

Colossians Chapter 3 v 5 - 12a

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Preacher: Peter Robinson

[0 : 0 0] far in this letter and I think by, he says, hopefully by Christmas we will have finished Colossians on Sunday evenings, probably in the next few weeks. But last week we began and looked at the first four verses of chapter 3 and we're going to go on from there. But we'll read in context, so we'll read from chapter 3 verse 1 through to verse 14. So chapter 3, Colossians verse 1 reading through to verse 14.

Since then you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things, for you died and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature, sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and griefs, greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. You used to walk in these ways in the life you once lived, but now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these, anger, rage, malice, slander and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its creator. Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all and in all.

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

And over all these virtues, put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Well, we'll be looking at part of that passage together in a few moments time.

So let's turn back to Colossians and to chapter 3. And let's pray together briefly. Your word, O Lord, is light and it is life. It is truth and it is power.

[2 : 5 9] And we ask that you would cause your word to have free course in our minds and hearts and lives now. That you would give to us the help of your Holy Spirit, who himself is the spirit of truth.

That we, your people, may hear and be empowered and transformed by your word. For the praise and honour of your dear Father, our God. Amen.

This may sound like a bit of a cheeky question to ask, but when was the last time that you cleared out your wardrobe? I'm not going to make any judgments about whether that was recently or some time ago.

I know that for some people it's one of those things that they do perhaps once or twice a year. Have a good rummage through and check what clothes need to be kept and what clothes need to perhaps go out either to the bin or to the charity shop.

And there's several reasons, of course, why we might discard clothes in our wardrobes. It could be, of course, that they no longer fit us as they once did. Perhaps we've lost weight and they're a bit too baggy.

[4 : 0 9] But probably more commonly we've gained a few inches around the waist and they don't fit us anymore. We may keep hold of them in the vain hope one day they will fit us again.

But if we're realistic we know it's time for them to go. It may be, of course, that we have to throw clothes out because they're damaged. Perhaps a stain upon them or they've worn out or beyond repair or cleaning.

Again, we may keep them for a little while hoping we can use them in the garden or use them for DIY or something else. But eventually, of course, we know that they have to be thrown away.

It may be that we go through the wardrobe and we find clothes that we no longer like. In fact, we may even find some clothes and we think to ourselves, what possessed me to even buy this in the first place?

And so we decided that that had better go. And finally, it may well be that we discard of our clothes because they're no longer fashionable. That kipper tie from the 70s, those padded shoulder jackets from the 80s.

[5 : 15] We've clung on to them in the hope that fashion will come around again. But there are just some fashions that thankfully never come back again. And so they've got to go.

Well, when a person becomes a Christian, they have a complete change of wardrobe. They discard those items that once they were wrapped up in and replace them with a whole new outfit.

That's how Paul illustrates the makeover which every believer experiences in Christ. See there verse 9. Do not lie to each other since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self.

And later on in verse 12, he says, Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with certain things. It's his way of describing the resurrection life that we've been thinking of all the way through Colossians.

That transformation from being who we were to what we are and what we shall be. There's a transformation.

[6 : 27] We are people who live differently to the way we lived before. There it is in verse 5. Now there's two aspects to this transformation that the Bible talks about.

There's one that takes place at our conversion when we are born again. An instantaneous work, as it were, by the Holy Spirit of God. Whereby we are dead in our sin and we are made alive to Christ.

It's a wonderful transformation work. It's the only way we can become a Christian is when God by his Holy Spirit does that born again work in us. But there's a second aspect to it which is also here in this passage.

And it's something which is a lifelong experience of the believer. It's an ongoing activity which is the result of what God has done for us through Christ.

And what God is yet to do with us in the coming age in glory. We looked there, didn't we, in the first part of the chapter, verses 1 to 4, about what God has done for us.

[7 : 41] He's raised us with Christ. And we have died to the old way of life so that we are now hidden with Christ in God. That's this incredible spiritual transforming work in us.

Taking away, the Old Testament put it, the heart of stone. Putting in a heart of flesh. Making us new creatures. But also it looks forward to what yet will happen.

Verse 4, when Christ is your life appears, you also will appear with him in glory. Glory. There's a wonderful goal ahead of us that we shall one day be in glory with Christ.

And every vestige of sin and that which pollutes will be gone and dismissed. Now in the meantime, between our conversion and that time when we are in glory, there is an ongoing transforming work.

A change taking place. A sorting out of the wardrobe, we might say. And a reclothing of ourselves. We have that there, don't we? The two essences of the old. See, verse 9 says you've taken off your old self and you've put on the new self.

