

RADICAL NEWNESS PART 2

An exposition of Colossians 3:9-11
at West Hills San Jose on February 21, 2021

PASTORAL PRAYER: Father, the hour has come, glorify your Son, and let your Son glorify You. Father we come to you with all our sins, all our baggage, all of our weakness, seeking healing and eternal life. We have nothing, but you have all. This is eternal life, to know you, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. Help us to keep your word. Help us to receive them and to walk in them.

Jesus Christ, faithful high priest, we thank you for praying for us. Be glorified in us we ask. Keep us in your name, that we may be one, as you and the Father are one. We know Lord that in this world we will have trouble, help us to take heart in the fact that you have overcome the world. Protect us from the evil one, and keep us in your holy love.

Holy Spirit, helper and giver of life, would you sanctify us in the truth. As the Father sent Christ into the world, would you send us into the world that all might know that Christ was truly from the Father, and that all who repent and believe can be reconciled to the fullness of life as it was always meant to be. Holy Spirit, bind us together in love, and preserve each of us in the faith, help us to reach our heavenly home where Christ is, that we may see His glory that you gave to Him before the foundation of the world.

Triune Lord, we pray for our own church. Would you be working in power in each of our lives, in each of our battles for holiness, in the midst of every trial and struggle and fight for faith. Would you help each and every one of us, not to seek our comfort and relief from lesser, smaller, less satisfying things. Help us to seek help and comfort and rest from You. Help us to love one another, as God in Christ has loved us. Help us to forgive, and forbear with one another, to seek one another's welfare for Christ's sake, to weep with those who weep and to rejoice with those who rejoice, that the world might see in this small community, a glimpse of the kingdom of God. I pray for our time together, help us to worship with our whole being. Make your Word clear and your gospel beautiful and fill us with joy inexpressible I ask, in Christ's name, Amen.

PROBLEM: Grace and peace West Hills, it is a privilege and a blessing to be able to share with you this morning from God's Word. As we continue moving through the letter to the Colossians, we are going to look carefully today at more of what Paul has to say to us about sanctification. I have shared quite a bit about mortification, the putting to death of sin, but today we are going to talk about the other side of that coin. Namely, vivification, or growing in holiness. Becoming more like Jesus. Not just in how we fight sin, but in how we pursue holiness and love. And the reason I love talking about this is because it hits us right where we live.

I mean who here is satisfied with the level of holiness and love they see in their own life? I could probably trace every single problem in my life back to the twin anchors of "I sin too much" and "I need to grow in holiness." If I got those two things in order, life would be joy and peace and thanksgiving in spite of whatever sorrows might come. But here is what is so shocking about what we are going to see today. That picture of walking and working and living and existing in perpetual joy and confidence, peace and thankfulness...that is a picture of what

humanity was meant to be. Holy, satisfied and at rest in the comforting love of our God for all our days.

Yet tragically, that is not how we experience the world. We experience fear, and anxiety, and loneliness and bitterness. We experience guilt and shame and shortcomings and distance, like our fathers and grandfathers did before us. And it is in the midst of all that brokenness that the Son of God has come. It's in the midst of a world bound up under curse that the Son of Man became accursed for us dying for sin, and rising for our justification in order to reconcile us to God. He opened the way back, not to Eden, but to God Himself. To God Himself, where life like that is experienced. And it is now the Father, Son and Spirit that are drawing us with cords of love to come to Him, to receive Him, to be changed by Him. God is not trying to change us for changes sake. He is not like my kids with their legos just rearranging things constantly for their own pleasure. It's not that kind of change. It's more like healing. Like having a broken leg reset, and learning to walk on it again...not so that you will spend the rest of your life hobbling around on crutches...but so that you will heal more and more until you can run with all your might.

MAIN POINT: In Christ, your God will heal His image in you, so come to Him and be renewed

SETTING THE CONTEXT: Please open your bibles to Colossians 3, we will be picking up where we left off last week in verse 9. Let's take a moment to briefly reestablish the context of Paul's argument. Paul has been responding to the false teaching of Jewish mystics in the midst of this young but growing congregation of new Christians in the mid-size town of Colossae. And the question the young church is wrestling with is where is fullness found? They are seeking the fullness of knowledge and understanding, the fullness of God, the fullness of inclusion into God's people. What does it look like to fully pursue holiness and maturity in the faith? And these false teachers have come along and offered all kinds of answers, most of which have the appearance of wisdom. But Paul makes clear to them, just as experience would make clear to us, that the answers they gave were of absolutely no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh. Why? Because fullness is in Christ. And in Christ, we have been crucified to the dominion of darkness and raised into the kingdom of light. We no longer belong to the old order of things, we belong to Christ and the kingdom of God.

