

THE NEW YOU
Colossians 3:1-17

Intro: In August of 1975 I went off to what became three years of voluntary service at Brethren in Christ Navajo Mission. In December of that year, my nephew, Matthew Book, was born to my sister, Beth, and her husband, Morris in Farmington, NM. They were serving at the mission too, where Morris was the physician at the mission's clinic. (He was the last physician at the clinic as it was closed at the end of his tenure, what with the fact that Indian Health Service clinics had become much more prevalent)

Matthew's first month was touch and go – he very quickly became ill with pneumonia and he came close to death several times. These difficult times meant that Morris's mother came from California, my grandmother from Pennsylvania, and, actually, after Matthew was on the road to recovery, my own mother, came to assist Beth. I was always the taxi service, making the 170 mile trip to the train station in Gallup for Morris's mother, and the 150 mile trip to the airport in Albuquerque for my grandmother and for my own mom.

Meeting my mother at the airport in late January of 1976 is a vivid memory for me. Remember, I had left PA in early August of '75. Now, a little over 5 months later, I was picking my mom up, and in my mind's eye, I was looking for a black haired woman with her hair in a very Brethren in Christ bun, and, let me put this delicately, ample. Yes, she is the one I blame for my tendency toward lumpiness. She wasn't fat, but she was not, by any stretch skinny. I was looking for the mother I'd known for practically 19 years, but when she walked from the plane and over to me as I waited at the gate – I did not know it was her. I was glad the woman who hugged me had my mother's voice, because that was the only way I knew it wasn't some stranger who was greeting me.

It turns out that in those 5 months since I had been gone, my mom and my two other sisters had very successfully embarked on Weight Watchers. I don't know how much weight Mother had lost (there are things you do not ask a woman and I already was aware of that 47 years ago) but it was significant enough that she was slim and fit. She had also gotten her very Brethren in Christ hair trimmed, bun and all, into a fashionably sensible style that did away with that ubiquitous BIC bun. She was a new person! And it took some getting used to.

Now that was a very surface example of a transformation – but it was enough for me to know there was something different about my mother. As we move into Colossians 3 Paul moves from the technical teaching against false teachers and full of warnings and admonitions, and gets down to some practical brass tacks ways for the Colossians to live a life as the new creations they truly were. Listen as I read

(Read Colossians 3:1-17)

This is full of wonderful stuff! First . . .

The resurrected life involves transformation

- Paul has been using the word picture of believer's baptism to describe the life we as followers of the way of Christ must live. In baptism we act out dying with Christ, entering the grave with Christ, and rising victorious with Christ from the grave. He says "If you've done that you have new responsibilities and challenges to live in a way that shows we are now seeking the things above. And not only that, but we are to SET our minds on things above." We have been transformed – so we need to be on a quest to be like Jesus. Peterson paraphrases verses 1-2 this way, *So if you're serious about living this new resurrection life with Christ, act like it. Pursue the things over which Christ presides. Don't shuffle along, eyes to the ground, absorbed with the things right in front of you. Look up, and be alert to what is going on around Christ—that's where the action is. See things from his perspective.* Colossians 3:1-2 (The Message).
- The Greek word from which the translators get the idea of "setting our minds", is a favorite word of Paul's and it vividly describes the mental reorientation which new life in Christ brings about. It describes our entire mental activity and not simply the occasional thought. In other words, our relationship with Jesus Christ, better yet our walk with Christ, is not just an afterthought. It's a lifestyle.
- This brings up a question we must all ask ourselves: If our entire life needs to be God-oriented. Are we able to do that? Ask yourself, "*Is this true for me?*"
- We go from being ME oriented to being Christ oriented as we are transformed. Listen to verse 4 again, *When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.* This world is no longer

our home. Everything is viewed with the background of eternity and we must no longer live as if this world was all there is, because it's not. This is a recurring theme for Paul which shows the importance of it.

- And those three words, "Christ our life" is another recurring theme for Paul. Remember, he wrote to the Philippians, *For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.* Philippians 1:21. And to the Galatians, *I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.* Galatians 2:20. For Paul, the Christ Follower's most important thing is Christ – in fact, he is more than life.
- So with that in mind . . .

Put to death every part of yourself which is against God and keeps you from fulfilling his will

- Yep – as usual, Paul doesn't mince words. Rid yourself of, let me list them as he does in vv. 5-9:
 - Sexual Immorality
 - Impurity
 - Passion
 - Evil Desire
 - Covetousness (Paul adds the clarification) which is idolatry. This past week I was talking to my friend Randy about how our neighbors on the other side of our woods will be building more storage units. People just want more and more stuff. This, in part, comes from a heart of covetousness. We want to keep up with the Jones's because we covet what they have. Barclay says this, "*The essence of idolatry is the desire to get. A man sets up an idol and worships it because he desires to get something from it. The essence of idolatry is, in fact, the desire to have more. Or to come at it another way, the man whose life is dominated by the desire to get things has set up things in the place of God--and that precisely is idolatry.*"
 - Anger
 - Wrath (Anger that simmers and then boils and then festers and then destroys)
 - Malice
 - Slander
 - Obscene talk from your mouth.
 - Do not lie to one another
- In verse 11 Paul nails an issue that is as old as humanity itself – the barriers we place between ourselves and other cultures, races, and nationalities. Listen to it again, *Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.* Colossians 3:11.

