

Colossians - New Life in Christ

by Mariano Di Gangi

The sermon emphasizes the importance of living a life of personal identification with Christ, total mortification of sin, and radical transformation of life.

Duration: 27:15

Scripture: Galatians 3:28, Colossians 3:1-6, Colossians 3:8-11

Topics: "New Life"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of our actions and words in influencing the body of Christ and the world. He highlights that sin not only dishonors God and defiles our own character, but it also disrupts and destroys fellowship. The preacher refers to Thomas Boston's 'Fourfold State of Human Nature,' which states that we are created in God's image, but sin causes us to lose that image. However, through God's grace, we can be remade in His image and ultimately restored to glory. The sermon concludes with a call to pray for a radical transformation of life, seeking knowledge of God and experiencing fellowship with Him.

Transcript

It's good to be back with you after an absence of two weeks, where there was an opportunity for the ministry of the Word of God in the sunshine state of Florida, and believe it or not, the sun actually shone with spring-like warmth on precisely two days. So think of all the money you saved! Nevertheless, the Lord provided some wonderful opportunities for ministry in several churches in the Miami area, two Presbyterian congregations there, missions conferences, and then to preach in Calvary Baptist Church in Bradenton, Florida, and to prepare a series of eight messages on 1 John, which through a cassette ministry in the U.S. will be distributed in many countries of the world. We've been studying the letter of Paul to the Colossians, and today we come to chapter 3, reading from the third chapter of Colossians, the first 11 verses.

Hear now the reading of this portion of God's written and inspired Word. in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature, sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires, and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. You used to walk in these ways in the life you once lived, but now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these, anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips.

Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices 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, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all and is in all. These are days in which some television evangelists are running for the presidency and others are running for cover from the press because of financial mismanagement, intentional deceit, and sexual impropriety.

Jesus warns us, not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven. It's not enough to talk about Christianity, we have to walk and live as Christians. And in the passage that we have before us today, the Spirit of God, through the writing of the Apostle Paul, reminds us that Christianity is not only a doctrine to be believed, but a faith to be practiced.

And in this passage of Scripture, the Apostle Paul gives us some great characteristics of the new life in Christ. What does it mean to live as a Christian in the first century AD? What does it mean to live as a Christian in the 20th century AD? What did it mean to live as a Christian in Asia Minor? What does it mean to live as a Christian in southern Ontario? This is something that is not theoretical, it is intensely practical. Paul tells us that the first characteristic of the Christian life is personal identification with Christ.

Over and over again in his writings, the Apostle Paul tells us that to be a Christian is to have a relationship with Jesus Christ, so that the things that actually happen to him in the course of history will have their analogy or parallel in our experience spiritually. The Apostle gives us several ways in which we ought to be personally related to and identified with Jesus Christ. He says, you were dead.

In other words, crucifixion. It's not enough to believe that on Good Friday Jesus died on the cross. It is great but insufficient to believe that he died for our sins, paying our penalty.

You and I have to take our old self-centered nature. We have to take our ego and it must be marched to a hill called Calvary and there be crucified with Jesus Christ. We must identify with Jesus at the point of his crucifixion so that our old self-centered nature is riveted to that cross.

Writing to the Galatians, St. Paul stressed the very same thing. He said those who belong to Jesus Christ have taken the old nature with all its disordered desires and have nailed it to his cross. Closing that letter he also said, God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ by whom the world is crucified to me and I am crucified to the world.

The sinful desires that still linger on in us are not to be gratified but they are to be crucified. We must identify with Christ in his crucifixion and in his resurrection. Since then you have been raised with Christ, says the Apostle.

Paul puts together both of these aspects of dying to sin and of being resurrected spiritually to live a new life in Galatians chapter 2 verse 20. We all know the verse, how glibly, how easily we can quote it. How rarely do we experience its power.

I, my old ego, is crucified with Christ. Nevertheless, I live. Yet not I but Christ lives in me.

We are not only to die to sin, we are to be resurrected with Christ and to live an entirely new lifestyle that is pleasing in his eyes. And now, says Paul, we are risen with Christ. We've come up out of the grave of our deadness and trespasses and sins to live a new life that is described as being hidden with Christ in God.