And that has some profound implications. My life, my hope, my purpose, my fundamental motivations are no longer things on earth, my life my hope my purpose my fundamental motivations are now rooted in Christ Jesus. We live for Him, because we have been raised to union with Him, and we will one day appear with Him in glory. And the new trajectory of our lives is learning to stop defaulting back to our old identity, like a dog returning to its vomit. But instead to embrace our new identity, to be who we are in Christ Jesus, to the glory of God. And today, Paul is going to pick up where he left off, in his explanation of how to do that.

READING: [9] Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices [10] and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. [11] Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all. (Col 3:9-11)

PRAYER: Speak we ask, Lord, your servants are listening.

ROAD MAP: 1.) Forgetting what lies behind, 2.) striving forward to what lies ahead, 3.) the upward call of God, 4.) practical implications

FORGETTING WHAT LIES BEHIND

1. I want to briefly review what it is that we are trying to leave behind as we prepare to consider more deeply how to strive forward to what lies ahead. In verse 9, we are told to leave behind 3 things, our life in darkness, our life in Adam and our life of sin. Let's look at all three in order.
2. Paul says in 3:9 "Do not lie to one another." In New Testament Greek, a verb can take on three voices. The first is the active voice. I lie. The second is the passive voice I was lied to. And the third is called the middle voice, I lied to myself. the action of the verb is upon ourselves. Here in this text, the verb lie is in the middle voice. Don't lie to yourselves, to one another. And the idea is corporate, you are a body. If an individual lies to the body, the body is lying to itself, and the spiritual immune system of the body can't bring healing.
 1. And it's impossible to disconnect don't lie, with verse 5-8, that list out a bunch of sins we are called to stop walking in. The clear implication seems to be "stop covering up your sins, be honest with one another so that you can help one another put to death what is earthly in you. So Paul first calls us out of life in darkness. Out of a life of secrecy.
 2. Come into the light. Come into the truth. And the motivation he offers for doing this is really interesting. He doesn't say fess up so you can come and take your medicine. He says don lie to yourselves...
3. Verse 9 seeing that you have put off the old self, or the old man. What is the old man? Well the old man, is about to be contrasted in verse 10 with the new man, which is being renewed to the image of it's creator. Which immediately recalls Genesis 1, and the garden of Eden and the fall of our father Adam. In Adam, Paul tells us in Romans 5, in the old man, there is death through one mans trespass, there is condemnation for all men, in the old mans sin. But the second man has come, Jesus Christ to offer the free gift of grace to many. Though the old mans sins brought condemnation, through the second man came justification and life for all who repent and believe.
 1. I think Paul is saying in Colossians 3, don't hide your sins in the dark anymore because there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. To receive the gospel IS to humble yourself. It is to say the law wasn't enough to make me righteous. God told me what to do, and I was to morally weak to do it. And I need a savior. I need someone to come and clean up the mess I've made of my life and of my standing before God. And Jesus has come and said I will do it. I will lift you out of all that you are in Adam, and bind you to myself. So that your life, your hope, and your purpose and your fundamental motivations can be rooted in me. Not fear of condemnation, not a desire for earthly status, but in my mercy and kindness and steadfast love toward you. That can be your life. You just have to stop lying, and embrace that you are no longer in Adam. You have to put that off.

