

# Coming in First Place ~ the preeminence of Jesus Christ

"... so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything"(Colossians 1:18).

## Coming in First Place – The Book of Colossians

Colossians 3:8-11

*The Christian's Experience – A Putting Off (Part 2)*

**8 But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth. 9 Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices, 10 and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him — 11 a renewal in which there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all.**

As we come to our text this morning, let me remind you of the larger context in which we find ourselves. We have been and continue to look at two key aspects of genuine Christian living. The first aspect, as found in Colossians 3:1-4, is living in light of the Christian's Expectation. Of course, the Christian's expectation is really God's expectation upon all who have been called by Him to follow His Son Jesus Christ. The first expectation is found in verse one, that we **"have been raised up with Christ."** What this means is that we are new creations, there is something new and different about the person who has trusted the work and words of Jesus Christ; and rather than being dependent upon one's own abilities alone to reason and rationalize life; or even of depending upon the abilities of others to explain and give meaning to life; the one who has been raised up, or resurrected with Christ, is one who now depends upon God and God's Word and God's promises for meaning and direction in life. God expects the believer to daily experience in his life the same power that raised Jesus from the dead; that same power that brought Jesus to life is to be at work in the believer, enabling him to know and to live even as Jesus lived. Because the truth of the matter is that in ourselves, we have no ability to live as Jesus lived and therefore to ever live up to God's demands of perfection. But Jesus did live up to God's demands of perfection and His perfection, proved by His being raised from the dead, is our perfection by faith, because we believe that it is so and God not only gives this belief, but then also works in us to live a life more and more like that of Jesus.

Additionally, God expects the believer to live in light of the sovereignty and Lordship of the raptured Christ, for Jesus is **"seated at the right hand of God,"** in the position of all power and authority. Calling Jesus Lord is not to simply be some title of respect, but a declaration that Jesus is calling the shots, that He is the Captain from whom I take my orders. <sup>[slide 04]</sup> As 1 John 2:6 declares, **"the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk (live, or behave) in the same manner as He walked."**

And then, we noted that God expects believers to live their lives in light of Christ's return; that because Jesus is coming again, because He will be **revealed** and because we who have trusted and followed Him **"will also be revealed with Him in glory,"** we are to be determined to live His life now. Note verse 4 says not that Jesus will be our life, but that Jesus **"is our life"** right now, our lives are to reflect the attitudes and actions of Jesus.

All this brought us to verse 5, where Paul addressed some of the actions and attitudes that are not in accordance with this new life in Christ. Remember what Romans 6:4 declares about believers,

## Coming in First Place ~ the preeminence of Jesus Christ

"... so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything"(Colossians 1:18).

**Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.**

We are to walk in or experience this newness of life, in Christlikeness. [slide 06] We have been raised up with Him. But this all implies that there is an oldness of life, an old way of thinking, acting and responding to the things around us that is to be put off and put to death. And while we might have like it to be otherwise, becoming a Christian does not erase our old way of thinking and acting. We inherited a corrupted and perverted view or understanding of God and until God changes that within us, even our most noble efforts, prior to coming to Jesus, will fall woefully short of true trust and dependence upon God and a true and pure desire to worship Him who alone is worthy. Constantly we read in the Scriptures statements like that of Galatians 2:20 which says,

**I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.**

Or that statement found in Colossians 3:3 which says,

**For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.**

What has been crucified? What has died in me? Is it that old nature inherited from Adam which is simply an earthly, man-centered way of understanding life and God; a nature that can often seek to live for itself, and to either explain away God altogether or at least seek to understand God on its own terms? Because if that is dead, it so often seems to resurrect itself. Last week we saw that believers are called to "**consider the members of your earthly body as dead to...**" followed by a list of personal sins that reveal a heart of lust. The call in verse 5 is literally, "**be constantly putting to death**" any aspect of allowing your heart, your mind and your body to engage in such behavior. It is not that we put to death things like "immorality" for that will be on this earth until Jesus comes and eradicates it; but rather the thought is that we consider ourselves, our lives dead to the pursuit of such things. I like the word "consider" in verse 5. We are to consider, to reckon, to live the rest of our lives in this flesh as unto God and the new nature He has given us, this nature, this part of us that wants to know God rightly, to love God purely and to serve God wholly rather than to either purposely or passively allow ourselves to engage in that list of destructive sins. This is exactly what Romans 6:11 declares to us,

**Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.**

Its not that sin has gone away, or that it has ceased to exist, rather is that because of Christ work on the Cross, if you have come to believe that He died specifically for you, that Christ has broken the power of sin to control and dominate your life and have given to you His Holy Spirit, who is to fill you, that is to control and direct your life to the glory of God. While most people do not like this thought, we are all slaves; we are all servants to one of two things. Let us look at Romans 6:11-18 which reveals this truth that we are either slaves to sin, which we are all

# Coming in First Place ~ the preeminence of Jesus Christ

"... so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything"(Colossians 1:18).

born into, resulting in death; or we are slaves to righteousness, into which we must be born again by faith in Jesus Christ, resulting in life.

