

Colossians 3:1-17 – Raised with Christ



- **COMFORT**

It's winter. It's cold. I am now wearing many layers of clothes. And I am very warm. Cosy and comfortable.

Small problem. It's hard to walk. It's hard to move. It's hard to do... well, anything!

This is Colossians 3:1-17 in a nutshell –

As we live in this world, we will put on many, many layers that the world has to offer. We will layer ourselves with the comforts and ways of the world. But if we keep doing that, if we keep adding layer upon layer upon layer of the things the world offers, if we continue to cover ourselves in the clothing of the world... we will not be able to walk in the way of Jesus.

We have the comfort of very nice places to live.

We have the comfort of good education.

We have the comfort of nice holidays.

The comfort of nice food.

The comfort of great entertainment.

The comfort of Netflix and internet and mobile devices.

The comfort of air conditioning and gas heating.

We can indulge in so many comforts and pleasures if we want to.

Is it wrong to enjoy these comforts?

This is the challenge: We are IN the world. But the question we need to ask ourselves is:

- **“Do we BELONG to the world?”**

We are IN it. We ENJOY it. But do we BELONG to it?

Look with me from verse 1:

- **1Since**, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your *hearts* on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.

What God wants for us is to remember that he has a bigger plan for us. He doesn't want us to be wrapped up in this world – he wants something more for us. **SINCE** you have been raised with Christ – set your hearts and minds on him. On heavenly things. On Jesus things. Look up.

It's like going bushwalking and looking in front of you and around you – you'll see some great stuff and have a great time. But there's much more if you look up! And God wants us to look up *spiritually*. He wants us to look up and focus on Jesus –

focus on eternal things – things that will last. How much of our life do we spend focussing on stuff that doesn't last? God says: "Look up".

But we can't be focussed on Jesus if we are completely focussed on the world. There's a difference between **enjoying** life in the world and **wrapping ourselves up** in the world. And the difference is this:

- **Where do you find your identity?**

Where do you find your true value? Do you find your value as a person in the job you're in? Do you find value as a person in the possessions you own? Do you find value in the education you have? In the culture you come from? In the friends you have? The family you belong to?

There is value in all of those things. But God says there is much **more** to you than these things. God says we can have an eternal and personal identity with him. I think we often ask ourselves: "What will people will see when they look at me?" But the bigger questions is : "What does **God** see?" What is my **eternal** identity? What is it about my identity that will **outlast** the things of this world?

- 5Put to death, **therefore**, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. ... **7You used to walk in these ways**, ... 8But now you must also **rid yourselves** of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. 9Do not lie to each other, **since you have taken off your old self with its practices 10and have put on the new self...**

God wants what's best for us. He wants us to move our heart away from the **temporary** things of the world, and move towards him – towards eternal things. He want us to take **off** the worldly clothing – the earthly nature – the way we **used** to walk. Sexual immorality, impurity, lust, anger, rage, malice... we take off the old self AND we put on a **new** self.

But remember, this letter is written to a church – to Christians. So essentially, what Paul is saying is this:

- **Christians make mistakes.**

Christians fall into sin. But Paul is also saying: No matter what mistakes you make, don't forget who you **belong** to! Don't forget your **true** identity is in Jesus. Don't forget that what you have with him is **eternal**. Don't forget this, verse 11:

- *11Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.*

He's saying: God doesn't care about the values and identities that the world cares about! He cares about **you**. If you are a Christian, your life, your identity, is in Jesus. Your life is wrapped up in him. It doesn't matter if you're a Jew or Gentile, black or

white, gay or straight, Protestant or Catholic, adulterer, liar, thief, rich poor, dumb, smart – once you commit your life to Jesus, the old self, the old identity, is dead. The old worldly descriptions of you are dead. God sees us as just as **us**. Without worldly values or worldly identity.

Christians all struggle to walk the path of Jesus. We are all **contending** in our faith. We are struggling together. We are constantly waking up to find ourselves wrapped up in worldly clothing, and once again having to take it off and refocus on Jesus.

- **Have you got it all together?**

I don't know about you... but I sin. I make mistakes. And I need you, as my church family, to treat me as any other person – as a struggling Christian trying to keep his eyes on Jesus. We need to see **every member** of our church family as a person struggling to walk in Jesus' footsteps.

There are others here in our church who are not yet Christians. There are people here who are looking at Jesus, and looking at the Christians around them, and trying to work out what it means to follow Jesus. If that's you, then I would love to talk to you about that today. But I want you to know, if you're still wondering how to follow Jesus, still wondering what it's all about, you should know – none of us Christians have it all together. We're **all** struggling. Jesus loves us. He's saved us. He's accepted us. But we struggle every day to keep following him.

It's a terrible thing for people to think that a Church is a place where people have got it all together. We are a hospital for sinners. We are people struggling with our identity. All of us have put on worldly things this week. And we need to take them off. We have moved our focus away from Jesus, and we need to **refocus**. And next week, we will put on more worldly things, and again, we will need to refocus on heavenly things, and take **off** those worldly things.

But as a Church, and this is why Paul is addressing the **church** with this letter – as a church, we take off the worldly clothing but we also need to PUT ON the clothing of Jesus.

- 12Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. 13Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. 14And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

This is where our unity comes from – putting aside all the worldly titles and identities we have and putting **on** the clothing of Jesus – kindness, forgiveness, mercy,

patience, LOVE. We don't just put off worldly things. We put ON Jesus things. We put ON the character of Jesus.

Have you put on patience today? Have you put on the clothing of forgiveness this week? Or did you leave it at home? Are you wearing the clothing of humility?

Unity doesn't come from what we DO. It doesn't come from the way we run church or the way we do services or the way we organise ministries. It comes from **each of us** listening to God's word and responding. Unity comes from **each of us** putting on the clothing of Jesus – the clothing of LOVE - and remembering that **Christ is enough** – all we need comes from him. Our identity comes from him. Our clothing comes from him. It comes from remembering, every day, the words from verse 15 – let's finish with these words – these are YOUR instructions so WE can be united:

- 15 Let the peace of Christ **rule in your hearts**, and be thankful.

1 Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. 3 For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ, who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

5 Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. 6 Because of these, the wrath of God is coming 7 You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. 8 But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. 9 Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices 10 and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. 11 Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.

12 Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. 13 Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. 14 And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

15 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. 16 Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. 17 And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.