

Christian Living, from Colossians #2

This is a continuation of the first lesson, looking at Paul's instructions to the Colossian believers in practical Christian living, starting in chapter 3. Chapters 1 and 2 are doctrinal, but we need to be able to put correct doctrinal knowledge into effect in our lives, to glorify God and to be fruitful in Christ.

Colossians 3:9-10 – Putting on the “New Man”

“... seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; And have **put on the new man**, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:”

Last week we talked about how to mortify the old ways of living, to “put off the old man”. What does Paul mean by putting on the new man? Back in Rom. 6, in the context of water baptism, he says in verse 6, “Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.”, and in verses 11-13,

“Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.”

And verse 19,

“... for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.”

So the Christian life is a combination of putting off the old works of darkness, and putting on the new:

1. Stop yielding to sin in your life. Count those old habits as dead.
2. Start yielding to righteousness, and using your “members” as instruments of righteousness. Body and mind are to be the means of doing right works, the end goal being a holy life that honors our God and Savior.

The problem is that unsaved people think they can do these as self-motivated reformation. They are going to “do better”. But it is impossible without the real spiritual conversion of receiving Christ as Savior.

Colossians 3:10 – We are to be Renewed in Knowledge

“... put on **the new man**, which is **renewed in knowledge** after **the image of him that created him**:”

This does not mean merely the knowledge of Biblical facts, even as important as they are, but the knowledge of God. We can actually and personally know God, and the result of that is a renewing of our lives.

When we come to Christ, our lives are a wreck. Sometimes this is painfully obvious to us, but sometimes we think everything is going ok and we have things pretty well under control. The truth is that our lives were in greater disarray than we were even aware of. We were in a state of spiritual death, and the only sins we were aware of were the grossest and most obvious. When Christ saves us, he doesn't want just to do a “Chicago overhaul” so that we look more presentable and civilized – he doesn't just want us to stop doing observably bad things, he intends to remake us from the inside out, to root out the embedded sinful thoughts, desires, motivations, attitudes, and prejudices that were the seedbed of sinful activities and deeds.

Mt. 15:19-20 – “For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: These are the things which defile a man: ...”

Jesus doesn't just forgive the old sins and leave us the same; he fundamentally changes our very nature.

What is the Nature of Real Conversion?

- It is described as a “new birth”.

Jn. 3:3-6 – “... Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. ... Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.”

The unsaved man is alive in body and mind, but spiritually dead. The believer is alive spiritually. The Spirit births us; we come alive in the spirit. This is apparent to God and probably the angels, but to the world around us, we still look the

same. It is only after God starts “making adjustments” to our speech, attitudes, dress, etc. do they see that there is something different about us, but even then they merely call it “getting religion”.

This new birth is a work of the Holy Spirit. Titus 3:5 – “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost”. The word regeneration means to be generated again, i.e., a new birth.

- **We are called “new creatures”.**

2 Cor. 5:17 – “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” From the moment of conversion, we are actually and fundamentally different, but instead of instant perfection, we need to be gradually and continually renewed by the Word and by the Spirit.

- **This new spiritual life requires a completely new nature.**

It can’t just be a patch job, not even a rebuild, but something completely new.

Mt. 15:16-17 – “No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse. Neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved.”

So in our old unregenerate nature, what we were before Christ saved us, we habitually gave ourselves over to fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind. But now in Christ we are new creations. It is therefore not correct to say after some burst of anger, “Oh, that was just my old nature”. If that is still your nature, then you need to get saved. We are not spiritual schizophrenics, with two natures in constant conflict. Unbelievers have a sinful nature which is inherently disposed to sin, but a believer has one new nature – new and redeemed and spiritual. The NT never describes the believer as having two natures. It does say we have a conflict with “the flesh”. We are still susceptible to temptation through the desires of the flesh. These fleshly temptations must be resisted and “put off”.

- **We are born of God – He is not just our Creator, but now our Father**

John 1:12-13 – “But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

Jas. 1:18 – “Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.”

1 P. 1:3 – “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” – “

1 P. 1:23 – “being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.”

So, we are born again, begotten by God the Father to become his sons, and it was accomplished through the word of God and our receiving of his Son and the truth of his resurrection.

This gives more light on the original verse above (Col. 3:10) saying “... put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him”. Since we are begotten by God, and are now his sons, we are to bear his image, to “look like him”. Obviously we cannot see God, but to bear his image means to have his mind, and to be changed to be like him in his communicable attributes (love, mercy, compassion, justice, truth, etc.).

2 Cor. 3:18 – “But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

We are to bear his image now, which is gradual – we become more and more like him over time as we yield to, and seek him - we are renewed in knowledge after his image. But in the future we will bear his image more perfectly.

1 Cor. 15:49 – “And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.”

1 Jn. 3:1-2 – “Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.”