[8 : 47] But then it goes on as about being renewed in the knowledge of the image of its creator. And about clothing ourselves. There's a sense of the ongoing there. And as we think about what Christ has done for us, as we set our minds, we thought last week in verses 1 to 3, as we set our minds and hearts on these realities of Christ, they spur us on, they give us momentum to carry on disrobing, as it were, and discarding the old and redressing with the new.

Now that's the wonder of God's salvation to us. That's the wonder of what it is to be a Christian. It's not just a past experience. It's not just something that's there.

It's not just something, again, to do with the spiritual realm, if I can put it that way, so that's how God views us. The Christian life is eminently practical. It impacts upon our lives today as well as in the past and the future.

And so we find that, indeed, our salvation and God's work is to this end, which we have there, of being renewed in the image of its creator.

We go back to Genesis. This is why it's so important, dear friends, that we have a whole Bible view and a whole understanding that everything within the Bible links together in one glorious plan of God.

[10 : 13] So when we go back to Genesis and chapter 1, what do we find was God's purpose in creating men and women? We find it in Genesis 1, don't we? Verse 26, God said, let us make man in our image.

And we're told that's exactly what happened. Verse 27, God created man in his own image. In the image of God, he created him. Male and female, he created them.

Again, that's very important to see that men and women created in the image of God. There is that wonderful equality that we are all created in that purpose that we might bear the image of God.

Now, of course, we know what happened, don't we? Sin came into the world and corrupted that plan of God's, though God knew all about it, of course. And so very little of the image of our creator remains in humanity.

That's why we see the evils around about us, while we see the pollution and the effects of sin in the world around about us. We see there is very little likeness of the creator left in humanity.

[11 : 23] For that very reason, the Lord Jesus Christ came into the world. He came to reverse the corrupting process of sin in us so that those who believe in him are renewed into the image of God.

Renewed into the image of the one who created us until ultimately, eventually, at his coming again, we shall be just as we were meant to be. Except even better, if I can put it that way, than in the garden of Eden.

So, if you can imagine, there is God creates humanity, sinless humanity. Sin comes into the world and there's this deterioration of humanity getting worse and worse.

But then Christ comes into the world and what does he do? As he works in the heart of a believer, he reverses the process. If we can put it that way, reversing the aging process. You've seen those programs, haven't you? Look, 10 years younger.

I thought about going on that, but I thought, well, I look pretty good as I am. But there's a reversing process. Oh, this is supposed to be. But you see what they have to do to these poor people. They've got to put acid on their faces and they've got to pull their teeth out.

[12 : 31] Oh, dear. All sorts of horrible things. Christ does amazing work in us in that he begins that work. When you become a Christian, there's the beginning, isn't it?

It's the beginning of new life. That's why Paul speaks about those who are new Christians. He says, babes in Christ. We're just learning. We're just starting. We're just beginning to develop and grow. And that's the exciting thing in the Christian life.

We never come to an end of that in this world. God is always at work in us. And again, this is one of the key doctrines that we find in the Bible.

In Romans 8, don't need to look there, verse 29, we read that God predestined us to be conformed to the likeness of his son. That's why God chose to save us. He planned to save us that we might be changed to be like Jesus.

2 Corinthians 3, verse 18. We are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory. And so in this letter that we have before us, in the verses that are here, and in the remainder of the letter really, we have Paul explaining what those changes look like.

[13 : 41] Sort of unpacking. What is a Christian like? What is the wardrobe he wears now? What is the way that he reveals himself to the world?

But also we have, in the verses that we're going to look at this evening, we have reasons why we should carry on the process. Reasons why we should seek God to help us that we might be changed in putting off the old and living in the new.

And the first one, which is a very powerful argument for this process, is there in verse 6. Because of these, what? Because of these old ways of living, these ways which were living by the earthly nature, because of these, the wrath of God is coming.

And that's a serious thing, isn't it? The way we clothed ourselves before we knew Christ, the way we lived, was very dangerous for our health. I don't know if you ever get to watch things like Horrible Histories.

It's a children's program, but it's so educational. It really is helpful. Anyway, one of these history sort of programs, it was talking about 18th century fashions. And the 18th century was very fashionable for men and women to have very white and pale faces.

[15 : 01] Not like the sort of the orange glow that is fashionable today. Now, to achieve this, there was a face powder which you could apply, which would make you very pale and white.

The only problem was, it was made from lead. Now, of course, today we know that lead is very poisonous. And what would happen is they applied it to their skin.

It would be absorbed into the skin. And lead poisoning would take place with headaches, vomiting, illness, and eventual death. Fashionable, but deadly.

Now, the way in which we used to live in the way of this world, the way which is fashionable to our society and community, is deadly. One of the reasons why we shouldn't live that way and we should, as it were, die to these things and get rid of them is because they are severely dangerous and harmful.

God's wrath is coming. God is angry with these things. God is going to bring judgment upon those who live in that way. As we once lived.

