

COLOSSIANS
Resurrection Power To Defeat Sin
Colossians 3:5-12

INTRODUCTION

“I’m a Christian. I’ve been converted. I’ve experienced the new birth. I’m a new creation in Christ.” These are words we often lightly throw around as Christians, but do we really understand the deep implications of these terms?

Whatever else Christianity teaches, it does teach that when one becomes a Christian, there is a radical, revolutionary change of lifestyle. Christianity is designed to change people and equip them to live in a world which is antagonistic to Christ. God is not pleased by people who call themselves Christians and are satisfied with mediocrity and nominalism. God despises anemic, pallid, lusterless Christian living and He expressed this disgust when he addressed the Church at Laodicea with these words, “I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish you were either one or the other! So because you are lukewarm - neither hot nor cold - I am about to spit you out of my mouth. (Rev. 3:15, 16).

Colossians 3:5-11 dispels any doubt that true conversion really is. It is dying with Christ and it is living with Christ. Conversion involves changing one’s position from being an old man in Adam to a new man in Christ with changes continually taking place in the life of the Christian. C.H. Spurgeon said, “The mark of a regenerate heart is a changed life.” A true Christian, then, is one who has been changed and is changing. Colossians 3:5-11 deals with defeating sins in our Christian experience. These Colossian Christians had only recently come out of pagan religions which had condoned as part of their religious worship the grossest of sins. Also the Gnostic heretics, who were seeking to get into the Church at Colosse, taught the body was evil. Most Gnostics said starve the body, use ascetic practices to put down the flames of lust within. However, there was another school of thought among the Gnostics and that was that the body was evil and the soul good. Feed the body whatever it wants in sexual pleasures, eating pleasures or whatever because it can’t be trained anyway. The philosophy, then, is “If it feels good, do it!” “If you don’t hurt anyone, you can do what you want with your body.” It was this teaching the Apostle Paul is fighting because he did not want to see the Colossians go back into their old pagan ways and abandon the Christian Faith. It is therefore very appropriate for Paul to speak forth-rightly about the demands of the new life and the urgent need to repress all the degrading tendencies of the old nature.

In Colossians 2:16-3:4, Paul has clearly taught the Christian has died with Christ and was resurrected with Christ. In dying with Christ, we severed our ties with our unsaved past, and in rising with Christ, we have a new life which gives us the power to live a new kind of existence. It is because of resurrection life and power that we Christians can now begin to obey Christ, keep the commands of scripture and submit to the moral law of God.

PUT TO DEATH GROSS SINS 3:5-6

The Command (5a) ***Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature.*** -- Paul tells these Colossians to put to death certain sins in their lives. Is Paul contradicting himself? In Colossians 3:3, he said the Colossians died with Christ and now he commands them to put to death sin. We died with Christ as our position but based on our position in which the power and authority of the sin nature has been broken and we have been severed from the old life, we now as our human responsibility, by resurrection power, are to put sins to death. Paul is saying, "Become what we are in Christ." That is, become in our experience what we already have become in our identification with Christ. We do not experience our position but we experience death to sin by faith, laying hold of our position in Christ. Our practice is to match our position.

This suggests we are not to suppress or control evil acts and attitudes but slay them, put them to death, deal harshly with them by killing them in daily self-judgment.

A man may be working in a plant and get his hand caught in a machine and it becomes obvious that it will take his arm and then crush his body and kill him. He picks up an ax near by and cuts off his hand at the wrist to save his life. Better to put to death some sin or sins and suffer momentary pain than to have sin destroy your Christian walk.

The Sins (5b): ***Sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.***

Sexual immorality refers to any sexual activity outside of the marriage union - premarital sex, extra-martial sex, homosexuality or lesbianism. Sexual immorality was rampant in Paul's day and he condemned it because it was contrary to the moral law of God.

Impurity refers to uncleanness in thought, word or act and some have translated it "dirty-mindedness".

Lust is an uncontrollable desire to fulfill one's sex drives at any cost.

Evil desires is a passion for evil sex beyond natural, God given limits of sex set down by God.

