

Colossians 3:1-17

The New Self

Paul has magnified Christ and warned the church about false teachers who are trying to diminish the character and work of our Savior. Now in chapter 3, he transitions to how to live life with Jesus; the creator, sustainer, and fulfiller of all things who sacrificed His life for ours to pay our debt and redeem us from the slavery of sin and shame. What a beautiful thought that the most precious of all beings would stoop and sacrifice Himself in order to commune with us, the most wretched of all beings! Never stop being amazed at the opportunity we have to walk through this life hand-in-hand with Jesus!

3:1 – After a chapter of discussing the false teachings that are continually all around us, it is easy to allow our focus and energy to be directed entirely to these subjects. Yet, Paul’s continual response to false teaching has consistently been to know, understand, and cherish the completed work of Christ. In response to the work of Christ in our lives, where do we focus our eyes and hearts? How do we practically do this?

3:2 – What earthly things most easily draw your attention?

What are ways that you can transition your heart back to Christ as it drifts?

Describe how your day would look differently if you were truly living out 3:2? How would your interactions with others change? With your children? With your co-workers?

3:3 – “you died” – what does this mean? How do you know if you really believe this to be true?

3:3-4 – What is the present tense reality of your life? What is yet to come?

3:1-4 – Notice how the Gospel flows into and influences the entirety of our lives. The past tense aspect of the Gospel, “you have been raised up with Christ,” influences the status and station of my heart. Presently, Jesus, “who is our life,” consumes my purpose and passions.

And the future reality of an eternity enjoying His presence and glory is the basis for personal holiness in this life (3:5-11).

How are verses 3:1-4 related to 3:5-8? How do the truths in the 3:1-4 affect our ability to live out 3:5-8?

3:6 – Why do you suppose Paul reminds us of this truth here in this verse?

3:8-11 - We are given a picture of what it looks like to live a life where we have “died” and now live in Christ “who is our life.” Paul uses the “old self / new self” illustration in a couple different places. Describe the new self:

3:10 – “the new self – who is being renewed” – We are already a “new creation” (2 Cor 5:17), yet we are also in a process. It is God who grows us (1 Cor 3:6), but at the same time we are to be active and intentional in putting off our “old self” and putting on our “new self.” How would we describe our role and God’s role in our spiritual growth?

God’s active presence and power in our life frees us up to give 100% of our effort toward growth, knowing His grace is sufficient for our weakness and failings. It is a wonderful picture of rowing a boat as God controls the current.

How do we practically lay aside the old self and put on the new self?

3:12-15 - Our new life with Christ is always lived out in our relationships with others. Our holiness is not measured by the number of Bible studies we attend or acts of service we perform, it is measured in our love for others. What qualities stick out to you in this passage?

What are some qualities in this passage where you would like to grow?

3:15 – How are you doing at letting the peace of Christ rule in your heart? Do you have any anger or bitterness toward any of your brothers or sisters in Christ? Family members? Past friendships? What are the next steps you need to take?

3:16 – How well do you know the Bible? Does it “richly dwell” in you?

What role do we play in helping each other grow in this area?

How transforming it would be if the Word was a frequent topic of our conversation. “What did you read this morning? What has God been teaching you in his Word? What did you learn from that Bible study last night?...” This can truly become normal speech for us! Lord willing, we can be excited about what we are learning and be happy to share and engage in conversation.

There has been a theme of thankfulness throughout Colossians. Where else has Paul emphasized thankfulness? What does it tell us about our hearts if we are not thankful?

3:17 – What is God’s basic expectation for all of our words and actions?

It is impossible to live out 3:17 without a thankful heart. How do we grow in thankfulness? What are you thankful for right now?

What does Paul usually connect to thankfulness in this epistle?

Each morning we go through the ritual of undressing, showering, and putting on clothes for our day. Perhaps we can use this mundane part of our day to renew our hearts? As you undress, remember your need to lay aside your old self and all its qualities. As you wash up, take your sins before the Father and remember that you are fully forgiven. Ask the Lord to help you put on your new self as you put on your clothes for the day ahead.