



+ This week at Magdalen Road Church we continued our series in Colossians from chapter 3v1-17.

Paul is seeking to encourage the Colossian Christians is to grow up in Christ but not through (as with last week) an emphasis upon what they **do**, but rather through what God has already **done**. Last week we began to consider what it meant to 'set our minds on things above' where Christ is now seated. This week Paul continues to explain that...

He focuses on both what we need to stop doing and also what we need to grow in as we live out our new identity in Christ.

+ Put the old life to death with the gospel (v1-11)

Three steps from these verses:

1. Remember what sin really is.

In our current culture the concept or idea even of 'sin' can be an alien one. In the world where everything is relative, whether ideas of God, or ideas of truth even, Paul says within the church we must be different. We are to be honest about sin. In v5 he encourages believers to put to death whatever belongs to our earthly nature (cf earthly in v2 as well). Clearly this sets us at odds with our current climate where sex is seen simply as a physical act and people are easily objectified (leading to abuse as seen in the news at the moment). Our danger is we don't kill the earthly nature, but rather, happily, keep it alive.

The end of v5 is also a striking one for our culture. It's easy to see greed in the lives of others rather than in ourselves. Do you think of yourself as greedy? Paul describes this though as idolatry-it is a false God that we set up and serve and think will provide satisfaction for us.

v8 adds further challenge onto the passage as Paul focuses primarily upon what we say. The words that come out of us, reveal what's going on inside and where our minds are set. All of these things are tied in with our old selves.

2. Remember who you really are now

The reason Paul gives for us putting off of the old, is again because of our new identity in Christ, because of us being who we really are now in Christ. Paul peppers this right the way through this section. We've already seen it in v1 to v4 but it's there as well by implication in v5 and v7. At each step of 'putting off' it's tied in with the why. He also clearly outlines the reality of our new identity in v9 to 10. We have taken off our old self and put on the new self - which is being renewed knowledge in the image of a creator. We are not who we were any more, but we are not who we will be either.

We then considered a silly example of a former sewage worker changing careers to become a surgeon. If he were to turn up on Monday morning for his new job dressed in his old drain cleaning kit from the week before, that would be wholly inappropriate! Well so Paul encourages believers to remember they have taken off their old self, and put on the new self. Our problem is we very easily wear our old clothes instead of the new ones that befit our new identity.

3. Remember Jesus is really enough

v11 gives us another hint as to the answer to dealing with our sin. Christ is all. He's reminding us of the glorious truths about Jesus in 1v15 onwards - Christ is all - Jesus is better - he is enough. When we are faced with that situation - Christ is all. When we are tempted to give in - Christ is all. When we get it wrong again - Christ is all. Don't look elsewhere, he is completely sufficient.

+ Living the new life of the gospel (v11-17)

The danger in verses like this is that we essentially end up stapling on fruit. We think if we try ever so hard to be more compassionate, kind, humble, gentle and patient - that is what Paul is asking for. Problem is that's just stapling on fruit and that doesn't work. What needs to happen is we are changed in such a way that that kind of fruit grows in us.

How do we change? We remember that because we are joined to Christ and have been raised with him, because we are holy and dearly loved people so we are free to treat others in the same kind of way that he treated us. He changes us to be more like his son - people who are compassionate, kind, humble, gentle and patient.

He then goes on to talk about the importance of forgiveness in v13-15. In v13 Paul tells us why we are to forgive: Because we have been forgiven. Because the Lord for gave us so we are to forgive others. There is something very earthly and like the old us and natural about holding onto grudges. But we are new people joined to Christ. Forgiveness is always costly, it was for Christ and it will be for. To forgive is abnormal.

Paul finishes up the section urging the church to sing to one another. Singing is a word ministry that can teach and shape us, as well as praising God. Lots of this sermon will be forgotten but hymn humming can happen all week! We need to make sure that the songs we sing help us and shape us in a good way - That we are encouraged to love and forgive one another. He summarises in v17 for all the putting off and putting on whether in word or deed we are to do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Here are some questions to start discussing within your group:

- How have you found setting your minds on things above this last week? Did you manage it? Why / why not? If you did, what was the outcome?
- Give a brief overview of this section of Paul's letter. What is the broad structure? Are there any verses or ideas that particularly jump out at you?
- In v1 to 4 Paul gives the foundational idea that then gives the basis for the rest of the passage. How is our new identity to work its way out into everyday life?
- What aspects of living and speaking are we to put off? What do these mean? How are we to do this?
- Why does he describe greed as idolatry? Are you greedy?
- What aspects of living and speaking are we to put on? What do these mean? How are we to do this?
- Why do you think people find it so hard to forgive? Are there people that you need to forgive? Why can you forgive?
- How do these verses help our mini 'project'?