**11 Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. 12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, 13 and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. 14 For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace. 15 What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be! 16 Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? 17 But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, 18 and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.**

So the point is, we must be constantly "putting to death" our desires to revert to old ways, earthly ways, God-dishonoring ways of living and then practice putting on the new self, the new ways, the Christlike ways of one who has been made new in Christ. We are to live according to our position in Christ as those raised with Him as those whose lives are actually Christ's instruments by which to live His life through us.

And so, we put to death things like immorality, impurity, evil desires and the like because they are inconsistent with the life of Christ. This brings us to the second list of "sins" of unChristlike behavior that the believer in Christ is to avoid. We see this list in verse 8. Only note that Paul uses a different picture here than the idea of death, rather he says that believers are to put aside such things. Let us read the verse,

***But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices.***

## I. The Putting Off (3:8-9)

Whereas the list of sins in verse 5 primarily with personal issues of lust, the list here in verses 8-9 deal with more outward, social sins. And it is to be the believer's experience to see these unChristlike attitudes and actions done away with. Only this time, rather than saying such things ought to be put to death, we read that such things are to be put aside, "***put them all aside***" we read. This is to be our action, our response; our very experience to being raised with Christ. We are to constantly realize that while these sins may have been part of our lives before coming to Christ, we are now to shed them just like we would soiled clothes. This is what "put aside" means in the text, to disrobe and cast off old filthy, dirty rags. It is to look at the list of vices in our verses as vile, disease ridden stains upon our clothing. If it is bad enough, we will want to get those clothes off as quickly as possible and even burn those clothes if necessary.

As those who now have a new nature, we must put off, by an intentional act of our will and through personal daily discipline, all of these sins that defile our relationships with God and with others. This begins by confessing such sins, that is agreeing with God that such things are

## Coming in First Place ~ the preeminence of Jesus Christ

“... so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything”(Colossians 1:18).

harmful, God-dishonoring, filth covering sins. It means recognizing that these things simply perpetuate other sins. The idea here is that once we see these sins in this light, then we can seek to avoid the very situations that entices such sins in us; or, if that is not possible, at least to purpose to exercise restraint on ourselves. And the best restraint we have is to reflect upon what Jesus said about, or how Jesus acted toward such sins.

[slide 12] Let us now consider the sins listed. First there is **“anger”** which refers to an abiding, growing, ever increasing state of mind that seeks some kind of revenge. We might call it, deep-seated, vengeful anger. It is like a smoldering volcano that lies dormant for years but then finally erupts. To dwell in such an attitude poisons every relationship, whether at home or in the workplace or at school. Anger is like a time bomb that ticks and ticks until it finally explodes. Anger can be triggered by a number of things. For some it is thinking on past hurts; for others it could be by hurtful remarks or by not getting one’s own way. The truth is that there are a thousand things that can trigger it, but regardless of what can cause it, our text says, put it off, cast it aside; for it is not befitting to you as a child of God’.

If we reflect upon it for a moment, isn’t it truth that often our biggest mistakes and our greatest regrets are the results of our not putting off anger? Sadly, we often make excuses for our anger. We justify anger by saying we’ve been wronged. But I see no exemption clause in our text. We do not read, “put off anger” unless you are constantly being irritated or annoyed by another person. The believer, as one who has been redeemed by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, has no cause to continue in anger. Let me ask you, how many of you struggle with anger? Then you need to take seriously what the Word of God instructs you to do and prayerfully and purposely, because you have been raised with Christ, put off anger.

The next “sin” listed is that of **“wrath”**. “Wrath” is similar to anger in that it speaks of an inward, hostile boiling spirit; but it differs in that whereas anger can build and build and can even be passive at times, “wrath” speaks of an intensity of rage that suddenly bursts forth. This is rage. It is anger taken to the next level. This is an attitude of being easily agitated and then flying off the handle, sometimes for no apparent reason. Like anger, its causes can be hurts, jealousy, envy or a number of things; but this too must be “put off” for such is inconsistent with who you are in Christ.

