

But Now. . . (Colossians 3:5-11)
By Pastor Jeff Alexander (1/19/2014)

Introduction

1. Before Christ—"You . . . were dead in your trespasses" (2:13).
 - a. Spiritually dead, waiting physical and eternal death
 - b. Corrupt, reeking and rotting in moral decay (3:5-7)
 - c. Debilitated and bereft of moral power, yet not relieved of moral responsibility
 - d. Guilty and subject to the curse of divine wrath with no means to reverse the curse
2. After Christ—"You have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God" (3:3).
 - a. Jesus died our death, suffering the curse of God's wrath for us.
 - b. Jesus was raised from the dead in order to be our life (3:4).
 - c. Jesus united us to Him in order to enable us to live out our moral obligation to Him ("But now you must. . ." (v. 8).
3. Chapter 3 opens with a first-class conditional clause ("if and it is true," or "since you have been raised with Christ"). We are obligated to something because of what has happened to us.
 - a. We are to seek Christ where He now resides—at the right hand of God (v. 1).
 - b. We are to do this by "setting our minds on the things above."
 - c. This is a non-optional issue for believers. Your present priority is to *seek* Jesus Christ and His kingdom. Two reasons (v. 3):
 - 1) You have died to the old life with its spiritual powers (note 2:20).
 - 2) Your new life is hidden (secure) with Christ in God as the source of true being.
 - d. Our present difficulty is that this new life is not readily evident to us now. Only when Christ returns will we also "appear" in glorified form—"manifest clearly" that we are new creatures in Christ Jesus (v.4).
 - e. In the meantime, we are to be putting to death what is earthly and putting off the old self (vv. 5-10), and, second, we are to be "putting on" the new self as renewed after the image of the Creator (vv. 11-17).

I. Put to Death, List #1

1. We must "put to death" in us that for which Christ was put to death for us.
 - a. Spiritually, we died to the reign and power of sin in our union with Christ (v. 3).
 - b. To continue practicing these sins is to demonstrate that you were never saved (1 Cor. 6:9-11; Gal. 5:19-21). Paul begins on the surface and digs to the very heart of the problem:
 - 1) Sexual immorality (*porneia*)—the outward expression of the old sinful nature
 - 2) Impurity (*akatharsia*)—the inner condition of the old nature (to be morally unclean)

- 3) Passion (*pathos*)—the driving force of the old nature (depraved passion) that uses others for self-gratification
 - 4) Evil desire (*kakos epithumia*)—the destructive fire or burning that kindles craving in the soul for something
 - 5) Covetousness (*pleonexia*)—greed—the craving of self to have more, whether needed or not. Every sin committed by us is the indulgence of self.
- c. Covetousness is identified with idolatry, the worshipping and serving of the creature rather than the Creator.
2. Thus, it is both unnatural and impractical for any believer to continue to practice these sins.
- a. Those who practice such sins are subject to God's wrath (*orge*), His burning anger against sin and those who practice sin (v. 6).
 - b. Those sins characterized the past life of believers, but they must now be put to death.

II. Put Away, List #2

1. The first list is obvious, but now Paul argues that less obvious sins characterizing believer's daily behavior must also be immediately put away.
 - a. Anger (*orge*)—a slow and gradual rising of emotional rage against perceived wrong—usually a selfish response
 - b. Wrath (*thumos*)—sudden and explosive outburst of passion unleashed on another because of an injury
 - c. Malice (*kakia*)—an evil attitude of mind that seeks ways to hurt and injure others
 - d. Slander (*blasphemia*)—injurious speech directed toward others with intention to do them harm. It is a barbed whip.
 - e. Obscene talk (*aischrologia*)—the typical base and low speech of worldly people, often characterized by taking the Lord's name in vain

Believers' conversation must be gracious, seasoned with salt—uplifting, encouraging, and expressing Christ's love (note 4:6).
2. Such sins destroy the unity and fellowship of the church, the body of Christ, preventing its proper function.
3. Paul cautions believers to be careful not to lie to each other (v. 9). Transparency is essential to the sanctification process. We typically want to hide or cover up our weaknesses and sinful habits. We need to be open and encourage others to help us by lovingly pointing out our faults and helping us see our blind spots.
4. The goal of our sanctification—our pursuit of holiness—is the restoration of the image of God in us (v. 10).
5. There are no class divisions in the body of Christ because in Christ we are all one and Christ is all and in all (v. 11). In the church there is neither Greek nor Jew (racial), Circumcised nor uncircumcised (religious), Barbarian nor Scythian (cultural), Slave nor free (economic).