

# A New Pattern for Living Putting off the Old Nature

Ken Birks, Pastor/Teacher

## I. Introductory Remarks.

In this lesson we will be exploring what it really means to put off the old nature and why it is an important aspect of our salvation. This is more of a doctrinal statement on the need for change and letting go of past sins than a message on how transformation comes about.

In much of today's Christianity there is a lack of true conversion and transformation in the lives of those who are attempting to follow Christ. Many are being seduced by a watered down version of Christianity that doesn't challenge people to put off the old nature by being crucified to the world.

We must keep in mind that the goal or the ultimate destiny for the Christian is to come into the fullness of Christ, being changed or transformed into His image.

***2 Corinthians 3:18*** *But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are **being transformed into the same image** from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.*

***2 Corinthians 4:1-3*** *Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart. <sup>2</sup>**But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. <sup>3</sup>But **even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing,*****

The above Scriptures not only show us how being changed and transformed into the image of Christ is our ultimate destiny, but they also show us that when we fail to change as we have been directed, it affects our ministry to those who are perishing.

## II. The Foundation of Change – Colossians 3:1-4.

In this passage of Scripture the apostle Paul is dealing with the character of the new man that is being formed in every Christian who has come to know

the Lord Jesus Christ and His saving power. Paul is making a transition from theological statements to practical precepts in Christ. He has laid a strong doctrinal foundation in the preceding chapters on Who Christ is and now his attention turns to how Christians should live their lives.

In these verses Paul lays the foundation for effective change in our lives. Because our lives have been raised with Christ, our lives are to be different. They are to reflect a new pattern of life.

## **1. Not Carnality but Christ.**

***Colossians 3:1-2*** *If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup>Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.*

***Colossians 3:1-2 (NLT)*** *Since 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. <sup>2</sup>Let heaven fill your thoughts. Do not think only about things down here on earth.*

The operative word here is “Set.” We are set our mind and affections on things that are above – the realities of heaven. If we are to see true and lasting change in our lives, it means setting all of our affection on Christ and His kingdom. The person who has been raised with Christ sees things from the eternal perspective, which should result in having their whole pattern of life on earth being dominated by this perspective.

We once walked according to the world, but now God has raised us up together in His likeness and made us to sit in heavenly places with Christ.

***Ephesians 2:5-6*** *(even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), <sup>6</sup>and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,*

Carnality does not produce faith but rather unbelief and defeat. Think of the ten spies who came back with a bad report after being sent out by Moses to spy out the land. They came back with a defeated report based on unbelief, because they were not seeing things through God's perspective. On the other hand, Joshua and Caleb came back full of faith with a good report because they new where they were seated. They had

set their minds on the realities of heaven. They knew where they were seated.<sup>1</sup>

## 2. We Have Been Hidden In Christ and Crucified to the World

The reason for the call to this new pattern of living and heavenly mindedness is the fact that, in Christ, the believer has died to the world and his life is now hidden in Christ.

**Colossians 3:3-4** *For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. <sup>4</sup>when Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.*

"Hidden" expresses a permanent condition created by God in Christ. The fact that the Christian's old sin nature has been crucified with Christ and buried together with Him in baptism and that he is now liberated, resurrected to live a life pleasing to God, must be accepted "by grace ... through faith", just as was the initial salvation.

**Galatians 2:20** *"I have been **crucified with Christ**; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and **the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God**, who loved me and gave Himself for me.*

**Galatians 6:14** *But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.*

## 3. Putting Away & Putting to Death the Sins of the Past.

Being crucified to the world means that we are now in a state where we are actually in the process of putting away or putting to death the sins of the past.

**Colossians 3:5-7** (NLT) *So put to death the sinful, earthly things lurking within you. Have nothing to do with sexual sin, impurity, lust, and shameful desires. Don't be greedy for the good things of this life, for that is idolatry. <sup>6</sup>God's terrible anger will come upon those who do such things. <sup>7</sup>You used to do them when your life was still part of this world.*

To be heavenly minded does not mean living in the clouds. The believer who obeys the apostolic charge to aim at the things above will be involved

in spiritual warfare here on earth as he or she puts to death the sinful flesh and allows the new nature to find outward expression in a godly life.