The third vice listed is that of **“malice”**. “Malice” is nothing short of being mean-spirited. It is the entertaining of a vicious nature that is bent on destroying or hurting others. We see a picture of what “malice” is in the Old Testament book of Esther. Remember Haman, that Persian leader who was so bent on destroying the Jews and specifically had it out for one Jew named Mordecai that he planned and joyously delighted in the gallows he had made to hang the godly Mordecai? That beloved, is “malice” – it plots and schemes to hurt others. And understand, “malice” does not have to carry its plans out to be sinful; for this is an attitude first before it is an action. And, according to our text, “malice” is to be put off, cast aside because it is inconsistent with who the believer is in Christ.

The next two vices speak about the tongue. [slide 15] We have **“slander”** – which is descriptive of “hurtful talk that seeks to defame or belittle the character of another.” This is seeking to put people down by what you say. It is to, in any form or fashion, attempt to bring another into disrepute or to paint him or her in a bad light or to say something in order to give him or her a bad reputation.

Additionally we have **“abusive speech”** which literally refers to vile or filthy speech. In today’s vernacular, it speaks of having a foul-mouth. It is foul, obscene, or dirty talk that defiles

## † Coming in First Place ~ the preeminence of Jesus Christ

“... so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything”(Colossians 1:18).

those around you or is even aimed at those with whom you are angry. It is the obscene tongue that finds pleasure in telling damaging or impure things. Here in our text we are told to put off such language. I love what Paul told the believer in Ephesus about such speech in Ephesians 4:29;

***Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear.***

If you have been raised with Christ, if you are looking to Jesus as your Lord, if you are anticipating His coming, then put off all such things. Why? Because these are unbecoming of those who are redeemed. Prayerfully seek the Lord help for strength to put off these things. God wants you to be holy and blameless and is working you toward that end. For which ever of these vices you find yourself, prayerfully replace each one with a virtue that will serve others for the glory of God.

Now, in verse 9 we are presented with a call to personal integrity. For as we seek to put off the vices in verse 8, we must also seek to be a person who can be trusted, whose word or promise is always sure. And so we read,

***“Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices.”***

Paul is implying something here. He is saying that the unregenerate condition easily give way to lies. But this is not to be so for the believer. Believers are called to live together as a community of faith. We are to learn and practice loving and depending upon one another. We are supposed to have one another's backs. Lying undermines this relationship of trust. Remember back in Acts 5 when Ananias and Sapphira lied to the church? I mean, they lied, purposely gave misinformation to the congregation, to people like you and me. And yet Peter told them that their lie was really against whom? Against the Holy Spirit, the One who indwells the church corporately. For that sin, they were quickly removed; that is they were not only put off, but also put to death. Let us never forget that the purposes of God are never benefited by lying. The quickest way to destroy trust and fellowship is by a lying tongue. This too, according to verse 9, is to be ***“laid aside”***. By God's grace, walk with integrity in your heart, being truthful with one another.

### II. The Putting On (3:10-11)

*10 and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him — 11 a renewal in which there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all.*

Why should believers strive to consider themselves dead to sin and to put off sin? Let us never forget that Jesus Christ came, according to 1 John 3:5, ***“to take away sins.”*** We are to learn from our text that the believer is not to have the same relationship to sin that he lived in before trusting Christ. There has to be a decisive and demonstrable difference. John even declared, ***“No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin [as his normal practice], because he is born of God”*** (1 John 3:9). So then, we

# Coming in First Place ~ the preeminence of Jesus Christ

"... so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything"(Colossians 1:18).

find in our text not only a putting off of that old nature, but also a putting on of a new nature. This is to include two things; a demonstrable difference and the sureness of sanctification.

## 1. A demonstrable difference

Let us first note the language Paul uses in verse 9 to describe the radical and decisive difference that is to be reflected in the life of the believer. At the beginning of verse 8 we read, **"But now you also..."** Just before this he wrote about how believers used to walk in all these sins. **"But now.."** – there is to be a radical shift that has taken place. Because you are raised with Christ, you have that new nature and therefore a new capacity and new reason to put your sins aside. The call is to no longer live in the patterns and habits of the past. If you are in Christ, a change has occurred; you are, according to 2 Corinthians 5:17, a new creature in Christ. This is to affect every part of your being. The more we grow in Christ, the more we realize this. As we draw closer to Christ, we are to become less and less satisfied with the old patterns of sin and desire more and more to please the Lord who has forgiven us through His sacrifice on the cross.