What does that mean? Let me try to put it as plainly as I can. For one thing it means security. In this world we shall have tribulation.

In this world the storms and tempests will swirl around us, but we are held safely in the hollow of God's hand. Jesus said, I give to my sheep eternal life and they shall never perish. No man is able to pluck them from my Father's hand.

Our life is hidden with Christ in God. We have a sense of spiritual security. He loves us with a love that will not let us go.

But our life is hidden in yet another sense, not only in the sense of security but of mystery. Our life, our spiritual life, our new life is hidden from the world which does not understand how one can be born again and become a child of God. Our world sees our faults but not our forgiveness.

Our world sees our afflictions but has no idea of our spiritual consolations. We are people who seem to get along with no visible means of support so far as the world is concerned, but we endure beholding him who is invisible. Our life is hidden with Christ in God.

Crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. We are to set our hearts and minds on things above where Christ now is at the right hand of God in heaven. Our hearts and minds, as by a powerful mighty magnet, are to be drawn upward from this world to where Christ is.

In other words, we are to look at our life in this world from the perspective of Christ. We are to live our life in this world in the light of Christ who is enthroned at the right hand of heavenly majesty as King and Lord. And yet we grovel, and yet we are taken captive by the fascinations of this present world, and yet we become as crassly materialistic as anybody else, and then we are ensnared in the temptations of the world.

When we should be set free from these things and rise upward to be thinking of Christ and his standard and his motivation and his goal for the living of our lives. Crucified with Christ, resurrected with Christ, drawn upward, ascending with Christ. But some will say, isn't that escapism? Aren't there people who are so heavenly minded that they are no earthly good? Not in the biblical sense of the term, for it is precisely the men and women whose hearts and minds are set on Christ and whose agenda is set not by the world but by the true King who do what is right and bring blessing where there is blight and seek to make the crooked straight in this present evil world.

Crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, revelation. The time will come when Jesus Christ shall be revealed again in all his splendor and in all his majesty and in all his glory, and then we shall reflect his radiance. We shall shine with the splendor that comes from him because at last we shall be like him for we shall see him as he is.

Personal identification with Christ at every step of the way. That's part of what it means to be a Christian. The second thing that the Apostle stresses is that there should not only be personal identification with Christ but total mortification of sin.

I don't know how many of you have ever been to the Far East and visited the city of Kuala Lumpur. It's in the area of Malaysia and every year just about this time of the year a very special ceremony is celebrated by devout Hindus. It's the feast of Thaipusam.

Vows are taken and people gather to proceed in solemn march toward the Batu caves. It's a walk of some seven miles and some people wear the kavadi which is a kind of yoke affixed to the flesh with spikes and some have small spears skewered through their tongues and their cheeks and others will walk through flame and they feel that in this way by the mutilation of the body they are making up for their sins and are pleasing their hundreds of millions of Hindu gods and goddesses. Is that what God requires of us? Does God require of us a kavadi? Does God require that we be spiked and skewered? Does God require that we mutilate the body? Not at all.

What God demands of us is the total mortification of sin. The Apostle says, put to death whatever belongs to your earthly nature. He's not offering us a suggestion.

He's issuing a command. He's not saying this is something you ought to consider. He's speaking in the imperative mood.

He's not saying let it be. He is saying let it die. He's not saying sooner or later you can get around to it but it poses no real problem.

He says you ought to be engaged in a search and destroy mission so far as sin is concerned and he's not satisfied to give us a general exhortation. He gets down to specifics and listen to the way he puts it. Put to death total mortification, total execution, whatever belongs to your earthly nature, that is to your old sinful humanity, sexual immorality and impurity and how many there are who stumble and fall precisely at that point.

It is not God's gift of sexuality that is involved here. It is the abuse of sexuality through fornication, through adultery, through homosexuality and through lesbianism. Put to death whatever belongs to your earthly nature, sexual immorality and impurity.

