

Therefore, because you were raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your mind on things above, not on earthly things. ³ For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ, who is your^[a] life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

⁵ So put to death whatever is worldly in you: sexual immorality, uncleanness, lust, evil desire, and greed, which is idolatry. ⁶ It is because of these things that the wrath of God is coming on the sons of disobedience.^[b] ⁷ You too once walked in these things, when you were living in them.

⁸ But now, you too are to rid yourselves of all of these: wrath, anger, malice, slander, and filthy language from your mouth. ⁹ Do not lie to each other since you have put off the old self with its practices, ¹⁰ and put on the new self, which is continually being renewed in knowledge, according to the image of its Creator. ¹¹ Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcision or uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but rather Christ is all and is in all.

Clothed in Christ

It's the Hanson family uniform, white shirt and jeans. It wasn't that I didn't like good looking clothes, I just didn't know what they were so I stuck to white t-shirts and jeans and that didn't change much until I made it to seminary where I suddenly needed a suit. I've never really seen a good use for them. They're terrible in cold weather. They aren't water proof or even resistant. They tear easily, don't protect your body for anything, and they're expensive. It's almost as if they were designed solely for one purpose and that is make work inconvenient or look good but I think that last one is questionable.

That's the problem with dress clothes. I don't care for them because when I put them on it means, "I'm not going to do any work." They'll get ruined and I can't tell you how many I've wrecked. Besides, Paul never wore a suit or a tie. His clothes seemed so much more fit for travel, comfort, and sleep. A cloak designed to be slept in and to keep you warm. Paul did everything in these clothes but there are some things you just shouldn't do. It's not because of the clothes he's wearing but when stepped out of the waters of baptism you don't go back to the mud. When you put on the righteous robe of Christ you don't return to the wallow. It's like putting on a suit to change the oil, or crawl under the house to snake a sewer pipe, it just doesn't make sense.

Paul says, "You've put on another set of clothing." Just as people wear different uniforms signifying who they are and what they do in the world, so it is with you, Christian. I'm not talking about sacred set of undergarments. I'm talking about who you are in Christ. You are clothed in Christ.

Paul has addressed the Colossians as saints, holy ones in Christ Jesus. He has continued to point out who they are in Christ. He's taught them to be rooted, built up, and walk in Christ. We spoke of the number of times Paul's referred back to "in him," or "in Christ." We've talked about our all sufficient savior in whom all the fullness of the deity dwells. Jesus is everything necessary for your salvation. There isn't anything you add. Last week we looked at the things people try to add, such as, "You can only worship on the seventh day. You can't eat pork. You can't smoke, drink, or

dance.” *such rules have the appearance of wisdom with self-chosen religion, which consists of humiliation and severe treatment of the body, they have no value at all in checking the self-indulgence of the sinful flesh.* People often make rules in order to feel like they’re holy but you know that saying, “Lower your standards, you’ll never be disappointed.” Lower God’s standards and you might not be disappointed but God will and you just might end up as a self-righteous legalist who looks not to Christ but to your work. These works don’t work.

Paul wants to leave no doubt as to who they are. God made you alive. God forgave all your sins. They have everything in Christ. That this is who they are whether they feel like it or not. Paul doesn’t want the Colossians to look to anything else or anyone else other than Jesus to be fully assured of their salvation. After proclaiming the good news of who they are in Christ he then gets into some practical application. Because this is who you are... this is how you live. In chapter three we see close to 30 commands. Do this. Don’t do that. Don’t live like that, Don’t dress like that. Don’t allow culture to influence you, influence culture. Some translations get this wrong. They like to take the gospel promise and turn it into a question. ESV “if then you have been raised with Christ.” This is a first class conditional, it assumes you have been raised with Christ. To translate is as a question, “IF” may lead some to believe they haven’t. This is causal, Because you were raised... *Therefore, because you were raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.* ² *Set your mind on things above, not on earthly things.* ³ *For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.*

Paul goes on to say, *“put to death whatever is worldly in you: sexual immorality, uncleanness, lust, evil desire, and greed, which is idolatry... Rid yourselves of all of these: wrath, anger, malice, slander, and filthy language from your mouth.* ⁹ *Do not lie to each other.* Paul lists the giant sins that everyone agrees to be wrong, like sexual immorality, lust, and greed, but then he pulls things back to everyday sins like, “anger, malice, and slander” Paul doesn’t want anyone to get out of this room with a clean shirt. We’ve all got dirt on us. No one is clean.