[16 : 10] And we see again that these groups, isn't it, that Paul has here, they're not meant to be a definitive list of all the sins that God hates that bring wrath.

They're really just to be, if I can put it, a flavor of those things that God detests in the world. We see that that first group really is, it could be summed up with the word lust.

Sexual immorality, impurity, evil desires, and greed. It's the lust of the flesh. It's the sinful desires for self. To gain for self. To serve self.

To worship self, which is indeed idolatry, rather than worshiping God and living for him, to please him. We see in that second group, well, we could sum it up in one sense, really with pride.

Because out of pride flows anger and rage and malice and slander. It's out of that hatred of one another. Because we feel ourselves better than them. Think of ourselves superior to others.

[17 : 10] That we have a right to be angry with them or speak badly of them and so on. So again, we see that those things grow out of the very opposite for which God created us, which is to love.

Not to exalt self. And then we have, along with that, of course, lastly, we have deception and deceit. Do not lie to each other. False speaking, false living as opposed to truthful and faithful living.

God's judgment is coming. As the people around about us continue in their way of life, one of the great sorrows and sadnesses and tragedies is that they do not realize that God's wrath is coming.

Surely, as tomorrow is coming. Surely, as God exists, he will only suffer these things so long.

His patience will only endure with evil so long. And when his wrath comes, the consequences are going to be terrible. Now, of course, the reality is that we once lived that way, didn't we?

[18 : 21] This is what Paul has to say. Verse 7, you used to walk in these ways. We, too, were like this. We, too, were living self-destructive lives. But we've been rescued from that.

We've been brought out of that. That old way of living is no longer our way of living. We've been rescued and delivered. But, dear friends, to go back is a foolish thing to do, isn't it?

If something is so dangerous and harmful and we've been rescued from it, why would we go back? That's the first reason, then, that we are to put off the old and put on the new, because the old is so destructive and harmful.

The second reason that we are to live this way is because our new life is by God's design. Our old life incurs God's wrath, but our new life is by God's design.

Look at verse 12 particularly, how Paul describes us. Therefore, because you are, therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved.

[19 : 33] Each one of these titles speaks of God's purpose in saving us from sin. We are God's chosen people. That means that we belong to him. We are his.

We carry his name in the world. When people look at us, they are to see the very likeness of God. We have been chosen.

God's chosen us to live for him and to be his standard bearers in the world. He's chosen us to live lives which do his work and accomplish his purposes.

Back in Ephesians and chapter 2 and verse 10. We are God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus to do good works which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Our lives are not just going around in sort of a vacuum. We're not just wandering through life and getting from A to B, from birth to death.

[20 : 36] There's a purpose. God chose us. And he chose us that we might live for him. We see as well, don't we, that we are God's chosen people but we are holy.

That word holy means that we've been set apart from the rest. Not only has God chosen us but he's chosen us out of the world. To be holy means that we are used for holy purposes.

When God took his people out of Egypt, he separated from the rest of the humanity and said you are my people, holy people. And so we've been selected and chosen and brought out and set apart.

Yes, we live in Whitby and we're part of the United Kingdom and we're part of the human race but as Christians we are holy. Not perfect. Not without fault.

Not without sin. Not doing everything right. But in God's sight we are to be different people. Here's Peter as he writes and says something very similar.

[21 : 40] In his first letter, chapter 2, you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

When he says that all these things have happened that we might declare the praises of him who called us out of darkness into light. It doesn't just mean that we should sing songs or hymns on a Sunday. But our lives declare that we belong to God.

God designed us to be different. He says there as well, dearly loved.

Isn't that the most wonderful title that we can have? Dearly loved. Remember that before our sins called for God's wrath and Paul says in Ephesians 2 we were objects of God's wrath.

We were objects of his anger. When he looked upon our sin it made him angry. But in his love he saved us. And the proof of that love is of course seen in the action of the Lord Jesus Christ as he died on the cross.

[22 : 49] Romans chapter 5 and verse 8. God demonstrates, displays his love for us in this. That while we were sinners Christ died for us. So it's only natural that if God loved us to such an extent that our lives are to be lived out in love for him.

Lived out in love for him who loved us. You see this is God's plan for everyone who trusts in him. Verse 11. There's no Greek or Jew circumcised or uncircumcised.

Barbarian, Scythian, slave or free. Christ is all and is in all. It doesn't mean that every single person of those groups has Christ in him. But every believer.

It doesn't matter what outward things separate us. It doesn't matter what outward, whether it be language or age or customs or tradition or any of those things.

Whatever they are outwardly that may divide us. We are united in this plan. We are united in this purpose. We are united in this goal. That we are God's chosen people. We are holy and dearly loved.