THERE ARE NO BARRIERS!

- Christ came to destroy them. Christ Followers must destroy them – despite the fact that, too often, Christians have been the very worst at creating barriers.
 - There are no barriers for Christ Followers when it comes to birth and nationality. A person's nationality is a human construct. They are created in God's image, just like you and me.
 - There are no barriers for Christ Followers when it comes to race. A person's color or racial background does not take away from the fact they are created in God's image, just like you and me.
 - There are no barriers for Christ Followers – a redneck and a college professor are created in God's image, just like you and me and the fact that one prefers to spend time in the woods or a four wheeler and the other on a Lazyboy with a good book means that one prefers to spend time in the woods or a four wheeler and the other on a Lazyboy with a good book. God loves each and has a purpose and plan for each.
 - There are no barriers for Christ Followers when it comes to the human constructs of class. Which side of the tracks we live on does not matter one tiny bit to the one who went to the Cross for all humanity.
- We are in Christ and *Christ is all and in all!* (v. 11) THERE ARE NO BARRIERS! Christ came to destroy them. Christ Followers must destroy them
- So, in the words of William Barclay . . .

Put on the garments of Christian Grace

- Because . . . WE ARE A NEW CREATION . . . new creations are not same old same old. If we are Christ Followers we are different – or at the very least, becoming different!! Your witness needs to mirror your actions and Paul offers some of what he calls Fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23, as what the people of God should exhibit.
- He actually uses the words “*Put on then*” (v 12a) and then qualifies the ones who are donning the garments of grace, as, “*God’s holy chosen ones, holy and beloved*” (v. 12b.) If this is me and if it is you, then we MUST have:
 - Compassionate hearts
 - Kindness
 - Humility
 - Meekness
 - Patience, bearing with one another, and if one has a complaint,
 - FORGIVING ONE ANOTHER, AS THE LORD HAS FORGIVEN. SO YOU MUST ALSO FORGIVE!
- And then Paul shares what makes it all not only possible, but necessary, we need to have the absolutely necessary garment of LOVE! When he describes love in 1 Corinthians 13, he ends the long, but in no way complete, list of descriptions of the word “love” (the Greek word “agape”), with, “*Love never ends.*” 1 Corinthians 13:8a (ESV) and many translations say “*Love never fails*” And it doesn’t – God’s love never fails and it never ends, and neither should ours.
- And another key garment in that wardrobe comes next, and Paul uses a vivid picture – *let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts* (v. 15a). Peace needs to rule. It’s not an option to be used when it’s convenient – the peace of God needs to be the decider of all things within our hearts. Barclay says, “*Literally what he says is, “Let the peace of God be the umpire in your heart.” He uses a verb from the athletic arena; it is the word that is used of the umpire who settled things in any matter of dispute. If the peace of Jesus Christ is the umpire in any man’s heart, then, when feelings clash and we are pulled in two directions at the same time, the decision of Christ will keep us in the way of love and the Church will remain the one body it is meant to be. The way to right action is to appoint Jesus Christ as the arbiter between the conflicting emotions in our hearts; and if we accept his decisions, we cannot go wrong.*”
 - Ohhhhhh that we would see this more in the people of God! But when we don’t, please, let it be said of us, that we let the peace of God rule our hearts.
 - When we don’t agree, let the peace of God rule!
 - When our politics don’t agree, let the peace of God rule!
 - May peace be a well-worn garment of grace that describes the people of God who are Ashland Brethren in Christ Church.
- Because, after all, it’s what happens when . . .

The word of Christ dwells richly in his followers

- I say it over and over again – we need to be in the word! DAILY! Your Bible must not gather dust. You must never get a notice on your device that your Bible app has gone unused for a long period of time and do you want to delete it? If we don’t eat, we starve. If we never drink, we will die of dehydration. If we don’t sleep we will wither away and die. If we don’t spend time, on a regular basis, in the word of God, we will know less and less how to live and then we will eventually die.
- We also need regular teaching and admonishing and singing the songs of the church. This service is essential and I’m so glad you make it a regular part of your week. But LifeGroups and other times of input are incredibly important too.
- The church has always been a singing body and I think it’s interesting that Satan uses our preferences for what is worship music in our own minds to be one of those barriers that cannot and must not characterize who we are. Let’s not allow that to be who we are ABC!

Conclusion: Finally Paul puts the icing on the cake by telling the Colossians that everything we do or say should be done and said in the name of Jesus. One suggestion I found is to test anything and everything we do

with: *"Can we do it, calling upon the name of Jesus? Can we do it, asking for his help?" One of the best tests of any word is: "Can we speak it and in the same breath name the name of Jesus? Can we speak it, remembering that he will hear?"* If we bring every word and deed to the test of the presence of Jesus Christ, we cannot go wrong.

That's why when we invoke the name of Jesus in a prayer, or in anything we do, we are not using his name as a good luck charm. The truth is we are invoking the name of Jesus because we are committing it to his care. So, if it's something we cannot use in the same breath as the name of the Son of God who died for our sin and to make humanity free, then we cannot and should not use it. That's why I cringe when I hear the name of Jesus used as profanity.

And do it with thanks. FB Meyer, says of the final words of our text, which are in verse 17, *And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.* Colossians 3:17 *"A thankful heart makes for a victorious and attractive character."* A thankful heart in all things is a sure attribute of the new you. Amen.