What we find here in verses 9-10 is what happens when a person repents of his sin and truly believes in the Lord. There is a change, there is a decisive break with sin that occurs. Paul describes it this way,

***...since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices and put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him."***

Beloved, this not some casual decision, as though you were joining a club. This is not some phase of life. When you really believe the truth of the gospel, it is because you have died to your sin. You have turned away from your self-centered lifestyle. Your break from the walk of sin was not morally neutral. It is a throwing out of all that is your old life with all its sinful ways as though you were taking out the trash. An in its place, you take up a radically new life, a new nature, with new desires, and new passions. Putting off or putting aside this old nature affects your whole personality, your whole being.

There may be some there that say, 'This isn't my experience. When I made a decision for Christ one day, I didn't see any noticeable affects on my life'. Beloved, I don't know what to do with our text then; because here is described what happens when a person really comes to Christ, when they really come to grips with what it is that Jesus did for them on the Cross; when they come to embrace that Jesus saved their life so that they might now live His life. This new life is not just fire insurance in case there is a heaven and hell; it is a whole change life and lifestyle, the turning from sin by God's grace and embracing a new life bent on holiness. That is to be the demonstrable difference. Is it in you?

## 2. The sureness of sanctification

Next I would have you notice how the believer is assured that he is being sanctified, that is, changed by the Lord. We read in verses 10-11: ***"and put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him-a renewal in which there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all."***

Beloved, this does not refer to something that "might" happen for just a few believers. Rather, the text emphatically speaks of the certainty and constancy of being renewed. This is the

## Coming in First Place ~ the preeminence of Jesus Christ

“... so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything”(Colossians 1:18).

sureness of sanctification. The word “renewed” here is the same term found in Romans 12:2 where we are told to **“be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”** This speaks of a newness in quality that keeps growing and changing and improving in the believer.

While coming to Christ doesn’t change our physical bodies, (at least not yet); and while it doesn’t change your brain, nor erase all the experiences of that past that are etched into your mind; nonetheless, as you grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, a renewing process most assuredly takes place. All those old patterns and habits are increasingly replaced with new patterns and habits in the fashion of Jesus Christ. This is the sureness of sanctification: that the Lord will work His grace in us, reproducing us, or better said, reproducing through us the very image of Jesus Christ.

This renewing, but definition, affects the way you think and what you understand about the Lord, His Word, His will, and His working in your life. Notice that it is called in verse 10 **“a true knowledge.”** This idea of “true” in the text speaks of that which is thorough, complete and tried. It is not just that it is factual, but also that it is a comprehensive, intensive, and life-changing knowledge that affects the way you live your life according to the pattern found in Christ. It is a “knowing” of Jesus as a person, not just facts about His birth and life and death.

But just how do we partake of this renewal? Here I have nothing new to report except to have you think about what Jesus petitioned the Father for in His High Priestly prayer: **“Sanctify them in the truth; Thy word is truth” (John 17:17).** Whether or not you consider it difficult on one hand or too simplistic on the other; God has spoken to us through His Word. So only as we engage in His Word, by hearing it, reading it, thinking upon it, meditating on it, digesting it and applying it, only then does the gradual, yet effectual work of sanctification occur. I am not saying that God doesn’t use other things, like trials, circumstances, relationship and others to change us; but absolutely foremost of all is the Word of God. This is why the renewing that takes place is to a **“true knowledge according to the image of the One who created”** us.

If you are born of God, a great evidence of the sanctifying, life-changing work of the Spirit in your life is found in your devotion to know and live according to the Word of God (Psalm 119:9). By this we can be assured that He who began this good work in you will carry it on to completion (Philippians 1:6).

Beloved, this is to be the experience of all of God’s children. Does this describe you? I know that this radical living, but we must never be satisfied with simply going to church each week but not living radically, differently and with all assurance for Christ. Let us prayerfully pursue this putting aside the old nature, this putting on the new nature; one that is clearly revealing the person and work of Jesus Christ.

*Soli Deo Gloria*

---

Copyright © 2010 Edward K. Godfrey. This message is the sole property of the copyright holder and may be copied only in its entirety for circulation freely without charge. All copies of this message must contain the above copyright notice. This message may not be copied in part (except for small quotations used with citation of source), edited, revised, copied for resale or incorporated in any commercial publications, recordings, broadcasts, performances, displays or other products offered for sale, without the written permission of the copyright holder. Requests for permission should be made in writing and addressed to Edward K. Godfrey, Pastor, Hope Community Bible Church, and 2300 South 13<sup>th</sup> Street, Rogers, AR 72758.