Which makes me wonder why anyone would ever add to the commands of God? Why add to something we already have trouble with? We can’t keep the ten so why do we need more? But it’s not just those who add to scripture that are rightly condemned but there are those who take away from scripture and ignore the simple words. That’s the sad part. People don’t typically drift toward holiness. We drift toward compromise and call it tolerance. We drift toward disobedience and call it freedom. We’ll make excuses for any act of disobedience and then explain to God why we can’t comply. But Paul says, *“put to death whatever is worldly in you.”*

Sexual immorality happens both among young and old. When were old we act as if we need to play the government because it’s cheaper for us to live as if we are single than to marry. The young will do the same when they shack up together before marriage excusing their acts of disobedience as, “We’re only doing so to save money. We can’t afford two apartments.” What you’re really saying is that you don’t trust God to provide all that you need to support this body and life. You’re saying the first article of the apostle’s creed doesn’t mean much and I don’t believe it. It’s greed

because it wants more, craves more, and won't be content with what God has given. It's idolatry. Before the altar of the bank account it bows down and sacrifices another tax law, another loophole for the sake of saving money and it stinks before the one true God.

Sexual immorality does the same it stands before the altar of the bed and offers our bodies as sacrifices to another god of self. When we do so we worship our wants and desires above our God. *Paul says, "Put it to death!"* He doesn't say cozy alongside it. Put it in a safe space for later. It could kill you. *The devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour (1 Peter 5:8).* Get rid of it. That's the seriousness of sin. It's one of the reasons I like *Pilgrim's Progress*. The way sin is portrayed, just one misstep off the way could lead to death. It's because of these missteps and outright defiance that our clothes are soiled and Paul says *the wrath of God is coming*.

To ignore sin is like ignoring a gas leak in your house. It hasn't killed me yet. It doesn't matter. It's been that way for years. While the world believes that God won't do anything Peter writes, *he is patient for your sakes,^[b] not wanting anyone to perish, but all to come to repentance. (2 Peter 3:9)* Paul writes, "God's wrath is coming." God will bring justice upon this world and it's at that time that you don't want to be caught in your own righteous rags claiming, "This is enough." Remember the parable of the wedding banquet? *But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. ¹² He said to him, 'Friend, how did you get in here without wearing wedding clothes?' The man was speechless. ¹³ Then the king told the servants, 'Tie him hand and foot and throw him into the outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth' (Matthew 22:11-13).*

What will we say? *"every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God"* (Romans 3:19). When Adam and Eve stood before God they didn't have an excuse. They were caught in their sin. They had clothed themselves in garb far worse than our dress clothes. They stood before him in fig leaves which were insufficient to cover up their guilt and shame, insufficient to serve as protection and warmth.

So God clothed them before he banished them from the garden. Because of their guilt and shame and in order to demonstrate the seriousness of their actions something had to die in order to clothe them but that wasn't to remove sin.

In the same way someone had to take up their sin, their shame. And when Jesus was crucified he was put to shame. All of the paintings and carvings of Jesus get the crucifixion wrong and they do so on purpose so as not to offend our delicate sensibilities, but Jesus was crucified naked. Exposed. Stripped of everything. The crucifixion was meant not only to punish physically but to publically shame. Jesus took up our guilt, our shame, our sin, and he died in our place what we deserve in order to clothe us as his own.

Jesus came, died for us, rose for us, not so we can be rich and well off, but so we can be faithful. You can't stand before God setting your own standards or wearing your own rags but you can't stand before him wearing the wedding clothes he has provided for you. Clothes he has given you in baptism. Galatians 3:27 - *as many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with*

Christ. These clothes come through Word and Sacrament. We are clothed in Christ. When we fall into sin and temptation he sends his Word which reassures us we are forgiven. He gives his body and blood for you.

That doesn't mean you won't struggle with anger, abusive language, and at times give ourselves over to impurity, evil desires, and greed; but we are clothed in Christ, raised with him, renewed in him. That is who you are now. Those are the clothes you now wear. Don't soil and stain them. If it's not something that you will be doing in heaven – then don't do it. If you're going to stop doing it forever then you as well start today because that is who you are now.

Put to death and put off the old self. The image here is strip off in such a way that there isn't any possible return to the former clothes. Like Hulk Hogan who tore apart his shirt because he didn't have any intention of wearing it again. *Put on the new self, which is continually being renewed in knowledge, according to the image of its Creator.* Stop lying about who you are and start realizing what it means to be made in the image of God. It's no longer religious practice, culture, ethnicity, or net worth that defines you, but Christ who is all and is in all (Colossians 3:11).

Therefore as God's elect, holy and loved, clothe yourselves with heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. ¹³ Bear with one another and forgive each other if anyone has a complaint against anyone else. Forgive, just as Christ^[c] forgave you. ¹⁴ And, in addition to all these things, put on love, which ties things together in perfect unity. ¹⁵ Let the peace of Christ control your hearts, to which you were also called, in one body. And be thankful.

Remember who you are and be thankful for it. Jesus reminds us who we are and what he has done for you and me. Already in his sermon on the mount, the beatitudes he is telling us how blessed we are. He says, “*Do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?*”²⁶ *Look at the birds of the air. They do not sow or reap or gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they?*

You are and he has seen to it that you are clothed in Christ even if you only ever wear a stained up white t-shirt and shorts. Amen.