in the same way we must trust the life of Christ within us to save us and free us and transform us and make us fruitful***
- *Everything in the Christian life flows from our oneness with Jesus*

- *Many of us expend a great deal of time and energy wondering how we can overcome sin and become nearer to God and live a more abundant and fruitful life*
- *We fail to live out the reality that we are already dead to sin // we are already one with the Lord in spirit // and we are already alive in Christ*
- ***The Life of Christ within us is the source and the power of our spiritual life and our growth in righteousness and holiness***
- *It all flows from our oneness with Jesus – everything – our freedom from sin's power // our spiritual vitality // our growth in Christlikeness // our fruitfulness in Christian service and witness // our love for one another // our passion for the glory of God // our commitment to evangelism and missions – it all flows from our oneness with Jesus*

- ***I have been crucified with Christ. I still live, but no, I don't. Christ now lives in me.***
- *It is not our job to try to live for God in our own strength.*
- *The life that Jesus lives – He lives unto God – and Christ lives that life in us – Christ lives for the glory of God – and Christ is living in us – Christ's desire – his food – is to do the will of God – and Christ lives in us*
- *Do you want to do the will of God? Do you want to live for the glory of God?*
- *Then get out of the way – and let Christ live His life in and through you*

- ***When the life of Christ is flowing through you – that life will produce within you a heart for God – that life will produce within you both the desire and***

the power to do the will of God – that life will produce within you the fruit of the Spirit – the likeness of Christ’s character

- You don’t have to try to manufacture a heart for God or spiritual passion or spiritual vitality or spiritual commitment or an obedient spirit or love for the lost or compassion for the hurting or a forgiving spirit or self-control or a hunger for God’s Word or a desire to pray
- *That is the Christ-life – and those things will all come naturally as Christ lives His life in and through you*

- **Don’t waste your time trying to become a better Christian – you’ll just end up frustrated – instead – let Christ live His life in and through you**
- **Instead of trying to become something you’re not – just be yourself and let Christ be Himself**
- *That is – be your new self in Christ – and let Christ express His life in and through your new self*
- The old you is dead in Christ – count on it – reckon yourself dead to sin and alive to God in Christ
- *Christ is living in you – living for the glory of God – living to do the will of God – count on it – reckon it to be true*

- **New life in Christ does not come as a result of trying harder to be better**
- *New life in Christ is based on our new identity in Christ, which in turn is based on a new relationship with Christ*
- **This new life – and new nature – come as God’s gift to us through faith in Jesus Christ – it is not the result of our will-power or our good works**

- **Before we can behave like Christians – we first need to understand the Gospel truths regarding our identity in Christ**

- *Morality is more than obeying rules – and more rules do not make people more virtuous*
- *How many of our children and youth understand that? How many of our children and youth understand the difference between living out the Gospel and trying hard to be a good Christian by following a bunch of rules?*

- **Christian girls do not become pure and virtuous by lecturing them on the length of skirts and the style of bathing suits and the use of makeup**
- To be sure, teenage girls do need some basic instruction on how to dress in light of where guys look and what guys think

- *But Christian girls become pure and virtuous by abiding in a love relationship with Jesus Christ and learning how to live out the reality of who they are in Christ*
- **Moral behavior comes as a by-product of abiding in Christ – not from dutifully following a set of restrictive rules**
- *Far too many conservative churches have forgotten that – they preach the Gospel when it comes to salvation – but they preach the Law when it comes to morality*
- **All true Christian morality flows from the Gospel and from the reality of our new identity in Christ**
- *“Since you have been raised to new life with Christ” – everything flows from that truth – all moral purity – all godly behavior – all Christian living and service – everything flows from that truth*
- *“For you died when Christ died, and your real life is hidden with Christ in God.” – everything flows from that truth*
- Most of you know that Christ died for your sins – but did you know that the Bible also teaches that you have been united with Christ in his death and resurrection, *and therefore you died in Christ when Christ died, and your real life is hidden with Christ in God?*

