

“Off with the Old, On with the New”
Colossians 3:1–17
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October 16, 2016 • Evening sermon

Prayer:

Father, thank You so much for the special promises that You have made to us and one of those promises is that Christ has gone on to prepare a place for us and one day You will return to bring us home. We long for that home. We know that to die is better by far because that means we'll be reunited with You but for now we are to live as Christ. We pray that we would live boldly for You in this watching world that is looking for truth and reality but looks in so many of the wrong places. May we reveal through our lives the truth of Your love and Your Word. I pray that even now that You would make Your truth known powerfully to us and for Your glory. Lord, let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be pleasing in Your sight. Father, we thank You for what You have done through the praises of Your people and what You will do through the teaching and preaching of Your Word. May You be glorified and exalted, in Christ's Name, Amen.

I am the young couples pastor at Briarwood Presbyterian Church. It is such a privilege to serve in this capacity at Briarwood. I'm originally from a town called Millersville, Georgia and the license plates of Alabama say 'Heart of Dixie' but I always thought Georgia was the heart of Dixie. If that was so then Millersville was the aorta of the heart because it really was where all the life blood of the state came from. I was disciplined in college by the Briarwood ministry of Campus Outreach and that's how I heard about Briarwood. I came over to a conference at Briarwood where I was amazed, encouraged and blessed by my time at the conference. I stayed after to talk with some leaders in the church and here I am preaching at Briarwood to bring you this study. I praise the Lord for the opportunity to be a part of this staff at this church. It is a blessing to be a part of this church with the mentors, families and people that I am surrounded by here.

I feel somewhat like a midget among giants, who have filled this pulpit here at this church. So I give this with some humility and fear as well but even though I might be a midget God's Word is not and His Word is what we will walk through in this study. God's Word is powerful, effective, sharper than a double edged sword and it will penetrate our hearts. I trust that the Holy Spirit will take this Word and apply it to you so I'm excited to walk through the Scriptures with you because of the time we live in today. That might sound crazy to you at this time for what you hear these days on the news and in the media and all, for this is a difficult, dark time we live in today. There are a lot of trials that have come into our world today, but in reality there is nothing new under the sun.

What was and has been, is currently and will be but just like Esther when she was faced with a difficult day she knew from God that such a time as this He had her where He wanted her. For such a time as this in our culture and country the Lord has us here and it is a dark day, without a doubt. We know that darkness is difficult but we also know that light overcomes darkness.

John 3:19–21 says [19] *And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil.* [20] *For everyone*

who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. [21] But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God.

Some reading this today may not know Christ as Savior. Have you come to the Light of Christ? Have you left your darkness and been clothed in His Light, because without Christ you will continue to walk in darkness. Jesus is the Light of the world and those who come to Him fear no darkness because they no longer walk in darkness but they walk in light and light makes things clear. So the first step is coming to the Light.

Philippians 2:15 says *[15] that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world.* We live in a crooked and twisted generation and when we see crooked and twisted things taking place it really shouldn't shock us because crooked and twisted people who walk in darkness will do crooked and twisted things. But those of us who believe in Christ and desire to walk with Christ are to shine as lights in the world. For as such a time as this we believers have an opportunity to shine as lights in the world.

One of the ways that we shine is by putting off the deeds of darkness and putting on the light of life. Romans 13:12 says *[12] The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.* Christian, are you casting off the works of darkness and putting on the armor of light? We are to be doing this daily and continually. When we clothe ourselves every day we ought to be reminded of the armor of light and intentionally putting off the deeds of darkness.

The text I want to focus on for this study is Colossians 3:1–17 and talk about this life of putting off the darkness and putting on the light so we can shine in this dark world because Light has come into the world in the form of Christ but the world didn't receive Him because they wanted to walk in their darkness. Now that Christ has ascended and is at the right hand of the Father, He still sends His light into the world through His people. We carry this light for Him and we can complain about this crooked and twisted generation or can do all things without grumbling and complaining through Him who strengthens.

Before we look at the text in Colossians I'd like to give a background to it. Colossians was written by the Apostle Paul while he was in prison in Rome. The church in Colosse had some great elders in it, some of who were Philemon, Onesimus and Epaphras. Word had gotten back to Paul about some heresy that was in the church and in this letter Paul talks about the deity and all sufficiency of Jesus Christ contrasted with the emptiness of mere human philosophy. That is the theme of the book. It is a wonderful, rich, uplifting letter to the Colossians. Christ in Colossians is supreme. His salvation is complete and is sufficient for every spiritual and practical need of the believer. Ephesians talks about the body of Christ while Colossians talks about the Head of that Body which is Christ.