[23 : 56] That we might live for him. He lives in us. And his work in us is to make us like himself. Just as we get close to the end.

How does this work practically? How do we, as he puts it there, put to death? Or take off the old? How does this change take place in our lives?

Paul says there, verse 5, to put to death. He says in verse 8, to get rid of. Well, a bit like that process I was describing before about sorting out your wardrobe and your old clothes and so on.

We don't discard everything at once. In other words, when you become a Christian, yes, there's an incredible transformation and change. But it doesn't mean that suddenly everything's sorted out.

Is it? At least, if you know anybody like that, I'd love to meet them. Because for the rest of us, it really is an ongoing process of removing and throwing out those things as we become aware of them.

[25 : 08] As those offensive items, as it were, come up. So then we know how to deal with them. To change the metaphor a little, it's a bit like one of those fairground games where there's all these holes.

And a sort of a rat pops its head out. Have you seen that? And you've got to hit it with a mallet as it pops its head out. It's a bit like that with sin in our lives. These things that Paul speaks about there.

Greed pops its head out. That's when you whack it. One of the things that the false teachers got wrong was they thought that if you sort of deprived yourself of certain things, if you sort of really were hard upon yourself or laid down all these laws and restrictions, then you'll never have to deal with the problem of sin rising up.

But it doesn't work that way. So as greed pops up in our hearts because of an advert on the telly or something that we see or somebody who tells us they've got all this money, then we put it to death.

We say no. That's no longer the way I think. That's no longer the way I live. Whack. I'm going to take off greed. I know it's there. And it may come back again.

[26 : 15] It may come back just like the rat popping up through the hole from time to time. We've got to keep on putting it to death. It isn't a once for all. It's an ongoing process of dying to self.

It may be that eventually, after a while, it becomes all the more easier and no longer pops its head up. Same with anger or lying. As we're aware that there's a temptation to do that.

As we feel that anger or animosity or unforgiveness or whatever it is begin to well up. So we choose not to entertain it. That's the problem with sin, isn't it?

Because when it pops up, there's part of us that wants to give it room in our hearts. Justified in feeling greedy. Justified in feeling angry.

Justified in not forgiving. Well, you mustn't give it room in the wardrobe of our lives. We have to throw it out. And that demands an act of the will.

[27 : 15] The process and the work we're talking about, which God has begun in us, is something that we are part of too. It's not automatic. It doesn't just happen overnight. This does.

This wonderful transformation is God's work. This part is ongoing. God knows it's ongoing. That's why we have this call and this encouragement.

Take off and put on. It demands an act of the will similar to that of Joseph, if you remember him, in Genesis 39. Lust, as it were, came knocking at the door of his life.

This is what happens. One day, Joseph went into the house to attend to his duties. None of the household servants was inside. Potiphar's wife caught hold of his cloak, said, come to bed with me.

What does he do? Left his cloak in her hand and ran out the house. See? He acted. We've got to do that actively, inwardly, in the way that we behave as well.

[28 : 18] Sin takes hold. The temptation says, come and do this. We say, no. We have to disrobe in one sense as he did and run. That's how the change and transformation takes place.

Next time, God allows us, we'll begin to look at what does our new wardrobe look like? How are we to be dressed? The dress code of the Christian.

But let's pray together now as we reflect upon God's word to us. We thank you, our God, that you have a purpose and plan for each of us.

That we might be conformed into your likeness. That we might bear your image to the world, which is ignorant of you. We thank you for that wonderful work that you have done in each one who has put their faith in you.

Transforming and changing us. Making us new creations. Thank you that you've taken out the old heart and put a new one in. Thank you that you've done a wonderful work in us.

[29 : 27] Whereby we've been forgiven our sins. And given eternal life. We thank you, too, for your word, which instructs and helps us. Thank you for your Holy Spirit at work in our lives who changes us.

Thank you that we are being changed from one degree of glory to another. Thank you that you are dealing with those sins in our lives that keep on cropping up. And, Lord, we do look to you for the help that we might be those people who live such lives that display our creator.

We ask, Lord, that you would help us to put to death sin as it arises. In whatever shape or form it may be. For some of us, it's more difficult than others.

For some of us, greed is a real problem. And it's much more difficult for us than lying. For other of us, lying in deceit. Lord, you know us. Each one, we're different. We each have different rats, as it were, that pop out their hole.

But we ask again, oh, Lord, that you would give to us the strength, the grace, the desire to put them to death. And that, Lord, we may indeed take off that which is disheveled and grubby, Lord, and more than that, harmful and dangerous.

[30 : 42] And that we might fulfill the design of your salvation for us. To do those good works you prepared for us in advance to do. Thank you, Lord, that this is your goodwill.

And thank you, it is you who works in us to will and to do what is pleasing in your sight. Help us then, we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.