Galatians 2:20 ²⁰I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

- *Why do so many Christians live worldly and carnal and defeated lives?*
- Because they are not living out the reality that the old self has been crucified with Christ – and Christ now lives in them – *and their real life is no longer down here on earth pursuing the things of this world – but their real life is now hidden with Christ in heaven – and we live that new life by faith in Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit*
- Notice in these 4 verses in Col. 3 how the three tenses of salvation are all present
- **Past tense: You died with Christ and you have been raised with Christ – therefore you have been saved**
- *Future tense: When Christ appears at his Second Coming – you will be glorified with Him – your salvation will be completed*

- Present tense: Your life is now hidden with Christ in God – therefore, set your hearts and minds on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God – so that you can be transformed into his likeness

- **Right now, Christ is seated at the right hand of God – the place of highest honor and power and authority in the universe – the place from which all our spiritual blessings flow – *and everything we need to live holy and victorious lives is available to us from that heavenly throne – and we access those spiritual blessings and that spiritual power and authority by faith and by prayer***
- *And not only that – but we ourselves are raised and seated with Christ in the heavenlies – sharing in Christ’s victory and power and authority by faith*

- **If you want to become like Christ in your behavior and conduct – you first need to set your mind on who you are in Christ**

- **Neil Anderson:** *“The most important belief we possess is a true knowledge of who God is. The second most important belief is who we are as children of God, because we cannot consistently behave in a way that is inconsistent with how we perceive ourselves.”*

- **(Anderson):** Suppose you were a prostitute, and the king had declared that all prostitutes were forgiven. You saw the decree and the royal seal on it. That would be great news, wouldn’t it?
 - You would probably rejoice, but would that news alone change your perspective of yourself? You would probably still perceive yourself as a prostitute. Would your behavior change?
 - Probably not – you just wouldn’t have to sneak around and practice your trade in secret anymore.
 - But what if the king’s decree said that you were not only forgiven, but also that the king had made you his bride?*
 - If you had become the queen, would that change your behavior? *Of course!*
 - Who would want to live like a prostitute when in reality they had just been made queen?***

- *You are the bride of Christ --* **Whenever you find yourself thinking thoughts that are not true, replace those lies and falsehoods with truth – *for the truth shall set you free***

II. PUT TO DEATH THE DEAD AND TAKE OUT THE GARBAGE OF THE OLD LIFE (3:5-9)

- *At conversion – everything changes – we are given a new life and a new nature through our faith union with Jesus Christ*
- *And yet there is also a sense that at conversion, nothing changes – we still have our past with all of its influences // we still have our current life situation with all its troubles and hardships and brokenness and relationship problems and health problems // we still have our same attitudes and habits // and we still contend with the world, the flesh and the devil*
- *These things do not vanish when we say the Amen to our prayer of salvation*
- *We may get a new heart with new, godly desires when we are born again – but we have the same old brain with the same old memories and thought patterns and emotional reactions*
- *Living the reality of this new life in Christ is not automatic or effortless*
- *The process of becoming fully detached from the old and of fully actualizing the new is a laborious and sometimes painful process*
- *That is why God's Word commands us:*

Colossians 3:5 (NIV) ⁵Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.

- *Habitual and unrepentant sins accumulate like garbage – and garbage attracts rats*
--the tendency is to want to drive off the rats – but as long as the garbage remains, the garbage will continue to attract rats
--the key is to get rid of the garbage – then the rats will have no reason to return
- *Many people love to complain about the rats in their lives – many people will seek help to get rid of the rats – but few people are actually willing to get rid of the garbage*
--sexual immorality will attract rats / pornography will attract rats / greed will attract rats / rage will attract rats / bitterness will attract rats // a critical spirit will attract rats // so will slander & filthy language & lying & drunkenness & rebelliousness & a negative, complaining spirit & an unforgiving spirit & habitual worry
--the rats can take many forms – anything from bondage to destructive habits / to involvement with wicked people / to demonic strongholds / to broken hearts & misery / to broken relationships & dysfunctional families / to financial ruin / to health problems
--to get rid of the rats – you need to get rid of the garbage

“Rid yourselves of anger, rage, malice, slander, filthy language, lying”