Paul writes doctrinally in Colossians 1 while he tells you what your doctrinal duty as a believer is. This chapter also talks of the preeminence of Christ in all things. In Colossians 2 Paul covers the sufficiency of Christ in all things. Colossians 3 and 4 deal with the preeminence and sufficiency of Christ in the believer's daily life getting practical with how this is seen in a believer's life. These two chapters deal with the believer's submission to Christ and this is what we will focus on in this study because these doctrinal truths must produce the fruit of practical conduct. I like the way Paul writes this because you can declare and defend the truth but then you have to demonstrate the truth. In this world today we should be declaring and defending the

truth but we should also be demonstrating the truth by the way we live. The Christian's life should reflect that Christ is first, foremost and preeminent.

There are some colossal gems in Colossians. We learn that Christ is in us. He is the Hope of glory. We learn that we live in Him and are rooted and built up in Him. We learn that we have been given fullness in Him. We learn that we died in Him and have been raised in Him. We learn that our life is now hidden with Him in God. Those are the things you learn when you read Colossians 1 and 2 but now we come to the practical part, the duty part.

Colossians 3:1–17 says *[1] If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. [2] Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. [3] For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. [4] When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.*

[5] Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. [6] On account of these the wrath of God is coming. [7] In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. [8] But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. [9] Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices [10] and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. [11] Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.

[12] Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, [13] bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. [14] And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. [15] And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. [16] Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. [17] And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

I'd like to start by giving you an overview of this text. There is an indicative and there is an imperative. The indicative describes the believer's position in Christ and this is so important to know for Paul spends the first two chapters telling us about this. First, he says that the believer's position in Christ is that he is dead. He has been raised with Christ. He is hidden with Christ. He has put off the old self with its practices and he has put on the new self.

The imperatives indicates what the believer is to do as a result of the indicative. He is to set his heart and mind on things above. He is to put to death practices that belong to his earthly nature. He is to rid himself of practices that characterize his unregenerate self. He is to put on the character of Christ. He is to let the peace of Christ rule his heart. He is to let the Word of Christ dwell in him richly and he is to do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. In short, he is called to become in daily experience what he is positionally in Christ.

Now I'd like to walk back through the text to point out the gems that are deep in this text. It starts off 'if then you have been raised with Christ' and so the question here is, have we surrendered to Christ, crucified with Him and therefore raised with Christ? Have you been united with Him? It is because all that you do starts from this point. He is talking to believers here.

Colossians 3:1–2 says [1] *If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. [2] Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.* How do you shine as light in the darkness? What is your heart and mind set on? It should be set on Christ who is in heaven because heaven is where your Head (Christ) is. Heaven is where your home is and where Christ is preparing a place for you. Heaven is where your treasure should be, where your heart is also. The Lord tells us not to store up treasures on earth where moth and rust destroy and thieves steal but to store them up in heaven. It shouldn't be hard for our heart to be set on heaven because of Christ. Those that are the most content in life are those whose minds and hearts are always on the things of heaven and not on the things of this world.

If your mind and heart are on the things of this world you will surely be disappointed because the things of this world are passing away, rusting away and rotting away. If your treasures are in this world you will be a broken, disappointed person. I have four sons and one of my sons got really excited one time because a new toy was coming in the mail. He had paid for this toy with his allowance and this toy had become his treasure. He kept thinking about it as it was coming in the mail. It arrives and it's a remote control helicopter that he can't figure out how to work it. He is so frustrated and disappointed that it led him to tears because this thing he had set his hope upon didn't work like it had promised it would. The packaging and advertising showed a kid having a blast with this but in reality that is not how it worked. His treasure was there and not in Christ.

We all do that where we get our heart set on things on this earth. Many of us set it on our country. I love America because it's a wonderful country. I am very patriotic and even went to a military high school. I love our country but it can't be my treasure because I will surely be disappointed. My mind and heart must be set on heaven. We are to earnestly strive for the things that are above according to the text.

I grew up in a small town and we would go coon hunting. I think coon hunting is a lot of fun and when we'd go coon hunting you would let that dog go for that dog would earnestly seek out a coon. There was nothing that would hinder that dog from seeking out that coon. One time my uncle and I got lost way back in the woods one night. I had to get his dog, put it on a leash and drag it through the woods. That dog would try to bite me and jump at me because he wanted to go after the coon. He didn't want to go back to the dog box.

We are to strive after with great passion and zeal the things of Christ. That is what Paul is calling us to do here in this text. Philippians 4:8 says [8] *Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.* If you take all of these words in this verse and sum them up then that is who Christ is. Christ is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable, excellent and worthy of praise. We are to think of Him.

Romans 12:2 says [2] *Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.* So often we are conformed to the patterns of this world by the media that we take upon us. We are constantly bombarded with the message of the media of this world and we need to make sure that our mind is renewed constantly by the Word of God and that our heart is not fixed on the things of this world. Our minds should be fixed on Christ because in Christ is hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Colossians 3:3 says [3] *For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.* This is a picture of security. If you are in Christ then you are secure. Our country is not secure and neither is this world. Fill in the blank for it's not secure but Christ is and those who build their life on Him will last through the storms. It is so easy to be drawn away to build your life on the shifting sands of this culture, on the things that pass away. It's easy for me to get caught up in this country because this country has been a great one. It's easy to get caught up in the things of this world but those things are insecure, shifting and waste away. In Christ you are protected from all spiritual enemies. No matter how dark the world gets rejoice that you in Christ Jesus are secure for you are hidden in Him.