Lust, a disordered desire even if it's for something legitimate but gone to an extreme. It's very legitimate that a person should work and put aside something for a rainy day but if that desire becomes disordered and we simply labor to acquire and to hoard with greed instead of being good stewards and bringing blessing to others with our material gifts, that is the desire of a good thing gone bad. Nothing wrong with eating to satisfy our hunger but if that legitimate desire is carried to an extreme and we become gluttons when a world is starving, that is something else and that is what the Apostle here is condemning.

Then he speaks about greed, acquisitiveness, covetousness, having for the sake of having rather than having for the sake of sharing. Then he speaks about the idolatry of things, anger, rage. I'm wondering how many professing Christians have failed to get their distemper shot.

Again, malice and slander. These are things of which we must rid ourselves. These are things concerning which the Apostle says there should be total mortification.

Why? Well for one thing he says on account of these things the wrath of God is coming. These things are like a lightning rod that catches the revelation of God's wrath. We experience physical problems and we go through psychological difficulties and we have environmental disasters when we break the laws of God.

The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all the unrighteousness of men. And when we remember that God is displeased with the commission of sin we ought to cease and desist. The wrath of God is one motivation.

Then there's another motivation. He says once upon a time before your conversion that is the lifestyle that you used to follow but now things should be different. God has taken you out of the miry clay and set you on a rock.

Why go back in the swamp and in the mud? Why regress when you could continue to progress in the Christian life? Furthermore, says the Apostle, you ought not to commit these sins such as lying because you are really lying against your own flesh and blood. You are lying against the other members of your Christian community of your Christian society in this present evil world. Sin is never a purely personal matter.

What we do reflects upon the whole body of Christ. What we do either enhances the reputation of the church in the world or drags down the reputation of the church in the world. But the world has eyes to see and the world has ears to hear and what we say and what we do and what we fail to say and do affects the whole status and health of the body of Christ in the world.

And we ought to bear that in mind and be dissuaded from continuing in sin when we remember that it not only dishonors God and defiles personality but disrupts and destroys the fellowship. Personal identification with Christ, total mortification of sin, one thing more, involves a radical transformation of life. Back in the year 1720, a wise and perceptive Scotsman by the name of Thomas Boston wrote a thin but weighty volume called *The Fourfold State of Human Nature*.

And the fourfold state of human nature, said Thomas Boston, on good biblical evidence, was this. First, we are created in the image of God. Second, we sin and lose that image.

Third, God remakes us into his image. And fourth, that image is fully and finally restored in a state of glory when we are finally conformed to the likeness of Jesus Christ. At what stage are you? At what stage am I? What sort of progress have we made? He made us in his image.

We defaced that image by our sin. He patiently and graciously recreated us in his likeness. What progress has been made toward the goal of ultimate conformity to Jesus Christ? If any man be related to Jesus Christ, he becomes a new creation.

And ahead of us is a destiny of glory that someday we shall see him and be like him. But here and now we need to pray, create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew within me a right spirit. Why this radical transformation of life? Why this being recreated in the image of God? For two reasons.

First, that we should have knowledge, a knowledge of God and a knowledge of what we are really like, and then that we should experience fellowship. For when we receive a new heart and a new mind, we enter a new relationship with God and with all of God's people. Here, says the Apostle, there is neither Jew nor Gentile.

Here, says the Apostle, there is neither bond nor free. Here, says the Apostle, there is neither barbarian nor Scythian. Here, earthly distinctions are transcended.

Here, earthly prejudices are overcome. Here, there is no room for Arab or Israeli, for rich or poor, for male or female, for here we are all one if we bear his image and we are related to Jesus Christ. That is what our world is waiting to see, a world that is broken by prejudice, a world that is fragmented by hate, a world that is torn by animosity and acrimony, a world that is splintered and shaken and divided at every turn, and our world is waiting to see and hear a Christianity that is credible, to see men and women who are being

remade in the image of God and who not only talk about Christianity but live in the power and after the pattern of Jesus Christ.

Let us pray. Lord, help us to face up to your word with seriousness, not to speak of it with a sense of self-righteousness, as though we can proudly claim to have arrived. Help us rather to see our frailty, to acknowledge our fallibility, and to trust in your renewing and recreating grace.

Break us, refashion us after your likeness. Enable us not only to speak of Jesus but to let Jesus live in us and through us. In his name we ask it, amen.

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