

THE HIGHER LIFE

Colossians 3:1-15

When a person places his trust in Christ as Saviour, he passes from death unto life, and thereafter his interests, desires, words and deeds are quite different. It is his privilege and duty to exhibit the spirit of Christ in his daily life, as proof of the fact that he is a new creature. The Christian life, which is initiated by divine action in regeneration, is meant to have a continuous growth toward spiritual maturity throughout one's stay on earth. The Holy Spirit teaches, directs and strengthens the Christian as he perseveres toward the goal of Christ-likeness.

I. The Christian's Present Position. Colossians 3:1-4.

Christ took the Colossian Christians from the downward pathway and placed them on the heavenly highway. After reminding them that Christ had conquered death and the grave, and that because they had placed their trust in Him as their Saviour they had passed from death unto life, and were therefore in a new position, Paul stressed the kind of life that they were under obligation to live, which is something that needs to be emphasized today as never before. Paul based his appeal to the Colossians on the fact that they had been raised with Christ; consequently, their interests, desires, words and deeds should be entirely different from what they had been before they had been saved.

Since they had been identified with Christ in His resurrection and had come into possession of eternal life, Paul urged them to seek those things which were really worthwhile and satisfying, namely, those lovely qualities which were exemplified in the life of Christ. When people have been saved, it is normal for them to see higher and heavenly things.

Our Lord wants all of His followers to lift their eyes above the sordid things of earth, and to set their affections on Him and His work. Both our thoughts and energies must be centered on the doing of the blessed will of the risen and reigning Christ. It is His will that we shall be heavenly-minded. There are three good reasons at least for our doing so, namely, we are dead into sin but alive unto God, our lives are hid with Christ in God, and our hope of future blessedness. When Christ, Who is our life, shall appear, then we shall be manifested with Him in glory. What an incentive for living the higher life!

II. The Christian's Past Walk. Colossians 3:5-9.

Even though the believer in Christ possesses heavenly citizenship, sin will continue to be a problem to him as long as he inhabits a body of flesh. The flesh manifests itself so frequently in practices which call forth the displeasure of the holy God. Because He is righteous and holy, He refuses to countenance these things.

When one becomes a Christian there is a definite break with the sins of the past. Paul here exhorts believers to begin and to continue a war on sin within their own lives and in the world about them because evil is such a great obstacle to setting the affections on things that are above. Wrong attitudes, bad dispositions and evil practices are the enemies of Christian peace, power and progress.

In modern speech mortification means embarrassment, but in the Scriptures "mortify" meant to put to death. A number of things are enumerated which must be subjected to such drastic and painful treatment. None of them should have a place in the life of the Christian. Among these works of the "old man" are the sins which grow out of the physical lusts--impurity of thought, word and deed, and the sins which are the result of egotism-resentment, temper, malice,

and foul-mouthed and abusive language. Since God will not overlook these evil inclinations and practices, we must banish them from our lives.

Every child of God knows from experience the terrible conflict of the two natures. He is admonished to put away all of those sinful practices which are unbecoming in the life of a Christian. The wrong manner of life is to be eliminated just as a garment would be removed.

III. The Christian's Present Walk. Colossians 3:10-15.

After telling the Colossian Christians to put off these vices, Paul exhorts them to put on various virtues: compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering, forbearance and forgiveness.

Beneath all superficial distinctions all have the same basic needs and yearnings. We are redeemed by the blood of Christ, saved by grace through faith, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and kept by the power of God. Being in Christ, believers hold the same blessed position, whether Jew or Gentile, bondman or freeman. It is impossible to overemphasize the glorious fact that "Christ is all." He is the one and only Saviour. He is adequate for every need of every person.

It is noteworthy that so much prominence is given to forbearance and forgiveness. But, ever remember that it is God's grace which enables a Christian to forbear with those who disagree with him and to forgive those who have done him injury. The outer garment, which is to cover all of these beautiful and precious virtues and hold them together, is love, "the bond of perfectness." Love binds all of these excellences together.

It is clear that there is such a thing as a Christian wardrobe. Before these new garments are to be worn, there are some old ones that must be removed. It is lamentable to see a Christian attempting to wear the new garments over the old ones. Such a procedure on the part of any professed Christian is most unsatisfactory and very undesirable.

These virtues, which Paul enumerated, are to be displayed as one displays the garments which he wears. The believer in Christ is to be clothed with them, not only in private but also when he is seen mingling with others. The Christlike way of living should always appear in those who are hid with Him in God. Instead of permitting their old master to dominate them, Christians should let Christ control their lives. The enthronement of Christ in His rightful place, as the Lord of the life, will enable a Christian to perform his duties acceptably and effectively.

Christ's legacy of peace is the most precious of gifts, an inheritance which the world can neither give nor take away. It is independent of outward circumstances. Spiritual peace is based on a conscious fellowship with God, and it results in an absolute trust in Him that whatever life may bring it is for the best interests of those who trust in the Lord. Peace must be allowed to arbitrate in all spheres of the life of a Christian. What a blessing that peace prevails among those who are at peace with God!

Paul admonishes the cultivation of a thankful spirit. Such a spirit pleases the Lord, enriches the lives of those who observe it, and greatly benefits those who possess it. Thanksgiving is one of the most beautiful things that grows in the soil of the human soul. It is a duty incumbent upon all to render thanksgiving unto God for mercies received and blessings enjoyed. Let us thank Him with the gratitude of our hearts, with the praise of our lips, and by the obedience of our lives for our material blessings, our physical blessings, and our spiritual blessings.