Our society today would have us believe that such fleshly sins are not sins at all, and that it is perfectly natural and normal for men and women, women and women, and men and men to indulge in them openly and without shame. In fact, these "macho people" are often admired for their individualism, self-expression and free lifestyle.

Seneca wrote this concerning the moral condition the Roman Empire in the latter part of the century: “All things are full of iniquity and vice. More crimes are committed than can be remedied by force. A monstrous contest of wickedness is carried on. Daily the lust of sin increases. Casting away all that is good and honorable, pleasure runs riot without restraint. Vice no longer hides itself. It stops forth before all eyes. So public has iniquity become, so mightily does it flame up in all hearts that innocence is no longer rare; it has ceased to exist.”

Greed is a desire to have more with total disregard of the rights of others. In context, greed is used in terms of sexual sin where there is constant lusting for more. ***“So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more.”*** (Eph. 4:17-19). Notice that this is called “idolatry.” Wanton sex is a substitute for God. It becomes the idol of sinful men and women. What are the idols of Americans? Sex and money! We worship at these shrines and if you don’t believe it, then objectively look at your T.V. or modern movies, or advertisements, or read your newspaper or magazines. America has sex on the brain and it may well be her downfall.

Greed here can be widened to any kind of greed, especially in a ruthless desire for and seeking after material things. Greed can even so subtly take a Christian captive.

Greed sometimes sneaks up on Christians. Recently, Oral Roberts said he needed eight million dollars or the Lord would take his life. A man from right here in the Orlando area gave 1.3 million dollars and Roberts gladly accepted it. Yet, all of that money was made from gambling. Greed often blinds us to ethics.

The Punishment (6): ***Because of these, the wrath of God is coming.*** -- People who indulge habitually in the above sins mentioned stand to receive the wrath of God at the final judgment when Christ returns in His second advent. God’s judgment at that Great Day will fall upon the disobedient from Adam to the end.

Notice it says God’s wrath is coming implying that forms of God’s wrath are already being manifested against those who engage in gross immorality. Judgement takes many forms. A recent government survey shows that 80% of all women in America engage in sex before marriage and the percentage is higher for men. About 65% of married men cheat on their wives and over 50% of all married women cheat on their husbands. Could the fact that one out of three marriages in the U.S.A. ends in divorce, and that sex-crazed people are murdering unborn children by abortion, and that wife beatings and child abuse are on the increase, are all the result of God allowing man to reap what he sows and that no one ever escapes the consequences of sin.

Heterosexual mania and homosexual madness are rampant. Did you know that at the rate of the spread of the venereal disease Herpes II that by some time in the early 1990's one out of every four Americans will have this disease? We are all aware of AIDS which is killing people right and left. Did you know there are 1 1/2 million people in America who either have this disease or are a carrier, and it is passed by heterosexual activity as well as homosexual activity? AIDS is spreading like wildfire and scientists are now saying that by the year 2000 it could be as devastating to the USA as the Black Plague was to Europe in the Middle Ages, killing millions. Could not this be the beginnings of the wrath of Gad upon a sinful, god-hating nation?

C.K. Joad, a well known atheistic philosopher, in his pre-Christian days, advocated free love among the unmarried and mocked the church and ministers who tried to stop it. Toward the end of his life, Joad came to Christ, but not without a struggle. It was the insistence of the Christian Church on sexual purity which kept him so long from making the final decision for Christ. Joad said just before converting to Christ, "It's a big step and I can't persuade myself that the very severe attitude to sex which the Church thinks it necessary to adopt is really justified." But Joad finally yielded to Christ and later lamented that he had taken such a stand against Christ, the Bible and the church on sexual purity.

GET RID OF SOCIAL SINS 3:7-8

The Past Life (7): ***You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once received.*** -- All the Colossian Christians were Gentiles and they had wicked lives like all Gentiles because immorality of all kinds was part of their pagan religions. The Colossian church was filled with sinners saved by God's grace - those guilty of premarital sex, extra-marital sex, homosexuality, lesbianism, liars, idolaters, perverts, thieves and so on made up much of the New Testament local churches. Notice, however, it says, "They used to walk in these ways" but they didn't anymore since they believed in Christ and received a new life from Him. ***"Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God."*** (I Cor. 6:9-11).