4. So Paul has said, come out of darkness, stop lying, come out of Adam, put off the old man, and come out of sin...verse 9 with its practices. With its cadences, with its ways of thinking, and feeling and doing stuff.
 1. All of us have habits. What are your habits? Some of our habits are good, reading your bible in the morning, praying before you eat, attending community group every week, faithfully attending church on Sundays. Those are all habits that facilitate and encourage and stimulate your growth in Christ.
 2. Some of our habits are neutral, that is they aren't good or bad in and of themselves. Doing chores around your house, resting on the weekend, having a cup of coffee every morning.
 3. But Paul makes clear some of our habits...some of our practices are bad. They are rooted in Adam and His ways of thinking. I can't tell the truth or everyone will judge me, so I lie. In verses 5-8 Paul offers a rich variety of sinful habits to choose from.
 4. In other words, Paul makes clear that putting off the old man, isn't just a mental, emotional exercise. It involves making a clean break with sinful practices in concrete terms. You must put away verse 8 obscene talk from your mouth. You must put away slander, and anger. And if you want in depth practical help on how to do that, see the last two sermons I've preached on mortification.
5. So Paul is saying put off these old ways of life. Forget about what lies behind you, that is not who you are anymore. And let me add one more reason to forget about those things as options for your daily habits. And Paul doesn't explicitly say it here but it is clearly implicit. Let those things go because **THEY ARE THE WORST**. Living in darkness is the worst. Pretending like everything is fine when it isn't is so terrible. There is so much freedom in just telling the truth and getting it off your chest and being honest. Bearing the consequences of honesty is a million times better than maintaining a lie, because the truth is where Christ is, and where Christ is there is a refuge and hope. Let's now move on to striving forward to what lies ahead.

STRIVING FORWARD TO WHAT LIES AHEAD

1. If we have stripped off the old self, what do we put on to replace it? In Greek it just says having put on the new, and the ESV supplies what is implied, put on the new SELF. But Paul just says Put on the new. The new what?
2. Here we come close to the heart of Paul's big problem with the false teachers. In Christ, we are not called to simply stop touching, tasting and handling some sins. It's not enough to put away some sins. We are putting away old creation, life in Adam and becoming new creation. We need a new nature not just a new moral framework.
3. And how do we become new creation? 2 Corinthians 5:17, "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold the new has come. All this is from God who through Christ reconciled us to Himself." If you are in CHRIST, YOU ARE new creation. If you put your faith in Jesus in other words, God will make you new.
4. Notice in verse 10, "have put on" is something that has already happened in the past. You have put on the new...but then Paul says something curious that actually has a lot of explanatory power for our own life experiences in Christ. Paul says you have put on the new,

which is being renewed. Well which is it Paul, have I put on the new, or am I being made new? And of course Paul's answer is YES. It's both. You are a NEW CREATION... therefore become new creation. Or to say that another way, YOU ARE THEREFORE BE. God has made you new in Christ, therefore bring your thought, will and affection into alignment with what is real.

1. I think of this the same way I do about believing the gospel. When God first saved me, all I really understood about the gospel was that I had sinned, but Christ had died to redeem from my guilt, to deliver me from condemnation and to restore me to God. Is that believing the gospel? Yes. Is that a fully fleshed out understanding of all that the gospel really means? No. But as my mind continues to be renewed I'm confronted with deeper and wider gospel realities that I'm being continually invited to believe and enjoy. Part of the good news is that in Christ God loves you. He doesn't just forgive you. God wants to help me become like Jesus...He doesn't just order you to do it. As I understand more of how pure God truly is...it strikes new cords of how powerful Jesus' reconciling purifying blood actually was
2. Was any of that stuff less true before I understood it? No of course not. I'm the one that's changing and growing in my comprehension of what is real.
3. Similarly, you have put on the new which is being renewed. Become what you are. Live out what is true of you.
5. So you have put on the new which is BEING renewed. It doesn't say God might renew you who have put on the new self. It says HE IS RENEWING you. The grammar suggests that this is a continual, constant and ongoing process of your being changed. I know that many of us look in the mirror some days and ask why am I not godlier yet? Why am I not more like Christ in this area of my life yet? And the answer is YOU AREN'T DONE YET. You are being renewed.
6. Notice that the phrase is passive. You are being renewed in knowledge. As you gain knowledge it is changing you. And of course my question is knowledge of what, to which Paul doesn't provide a specific answer. But I think if you read the rest of Paul's letter it's pretty obvious that he thinks that we are transformed by knowing God.
 1. 2 Cor 3:18 And we all with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.
 2. 2 Cor 4:6 For God, who said "Let light shine out of darkness" has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.
 3. Phil 3:10 "that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and may share His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. No that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own because Christ Jesus has made me His own."
 4. I could go on but I think that is probably sufficient. In life there are things you can't unsee, both for good and for evil. There is certain kinds of knowledge/experience that affects you for the rest of your life.
 5. Interacting with God is one of those things. The glory and the goodness of God are things you can't unsee, when they've been seen with the eyes of the heart.