- **In order to get rid of the garbage – and the rats – in your life --- you need a new identity / a new hope / a new power / a new love – to fill your life**
- **You need a new mindset and a renewed relationship with Christ in order to live out your true identity in Christ**
- **Christians are called to make a decisive break with the world in order to live as citizens of God’s kingdom**
- *Adopting the new ways of Christ’s Kingdom begins with embracing a new identity in Christ and making a renewed surrender to Christ and forming a new mindset in Christ*
- **Living as a citizen of this world when you are a citizen of Christ’s kingdom is as foolish as rooting for Oregon or Illinois when you live in Iowa and could be rooting for the Hawkeyes instead**
- *New behaviors based on a new mindset based on a new identity must replace old behaviors based on an old mindset based on an old identity*
 --in other words, we must not only take off the dirty old clothes of our old sinful self – but we must also put on the new clean clothes of our new life in Christ
--not only do we need to experience God’s forgiveness and cleansing – we also need to embrace our new identity in Christ and experience the fullness of God’s love and receive the power to live a new life

Colossians 3:9-10 ⁹Don’t lie to each other, for you have stripped off your old evil nature and all its wicked deeds. ¹⁰In its place you have clothed yourselves with a brand-new nature that is continually being renewed as you learn more and more about Christ, who created this new nature within you.

- *We become like Christ – not by trying to reform our old sin nature – but rather by being renewed in our new nature created by Christ within us*
- ***We grow in holiness and Christ-likeness as we put to death the old // get rid of the old sins as we would garbage // strip ourselves of the old self and its sinful practices – and then put on the new self – which is being renewed in the likeness of Christ***
- **We do not put on the new clothes of righteousness over the old life – rather, the old must be put to death – the old must be stripped off and thrown away – and then the new life is put on**

- “When you ask God into your life, you think He is going to come into your heart, look around, and see that you just need a little cleaning – and so you go along for the first six months thinking how nice life is now that God is there. Then you look out the window one day and see that there’s a wrecking ball outside. It turns out that God actually thinks your foundation is shot and you’re going to have to start over from scratch.”
- ***Before the new self can be renewed in Christ-likeness – the old self must be put to death***
- Before we can experience the sweetness of the fullness of Christ dwelling in our hearts – the garbage needs to be taken out
- “You are dead to sin – now think and live that way” – put to death what is dead by repeatedly applying the finished work of Christ to the sinful deeds of the flesh
- “You are a new creation – raised to newness of life and seated with Christ in the heavenlies – now think and live that way” – allow the Holy Spirit to make real in your daily experience what is already true about your new identity in Christ

III. PUT ON THE VIRTUES OF THE NEW LIFE IN CHRIST (3:10-17)

- Notice that Paul says clearly in verse 10 that it is the *new self which is being renewed in the image of God*
- **The Gospel is not about reforming the old – the Gospel is about crucifying the old and renewing the new**
- ***Setting our mind on who we are in Christ and Abiding moment-by-moment in a love relationship with Christ – that is the key to spiritual renewal and growing in holiness***
- Who you are – and who you think you are -- determines what you do
 --***Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience***
 --you may say: “But I am not a patient person” or “I am not a gentle or compassionate person by nature”
 --***But Jesus is – and His Spirit is now in you***
- *We put off the old self and put on this Christ-life by means of surrender and submission to the Lordship of Christ*
- **Freedom in Christ must be maintained daily – even moment by moment**

- daily we put off the old self and stand into all the victory of the Crucifixion where the Lord Jesus provided cleansing from the old nature
- daily we put on the new self and stand into all the victory of the Resurrection and the provision He has made for us there to live above sin
- daily we put off the old nature with its selfishness – and put on the new nature with its love
- daily we put off the old nature with its weakness – and put on the new nature with its strength
- daily we put off the old nature with its deceitful lusts – and put on the new nature with its righteousness and purity

- Putting on the new nature is putting on Christ – his life, his character, his mindset, his attitudes, his passions, his speech, his actions

Colossians 3:12-14 ¹²Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. ¹³Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. ¹⁴And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