The word “so or therefore” found at the beginning of verse five signifies the transition from doctrine to practice. The connection between doctrine and duty is very important because in the end, we really behave as we truly believe. We express what we fully confess. In other words our actions are based upon what we believe and confess.

***Romans 8:12-13*** (NLT) *So, dear Christian friends, you have no obligation whatsoever to do what your sinful nature urges you to do. <sup>13</sup>For if you keep on following it, you will perish. But if through the power of the Holy Spirit you turn from it and its evil deeds, you will live.*

***1 Peter 2:11*** (NLT) *Dear brothers and sisters, you are foreigners and aliens here. So I warn you to keep away from evil desires because they fight against your very souls.*

The idea in the above Scriptures is that we are to live in heaven so that may really live on earth. As a result the following evil desires will be done away with.

- **Fornication** – Sexual sin between non-married people.<sup>2</sup>
- **Uncleanness** – Uncleanness or impurity embraces every manifestation in look, word, and deed of the immoral spirit. We are to avoid all appearances of evil.
- **Passions** – Inordinate affection and sensual appetites.
- **Evil Desires** – Lusts which lead to sinful actions<sup>3</sup>
- **Covetousness** – Idolatry, which is anything that is set up as an idol of their own making in place of God.

Covetousness and idolatry are very dangerous and perhaps more so than the others because they may assume a cloak of decency or respectability.

***Colossians 3:6-7*** *Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, <sup>7</sup>in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them.*

The wrath of God is directed against the devil, his angels, and sin, which destroy those for whom Christ died. But it is also coming upon those who

pridefully refuse the only remedy for overcoming the power of sin: Christ's atoning death.

In light of the reality of God's coming wrath, Paul exhorts the believers to destroy the deeds of the flesh. If we don't kill them, they will eventually kill us.

#### 4. Putting off the Garments of the Old Nature.

**Colossians 3:8-9** *But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. <sup>9</sup>Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds,*

The expression put off is a strong one calling for a complete putting off from oneself of all that pertains to the old life. We are to strip off completely the former habits which cling to us like an old garment and fling them away like an outward suit of clothes. The following habits are as follows:

- **Anger and Wrath** – Associated with anger is wrath or vengeful rage. When anger boils up there is wrath.<sup>4</sup>

**Proverbs 29:11** *A fool vents all his feelings, but a wise man holds them back.*

- **Malice** – Anger and wrath are bad, but malice is worse because it is more rooted and deliberate. It is anger heightened and settled.<sup>5</sup>
- **Filthy Communication** – This would involve swearing, coarse talking and jesting. As Christians our language should be pure and holy.

**Ephesians 4:29** *Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.*

- **Lying** – A false statement or piece of information deliberately presented as being true; a falsehood. Lying is anything meant to deceive or give a wrong impression.

Lying is contrary to the law of truth and the life of love. It is both unjust and unkind and works to destroy faith and to weaken our fellowship with one

another. Lying is a part of the devil's image in the soul, for the devil is the father of lies.

***John 8:44*** "You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.

We see from the above Scriptures that it is being asserted that when in regular contact with fellow believers and even non-believers we must speak the truth since the old man and his practices have been put off in Christ's death. We are to have no part with false speaking or any of these repulsive habits. They are not fitting for saints of God.

### III. Concluding Remarks.

Notice that the words "putting off" imply something we do. Some Christians never quit practicing sinful habits because they expect the Lord to do it all. The truth is, the Holy Spirit will help us when we decide we are going to get serious and put these areas to death in our lives. The Holy Spirit is our helper.

***Romans 8:11*** But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

***Colossians 1:28-29*** Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. <sup>29</sup>To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.

---

<sup>1</sup> Numbers 13:17, 25-29, 30-33

<sup>2</sup> 1 Corinthians 5:9-13

<sup>3</sup> James 1:15

<sup>4</sup> Ephesians 4:26 & Proverbs 10:19

<sup>5</sup> 1Peter 2:1-2