

Change from the Inside Out

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Colossians 2:20-23 (NLT) You have died with Christ, and he has set you free from the spiritual powers of this world. So why do you keep on following the rules of the world, such as, ²¹ “Don’t handle! Don’t taste! Don’t touch!”? ²² Such rules are mere human teachings about things that deteriorate as we use them. ²³ These rules may seem wise because they require strong devotion, pious self-denial, and severe bodily discipline. But they provide no help in conquering a person’s evil desires.

Introduction: Many people today perform religious rituals such as attending church, tithing, baptism, receiving communion, commemorating religious holidays, and abstaining from certain foods. None of these things are inherently bad or forbidden. However, none of these external factors are adequate to save us. They are also ineffective in helping us overcome evil desires.

This is the point that Paul is making in our passage. No amount of legalism, mysticism or asceticism will ever be sufficient to save us or help us overcome our evil desires. Change starts in the heart. This change is brought about by the person and work of Christ alone.

In Christ alone we have salvation, forgiveness and victory.

Salvation

Colossians 2:11-12 (NLT) When you came to Christ, you were “circumcised,” but not by a physical procedure. Christ performed a spiritual circumcision—the cutting away of your sinful nature. ¹² For you were buried with Christ when you were baptized. And with him you were raised to new life because you trusted the mighty power of God, who raised Christ from the dead. ¹³ You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ, for he forgave all our sins. ¹⁴ He canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross.

Forgiveness

Colossians 2:13-14 (NLT) You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ, for he forgave all our sins. ¹⁴ He canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross.

Forgiveness is not the result of a human effort but of the amazing work of Christ on the cross. Jesus provided the means for the forgiveness of sins.

Ephesians 2:11-13 (NLT) Don't forget that you Gentiles used to be outsiders. You were called "uncircumcised heathens" by the Jews, who were proud of their circumcision, even though it affected only their bodies and not their hearts. ¹² In those days you were living apart from Christ. You were excluded from citizenship among the people of Israel, and you did not know the covenant promises God had made to them. You lived in this world without God and without hope. ¹³ But now you have been united with Christ Jesus. Once you were far away from God, but now you have been brought near to him through the blood of Christ.

Acts 13:38-39 (NLT) "Brothers, listen! We are here to proclaim that through this man Jesus there is forgiveness for your sins. ³⁹ Everyone who believes in him is made right in God's sight—something the law of Moses could never do.

Ephesians 1:7 (AMP) In Him we have redemption [that is, our deliverance and salvation] through His blood, [which paid the penalty for our sin and resulted in] the forgiveness *and* complete pardon of our sin, in accordance with the riches of His grace.

Victory

Colossians 2:13-15 (NLT) You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ, for he forgave all our sins. ¹⁴ He canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵ In this way, he disarmed the spiritual rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by his victory over them on the cross.

The enemy kept us as slaves to sin and held us captive to the fear of death. But Jesus like a triumphant King stripped the devil of his power over us through the cross. The record of our guilt and the charges against us against us were dropped, cancelled and nailed to the cross.

Hebrews 2:14-15 (NLT) Because God's children are human beings—made of flesh and blood—the Son also became flesh and blood. For only as a human being could he die, and only by dying could he break the power of the devil, who had the power of death. ¹⁵ Only in this way could he set free all who have lived their lives as slaves to the fear of dying.

Understanding and experiencing the power of the gospel leads to a new life.

Following Christ is not about doing rituals; rather, it is about becoming more like Him.

Christ alone was, is and will always be sufficient to save and change us from the inside out.

Colossians 2:20 (NLT) You have died with Christ, and he has set you free from the spiritual powers of this world.

Salvation and newness of life is found in what he did not what we do. We're not saved by coming to church, paying our tithe, being water baptized, keeping holy days or abstaining from certain foods. We are saved through Christ and Christ alone. We aren't saved by fasting, taking vows of poverty, doing penance or practicing rigorous self-denial. We are saved because of Christ and Christ alone.

This is the key point that Paul makes in chapter one and two.

Colossians 2:10 (NLT) So you also are complete through your union with Christ, who is the head over every ruler and authority.

(AMP) And in Him you have been made complete [achieving spiritual stature through Christ], and He is the head over all rule and authority [of every angelic and earthly power].

2 Corinthians 5:15-17 (NLT) He died for everyone so that those who receive his new life will no longer live for themselves. Instead, they will live for Christ, who died and was raised for them. ¹⁶ So we have stopped evaluating others from a human point of view. At one time we thought of Christ merely from a human point of view. How differently we know him now! ¹⁷ This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!

Truly understanding and experiencing the power of the gospel concerning Jesus results in a new life.

This new life is real and powerful. However, we also recognize that there is still a part of us that is drawn to sin. Although sin is no longer our master, if we do not submit ourselves to God as servants of righteousness, it will overcome us.

Living from the inside out is relying on and responding to the indwelling presence of Christ through His Spirit.

Colossians 1:8 (NLT) He has told us about the love for others that the Holy Spirit has given you.

Romans 8:11-14 (NLT) The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as God raised Christ Jesus from the dead, he will give life to your mortal bodies by this same Spirit living within you. ¹² Therefore, dear brothers and sisters, you have no obligation to do what your sinful nature urges you to do. ¹³ For if you live by its dictates, you will die. But if through the power of the Spirit you put to death the deeds of your sinful nature, you will live. ¹⁴ For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. Those who have truly placed their faith in Christ are not who they used to be. His Spirit empowers us, enabling us to be and do what we should. But we must respond to Him.

Colossians 3:1-3 (NLT) Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, set your sights on the realities of heaven, where Christ sits in the place of honor at God's right

hand. ² Think about the things of heaven, not the things of earth. ³ For you died to this life, and your real life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ And when Christ, who is your life, is revealed to the whole world, you will share in all his glory.

What is this saying? Because of our union with Christ, through His death, we are dead to sin; through His resurrection, we have been made spiritually alive; and because Christ now dwells in Heaven, we should live for and fix our affections there.

Colossians 2:6-7 (AMP) Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, walk in [union with] Him [reflecting His character in the things you do and say—living lives that lead others away from sin].

Paul writes, since you have been raised to a new life with Christ, then let it be seen in the way you live your life from the inside out.

When Christ is the source of our life it results in new aspirations and new affections.

- **New aspirations**

Colossians 3:1 (NLT) Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, set your sights on the realities of heaven.

(AMP) Therefore if you have been raised with Christ [to a new life, sharing in His resurrection from the dead], keep seeking the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.

As humans we born to aspire (desire and pursue). When we experience the power of the gospel and Christ makes residence in us, we aspire heavenly things.

Our new desire and pursuit are for holiness, devotion, love and self-sacrifice.

- **New affections**

Colossians 3:2 (NLT) Think about the things of heaven, not the things of earth.

(KJV) Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

(APM) Set your mind and keep focused habitually on the things above [the heavenly things], not on things that are on the earth [which have only temporal value].

When we have truly been impacted by the gospel, putting our faith in Christ as Savior and Lord our desires and affections should change.

Because of our love and affection for God and the indwelling power of Christ we should aspire and seek to put to death the sinful things that lurk in our thoughts and flesh.

Colossians 3:6a (NLT) So put to death the sinful, earthly things lurking within you.