- **Compassion // kindness // humility // gentleness // patience // forbearance // a forgiving spirit // a peace-making spirit – those are the qualities of the new life in Christ – those are the clothes of Christ's righteousness**
- *And above all else – the kind of love that produces unity –*
- **The primary mark of Christ-likeness is not morality or sound doctrine – good as those things are – rather, the primary mark of Christ-likeness is love**
- For many of us – sanctification is not so much about getting rid of vices as it is putting on virtues – especially the supreme virtue of love
- Jill's email from Nepal: *“One really valuable lesson I have learned is that I desperately need God's grace every day. Often I have needed grace for the things that I was and should not have been. I now need grace for the things that I should be, but am not.”*

Colossians 3:15 - 17 (NIV) ¹⁵Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. ¹⁶Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.

¹⁷And 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.

- *Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts // Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly // do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus with gratitude in your hearts to God*
- This is how our minds are renewed and our character is transformed
- We don't conquer lust by trying not to lust
 - we don't conquer anger by trying not to lose our temper
 - we don't conquer filthy language by trying hard not to say bad words
 - these sins must be confessed and repented of, to be sure – but that alone will not suffice
- *New behaviors based on a new mindset based on a new identity must replace old behaviors based on an old mindset based on an old identity*
 - New character qualities must replace old habits – and new character qualities flow from allowing the life of Christ within us to produce the likeness of Christ within us**
 - Impurity must be replaced by purity / anger, rage & malice must be replaced by compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience /
 - bitterness must be replaced by forbearance and forgiveness / selfishness must be replaced by love / greed must be replaced by generosity / lying and deception must be replaced by truth / a complaining spirit must be replaced by a grateful heart*
- And how does that happen?
- *Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts // Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly // do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus with gratitude in your hearts to God // set your minds on things above, not on earthly things*
- When we set our minds on earthly desires and selfish ambitions and entertain the devil's lies in our minds – we set off a chain reaction of negative emotions such as insecurity, anxiety, fear, anger, lust
- *Those kinds of emotions fire up the part of our brain that can lead to impulsive behaviors – and impulsive behaviors are often sinful behaviors*
- **If you dwell on fearful thoughts and devilish lies, you will not be able to rid yourself of anger, rage, malice, slander and filthy language**
- **If you want to become like Christ in your behavior and conduct – you first need to reprogram your mind with the truth of who you are in Christ – replacing Lies with Truth:**

--“My identity and sense of worth are found in my ability to perform” – *“God chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will.”*

--“Everything is going wrong in my life because God has turned against me” – *“Since God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all – how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things.”*

--“I have been such a spiritual loser that God gave up on me a long time ago” – *“Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus... I will never leave you nor forsake you.”*

--“I am inadequate to serve Christ in the church or make a difference in someone else’s life” – *“For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do”*

--“I yield to sin because I just can’t help myself – I’ll never change” – *“You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness. Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness.”*

- What we believe has power over us – to heal or to destroy
- *Believing lies literally makes us sick in mind, heart and body*
- Mental, emotional, spiritual and physical health are all strengthened by choosing to believe the truth that God is love
- *Replacing lies with truth literally renews the mind and transforms character and behavior*
- **Setting our mind and heart on a God of love calms our fears, strengthens our sense of security and well-being, and actually improves the health of our brain and body**
- Brain scans have shown that meditating 12 minutes a day for 30 consecutive days on the love of God actually produces measurable brain healing and growth
- *Meditating on the love of God is brain fertilizer that actually renews the mind and provides better impulse control*
- Better impulse control enables us to practice verse 8:

Colossians 3:8 (NIV) ⁸But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips.

- *When we set our minds on Christ and His Love // When we let the peace of Christ rule in our hearts rather than fear or selfish ambition or anger or lust // When we let the Word of Christ dwell in us richly as we meditate on Who Christ is and*

what He has done for us and how much He loves us // when we cultivate gratitude in our hearts rather than resentment or self-pity or grumbling – *then the life of Christ will flow freely through us to transform us into the likeness of Christ*

Prayer – bulletin insert

Altar Call / “Jesus, You Are My Life”