6. I'm sure if I asked any of you, can you remember a time where some new and glorious reality of the gospel or of God, dawned on you for the first time? Like in a sermon, or in your reading, or as you were singing a worship song? We have all had experiences where the knowledge of God has struck us with a potency that left us a changed person. And I think Paul is saying that sort of thing is ALWAYS happening when you interact with God. It might not always be equally memorable...but every time you interact with God it is always having a renewing effect on you.
7. And so the last question, renewing us into what? We are being renewed in knowledge after the image of our creator. There are two significant things being said here which may or may not be obvious. The first is what follows from the creation language. You are new creation, being renewed in knowledge according to, or after the image of our creator. In Adam we were already image of God...but we were image of God corrupted. In Christ we are STILL image of God, but image of God being restored. Image of God being cleansed, and fixed, and corrected to it's original intent.
 1. You aren't simply being changed for changes sake...you are being healed that you would run with all your might. Growing in righteousness, is not some sort of dead religious exercise. That is a heinous distortion of the truth. Growing in righteousness, is recognizing that you have lived your life with your back hunched over so badly that you can barely walk, and learning to stand upright. To pop your back, to restore your joints into place so that you can stand upright, noble and tall, to be what He created us to be, filled with rigor and strength of soul for the glory of God.
 2. Being renewed in the image of God is to begin taking on God's character of faithful love, and justice and working to bring establish peace in your own soul, and in the world around you. This is our healing, and this is a picture of the healing of the world. This is striving forward.
8. But believe it or not, the image of God has a more concrete picture than the one I just laid out. And that is the person of Jesus who is THE image of the invisible God Colossians 1:15. He is the image of God par excellence. In other words, when we are being renewed according to the image of our creator...that is another way of saying we are being conformed to the image of Christ Jesus.
 1. As we grow in our knowledge of Him, we become like Him. As we interact with Him, and read about Him and pray to Him, we see and experience what it means to be truly human. We see love and anger and sorrow and joy, REDEEMED. He is the target of our transformation. He is the pattern we are seeking to conform our lives to. He is the one whom we are called to imitate because He is the One that God is making us like.
9. So what have we seen so far. We have seen that what lies behind, life in the darkness, life in Adam, life in sin, was just the worst. We need to forget about those things as options for us. And instead we need to press forward to what lies ahead. And what lies ahead of every Christian is recognizing we are new creation, and striving to live that reality out as God renews us in power to become more and more like Jesus. And what happens when we do that? What happens when we as individuals and us as a body unite in this common goal? We find ourselves leaving the old world behind and moving toward the upward call of God in Christ...

THE UPWARD CALL OF GOD

1. Paul says in verse 11, HERE. Or literally in greek, WHERE. And this is one of Paul's most radical sentences in the book. Among those who have put on the new and are being renewed...in that place there is not Greek and Jew, there is not circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free.
2. We are not violent enough yet as a culture to fully feel the weight of that claim. But let me try. Here in the place where people are forgetting what lies behind and pressing forward to what lies ahead...there is no black and white, there is no rich and poor, there is no oppressor and victim, there is no privileged and unprivileged, democrat or republican, there is no woke or alt right. Think of the most polarized terms we can find in our culture and then imagine that those two groups had been killing each other for 100 years.
3. Paul says you take individuals out of both of those groups...and convert their souls, and bring them into church...and those distinctions cease to have significant meaning. And of course the big question is how is that possible? How can that possibly be the case? I mean slaves don't cease to be slaves when they become Christians. How can you say that there is no slave or free?
4. And here is where we experience a fundamental disconnect from the world. Because Christ is all, and in all. In the place where people are putting off the old and have put on the new... Christ is everything. He is all. He is our primary preoccupation. He is the thing we think about in the morning, He is the one who sustains us throughout the day, He is the one we worship as we gather together and He is the one intercedes for us as our sympathetic high priest.
 1. The more time I spend loving God, the more broken the feelings of hatred and animosity towards others, begins to feel. The more time I spend preoccupied with the gospel, and experiencing forgiveness for my sins...the less natural it feels to withhold forgiveness from others.
5. But that's not all. Christ is all, and IN ALL, in the church.
 1. Imagine someone really really deeply wronged you. Let's say they wounded you in a deep and irreversible way that still has consequences on your life today. And you are bitter at them, and you have felt for a long time that it would be impossible to forgive them. And then they converted. And you heard them pray, and as they prayed, you could hear the same spirit of Christ in them that dwells in you. And it was unmistakable. I hear Christ at work in that person...how long do you think you would be able to continue hating that person...when you can literally see and hear the work of your King in their lives.
6. If Christ is everything to you, and Christ is in someone you once considered an enemy, there is nothing big enough in this world, to keep God's children from forgiveness and reconciliation, even if full restoration isn't possible in this world.
7. Paul isn't saying here that injustices like slavery don't matter any more because we are in Christ. He is saying that in Christ, the former distinctions that would cause us to despise and resent one another are not strong enough to endure in the face of Christ. Christ is everything and in everyone who has put off the old and put on the new.

