

Saved: God's Plan of Salvation

Week 9: Walking in Newness of Life: Faithful Christian Living -- Colossians 3:1–17

A man is released from prison after many years. The gate swings open, the sun hits his face, and he walks out a free man. But here is the strange thing that happens to many who have been locked up a long time: their bodies are free, yet their habits are not. They still hoard food, still flinch at footsteps, still live by the rhythms of a cell. Freedom has been granted, but it has not yet been lived. Paul writes Colossians 3 to people who have walked out of a far worse prison, the grave of their old life, and his great concern is this: now that you are free, live like it. "If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above."

Everything in this chapter flows from that one stunning fact. You have been raised with Christ. In baptism you were buried with Him and lifted up into a brand new life, and now your true home is "above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God." Paul does not begin with a list of rules; he begins with an identity. You are not trying to become someone new by your own effort. You already are someone new, and the Christian life is simply the long, joyful work of becoming who you already are. Set your mind up there, he says, where your life is hidden with Christ in God.

And then Paul gets practical, beautifully, bluntly practical. There are things to take off, like filthy clothes peeled away and thrown in the fire: sexual immorality, greed, anger, slander, lying, the whole wardrobe of the old self. And there are things to put on, like clean garments pulled over the head: compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, forgiveness, and over it all, like a coat that holds everything together, love. The new life is not vague spirituality. It changes how you speak to your spouse, how you handle your temper, what you do with your eyes and your money and your words.

This is what salvation is for. We were not rescued merely to wait for heaven; we were raised to walk differently now, until "whatever you do, in word or deed," is done "in the name of the Lord Jesus." This is faithful Christian living, the daily, ordinary, Spirit-empowered work of becoming like the One who saved us. So this week we ask what we are still wearing that needs to come off, and what Christ is holding out for us to put on. Read these verses slowly, and let them dress you for the new life.

Group Discussion: Paul says, "If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above" (v. 1). Why do you think Paul grounds the call to holy living in who we already are in Christ, rather than simply handing us a list of rules? How does knowing our new identity change the way we pursue change?

Personal Reflection: Paul says to set your mind on things above, “not on things that are on earth” (v. 2). Honestly, where does your mind tend to drift when it is free to wander, and what does that reveal about where your heart is most set? What would it look like to set your mind above this week?

Read Colossians 3:1–17

Study Questions

1. Paul begins, “If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God” (v. 1). How does our union with the risen Christ become the foundation for the entire call to holy living that follows, and what does it mean that our life is now “hidden with Christ in God” (v. 3)?
2. Paul commands us to set our minds “on things that are above, not on things that are on earth” (v. 2). What “earthly” things most easily capture your thoughts and your attention, and what is one practical way you could begin setting your mind on things above this week?
3. Paul says, “Put to death therefore what is earthly in you,” and lists sins like sexual immorality, impurity, evil desire, and covetousness, which he calls idolatry (v. 5). What does it mean to “put to death” these things rather than merely manage them, and why does Paul treat covetousness as a form of idolatry?
4. Paul’s lists are specific on purpose. Reading slowly through verses 5 through 9, which particular sin do you sense the Spirit pressing on your heart right now, and what would genuinely “putting it to death” look like in your life this week?
5. Paul says we “have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator” (vv. 9–10). What is the relationship between the new self we have already put on and the ongoing renewal Paul describes, and how does this shape a right understanding of Christian growth?
6. Paul tells us to “put on” compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, forgiveness, and above all love (vv. 12–14). Which of these garments do you most need to put on right now, and in which specific relationship is Christ calling you to actually wear it this week?
7. Paul describes a rich communal life: letting “the peace of Christ rule” in our hearts, letting “the word of Christ dwell in you richly,” teaching and admonishing one another, and singing to God (vv. 15–16). What do these verses teach us about how faithful Christian living is meant to be lived out together in the body of Christ rather than alone?
8. Paul places forgiving one another, “as the Lord has forgiven you,” at the heart of the new life (v. 13). Is there someone you are still struggling to forgive? How does remembering the way Christ forgave you change the way you think about extending that same forgiveness?
9. Paul gathers the whole new life into one sweeping command: “whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him” (v. 17). How does this verse show that faithful Christian living is the necessary fruit of salvation rather than an optional extra, and how does it hold together the truth that we are

saved by grace with the truth that grace produces a transformed, obedient life under the lordship of the risen Christ who reigns now at God's right hand?

10. Look back over this whole picture of the new life, the mind set above, the old self put off, the new self put on, every word and deed offered to the Lord. Name one specific way Jesus is forming you through this passage. What is the one garment He is asking you to take off, and the one He is asking you to put on, this week?

Now or Later

Reflect on these passages: Romans 12:1–2, offering ourselves and being transformed by the renewing of the mind; Galatians 5:16–25, walking by the Spirit and bearing His fruit; Ephesians 4:22–32, putting off the old self and putting on the new; Philippians 4:8, thinking on what is true and lovely; Colossians 3:18–4:1, the new life worked out in home and daily relationships.