This verse is a bridge between the gross sins of verse five and six and the social, more acceptable sins of verse eight. Someone might say, "Well, I never have done any of those gross sexual sins, and I never will!" That's good, but you have done the social sins mentioned in the next verse.

The Command (8a): ***Now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these:*** --This is really a command. It means, "Rid yourself! Put away. Put off!" The thought is that of changing clothes. It is divesting oneself of sin just as one might strip off a filthy garment.

The Sins (8b): ***Anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips.*** -- We are to rid ourselves of these sins and we can because we have resurrection power. We have power at our disposal which enables us to obey. We can if we will!

Anger is a settled seething anger against someone. It is holding a grudge, quietly harboring ill feelings against someone. Get rid of it!

Rage is a fiery, passionate outburst of temper. It is blowing the stack, popping the lid in vicious anger. Put it off!

Malice is holding a grudge to the point where you would strike or injure the person.

Slander is anger against a brother or sister in Christ to the point of assassinating his or her character.

Filthy language refers to having a foul mouth, accepting the accepted curse words of any society. It includes malacious speaking and telling unclean stories. Get rid of it!

One time I entered into a discussion with several college students from a Christian college about swearing. They claimed it was wrong to take the Lord's name in vain but other swear words which the culture made up were alright for them to use. Any filthy language is to be put off by the Christian.

STOP THE MOST COMMON SIN - LYING 3:9-12

The Command (9a): ***Do not lie to each other...*** -- This can be translated, "Stop lying to one another." Apparently some of these Christians were still lying and lying was not to be part of their lifestyle. ***Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body.*** (Eph. 4:25). Lying is probably the most universal temptation in human experience - the temptation to stretch, exaggerate or withhold the truth. In the Roman and Greek worlds, lying had become socially acceptable in order to further one's ends. The unsaved Gentiles were doing just what comes naturally. No one ever had to go to school to learn to lie. Actually, lying can be traced back to the Devil because he is called ***"the father of lies"*** (Jn. 8:44). We know that lying is a characteristic that stirs the wrath of God. (Rom. 3:13), and those who are habitual liars shall not enter into heaven. ***"And nothing unclean and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but allly those whose names are written in the book of life."*** (Rev. 21:27).

Lying, a way of life for unsaved Gentiles, has become a common thing in our American society. We have come to expect politicians, government officials, plumbers and used car salesmen to lie to us. Satan has hood winked us so as to redefine sin to make lying acceptable. We rationalize that it is alright to tell "little white lies." All lying is sin whether it is shading the truth, telling a half truth, exaggerating the truth or not telling all the truth.

Christians are to stop lying. Lying will not only get the Christian into deep trouble with men but more importantly, it will get him into trouble with God. Why? Because God hates lying. ***“There are six things the LORD hates, seven that are detestable to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked schemes, feet that are quick to rush into evil, a false witness who pours out lies and a man who stirs up dissension among brothers.”*** (Prov. 6:16-19).

The Old Self (9b): ***Since you have taken off your old self with its practices*** -- The reason Christians are to stop lying is that at conversion they took off the old self (old man) and put on the new self (new man). The old self (man) is all the person is in Adam before conversion to Christ. The old man is lost, unsaved and lives a godless lifestyle. When we become Christians, by God’s grace, we put off the old man with its evil practices. Our whole history in Adam is gone, wiped away because of God’s sovereign grace.

The New Self (10): ***And have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian (or) Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.*** -- Paul makes it very clear that the Christian has put on the new self (man). The new man is all that the Christian is in Christ - saved and living for Christ. In Christ is our new position as a new man. At conversion, we began a new history in Christ.