8. We are going to see later in chapter 4, that there are both a slave and his slave owner in this congregation, and in the book of Philemon, Paul lays the seeds for the undoing of slavery as a Christian choice. But here that is not his purpose...the cultural things that may divide us are not as big as Christ. They are not as transformative as Christ. They can't be equated with Christ...because Christ is everything.
 1. Is that how you see the church? Is that how you see other Christians? Whether or not Christ is in them? Or do you start by looking for what's different about them, and areas we can find to divide over?
 2. If Christ is everything to you, you will love Christ in others, and that is what we are called to do, no matter how culturally different we might be. And I think one of the great burdens of our time is to bring the Lordship of Christ to bear on our cultural thinking and engagement, rather than the other way around. And I don't think you do that by super focusing on the culture. You do that by super focusing on Christ, and then turning and engaging the culture.
9. So now I want to close today by operationalizing some of this. Or at least to share with you how I have operationalized this in my own life and how I teach others to become what we are in the Lord.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

1. So last week I confessed some sin to you guys, and was open about the fact that I had been dealing with covetousness in my heart. And I walked you through how I identified it, how I hated it, how I brought it to the cross of Christ, and how I set my faith on Jesus to cover my sins with His blood and to reconcile me to my God. Not that he had to do it over again, but I had to come to Him and receive it and believe it again by faith.
2. But a good question is, what is step 2? How do we take the second part of Paul's teaching and actually use it? How do I put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator, this afternoon when I get home?
3. Well what does the new self, the image of the creator looks like? It looks like Jesus. What did Jesus do when He was tempted to desire things that God had not ordained for Him? And I go and search Scripture with that question in mind. And there are many places I could have gone but the two that immediately jump out are Jesus in the wilderness being tempted by the devil, and Jesus in the garden seeking any other way for the cup to pass from Him.
4. And I notice a handful of things that Jesus does when He is in those situations. He reminds Himself of Scripture. He disbelieves and distrusts the lies of the enemy. He trusts God to preserve Him. In the garden, when the Lord was straining under the weight of His sorrow what did He do? He prayed? He sought prayer from His friends. And He honestly expressed His heart to God, and resolved to receive whatever answer the Lord would give Him. Just in those two examples I have a treasure trove of practical help, in what it looks like to put on the new man and to seek God's renewing power to change me.
5. I think about Christ, and learn about Christ and act on that knowledge by trying to put on His example. And in doing these things God will renew me.
6. How does that work? Well none of those things work like boxes I can just check and God will mechanically change me. You don't want to say I tried to pray once and it didn't work therefore prayer doesn't work. These things aren't buttons that turn on machines. Putting on the ways of Christ are the means that God normally uses to powerfully renew Christians. And

I put on this way of life, if I immerse myself in these patterns of life that God of all grace will be faithful to renew me after the image of Jesus, because He is faithful. Because this is what He wants to do in my life.

7. Brothers and sisters in Christ, you are new creation so become what you are. You are new and being renewed so come to the Lord Jesus and be changed through knowing Him. But Josh, what if it costs me everything? The martyr Jim Elliot famously said, he is no fool who would lose what he cannot keep, to gain what He can never lose.”
8. God has offered you infinite grace, in your pursuit of God and His inexpressible glory and hope. Lay aside anything that would hinder you and RUN to your God in Christ. In Christ, your God will heal His image in you, so come to Him and be renewed.

COMMUNION: This table reminds us of who Christ is, and as we remember and proclaim Him we are changed. Who are you? A sinner saved by grace. Who is Christ, the Son of God, sent to save you and lift you out of sins power and into the transforming power of God. This table is for all who would receive Him. This table is for all who hunger and thirst for righteousness, this table is for all who have repented of their sins and have put their faith in Christ to save them.