The Renewal Process. The new self (man) is “Being renewed in knowledge in the image of the Creator.” The Christian has changed positionally from the old man in Adam to the new man in Christ. The new man still has a sin nature and brings a lot of baggage with him from his unsaved state. God, however, is renewing, rebuilding, renovating, remaking the new man in Christ so he is becoming more Christlike. God changes his position from in Adam to in Christ, and now is being changed in his experience in disposition. The renewal process goes on through out life so that the Christian is becoming in his experience what he already is in position in Christ. This does not mean the Christian is sinless but it does mean he should sin less as he conforms more and more to Christ.

The new man is being renewed in knowledge; that is, God is changing his old patterns of thinking. That “stinking thinking” he had as an unsaved person is being changed. He begins and continues to view life from a God-centered perspective. This renewing of the mind and gaining of experiential knowledge of God is a lifetime process. God is constantly working on our actions and attitudes through the mind. It is important to note that every Christian is undergoing renewal. There are no exceptions.

Suppose a Russian wanted to change his citizenship from Russia to America. Let's just say he is 30 years old. He goes through all the legal procedures and changes his position from a Soviet citizen to an American citizen. His old history in Russian has stopped and he begins a new history in America. But a change in position does not necessarily mean a change of attitude. He has been trained in communist schools; he thinks like a socialist; he has the mind set of a Russian. As an American citizen, he must now learn to think like a capitalist, accept democratic ways of life and get the mind set of an American. Actually, to become a true American, he must be educated from the ground up about American ways. So it is with Christians. When they trust Christ, they are changed in position out of Adam in Christ, but they spend a lifetime becoming Christlike in their thinking.

The New Creation. The Bible says, "therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" The Christian is a new creation under construction, but as a new creation he belongs to God's redeemed family; he is part of the church of God. Christians are God's masterpieces which he is renewing daily and one day will make perfect at the coming of Christ. The new man in Christ is a new creation and the totality of new men in Christ make up the true church. In the new man, there are no national nor racial distinctions - Jew or Gentile. Nor are there Russians, Chinese, Americans, Japanese or Germans. Nor are there black, yellow, white or brown. All are new creations in Christ. Someone has said the most racially segregated hour in American is between 11:00 to 12:00 or Sunday morning at church. In the new man, there are no religious distinctions - circumcised and uncircumcised, but one new creation. In Christ, there are no social distinctions - barbarian or Scythians. Barbarians were the uneducated and uncultured in the Roman world. In the new man, there is no political distinctions - slave or free. In the new creation, Christ is all and in all. The New Testament Church was not all hung up with racial, religious and social prejudices. The Roman world was astounded by the New Testament Church and how the people loved and accepted one another. It was the kind of church where slaves and masters, who looked down their noses at one another, and Jews and Gentiles who hated one another, and educated and uneducated, who despised one another, and rich and poor who separated from one another got together in Christ. The new creation made such an impact upon the Roman world that within 390 years, Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire.

Our generation of Americans need to see real Christianity at work and we too will turn the world upside down for Christ.

CONCLUSION

Saved.

For us who are Christians, who claim to be born again and followers of Christ, we need to remember a few things from this passage. First, conversion demands a changed life. It is the act of deciding to put off the old life and follow Christ. Second, salvation is a renewal of the mind. What we do with our minds will determine what kind of people we will ultimately be. Third, Christian living is a process which goes on for a lifetime but it does involve our willingness to yield to the Holy Spirit for Him to change our lives. Fourth, one aspect of the Christian life is a struggle, a fight, a battle with sin in our lives, for God is at work to conform us to Christ and this at times produces great conflict. Fifth, the renewal process is going on primarily to make us love Christ and experience the joy of the Holy Spirit in our lives. God wants His people to be joyful and find their joy in Christ.

Unsaved.

If you are a non-Christian are you aware that you are lost spiritually and that your thinking process and lifestyle is repugnant to God? God says that His wrath is against you because your attitudes and actions are against Him. The result will be judgment and eternal separation from God.

But it is not too late. If you will trust Christ as Savior and Lord, you will be changed, saved by the grace of a loving God. Determine now to put off the old life in Adam with its negative thoughts about Christ and put on the new life in Christ. Believe, trust, accept, rely on, commit to Christ and you shall be a new creation in Christ. ***“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!”*** (II Cor. 5:17).