[4] *When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.* Praise the Lord He is returning. Come quickly Lord Jesus. Return before this election. Regardless of whether He returns in our lifetime or after He is returning and we can fix our eyes on that. We can look and long for His return and live in light of His return where we will be putting off and putting on which is where the next part of this passage leads us to. This is how we walk in the light for this is a daily thing we need to do.

Colossians 3:5–11 says [5] *Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.* [6] *On account of these the wrath of God is coming.* [7] *In these you too once walked, when you were living in them.* [8] *But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth.* [9] *Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices* [10] *and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.* [11] *Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.*

To put to death is a drastic call to action. It is not passive or when you get around to it or if you feel like it. It is a command for us to put to death that which is earthly in us. We know we've been crucified with Christ, raised with Christ and hidden in Christ but the reality is that we live in a fallen, broken world and we still have an old man. We have a fleshly nature that wants to raise its ugly head and do its ugly business. It's like trying to kill a snake. Even when you kill it, it still wiggles and that can freak you out if you're a little kid but you learn that even then it could still strike you and raise its ugly head. That is the way our sinful nature is. That is why Christ through Paul commands us to put to death what is earthly in us.

How do we do that? Here are three things to show you how to put to death that which is earthly in you. One is that you watch and pray. In Matthew 26:41 Jesus says to His Disciples, [41] *Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.* I Peter 5:8 says [8] *Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.* We must watch and pray because we have an enemy that seeks to devour us.

The second activity to do in our life to put to death that which is sinful in our life is that we walk by the Spirit, live by the Spirit, keep in step with the Spirit and we're led by the Spirit. Galatians 5:16–25 says [16] *But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.* [17] *For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.* [18] *But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.* [19] *Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality,* [20] *idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions,* [21] *envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not*

inherit the kingdom of God. [22] But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, [23] gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. [24] And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

[25] If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.

Romans 8:12–14 says [12] *So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. [13] For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. [14] For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.* In order to put to death that which is earthly we must watch and pray and walk, live, and keep in step with the Spirit so that we can be led by the Spirit.

Thirdly, we must be self-disciplined. Matthew 5:29–30 says [29] *If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. [30] And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell.* This is an aggressive self discipline act here. I Peter 5:8–9 says [8] *Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. [9] Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.* Resist the devil.

Paul says in I Corinthians 9:27, [27] *But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.* So living for earthly desires brings death but putting to death our earthly desires brings life. In Colossians 3:8–9 Paul tells us that which is earthly and these are inward and outward sins of the flesh. It's really easy to judge someone when we see those outward sins but the Scriptures tell us these are also inward sins because that is where the seed of that sin started. Our hearts are dark and wicked and we need to repent and put off these things. So if I stand in judgment against the world, in reality I need to look at myself. I need to ask the Lord what it is in my own life that is still earthly and that I need to put to death. That's why Paul says our hearts and minds need to be fixed on the things of God for He says on account of these the wrath of God is coming.

We used to walk in those ways when we were living in them but now we must put them all away. So it shouldn't surprise us when the world acts like the world. When someone who is not regenerated and acts like the world then it shouldn't surprise us or be shocked. We should understand that is the flesh living itself out but we as believers should no longer walk in those patterns and walk in the light. We are to put anger away, that smoldering attitude of hatred, bitterness and wrath. I used to think I was a very patient guy but then I had kids and I realized it's not them making me angry but that I have an angry heart. They are revealing the wrath and anger within my heart. God knew I needed a lot of help because I have four kids, four boys at that. I might say 'what are you doing' but the Lord is saying 'Jason, what are you doing? What's in your heart because I'm using them to reveal the sin in your heart.'

Malice is the root of that anger. It is intentional evil. Slander is railing or evil speaking. The same word here when it is speaking of God is speaking of blasphemy. So we know when we are slandering people we are basically slandering God and how easy it is to do that especially to someone we don't understand, like someone with an agenda that is opposed to our agenda. We are to put that off. We are to put off obscene talk, shameful or abusive speech from our mouth. We shouldn't lie to each other. We are to be truth speakers. If we say we follow the One who is truth then truthfulness should be essential in our life. We are to put on that which of the new man while putting off the old man.

Colossians 3:11 is referring to us putting on unity and putting off disunity. The church, the body of Christ, should be united. Even those who are different from us, if they are in Christ and we are in Christ, then we are to be one with them, united in purpose with them. So Paul has shown us the things that we are to aggressively put off in the list he gave us in verses 8–9 and now he tells us the things we are to passionately put on.

Colossians 3:12–14 says *[12] Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, [13] bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. [14] And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.*

We are God's chosen! What a privilege and honor and a great reason we have here to obey Him that while I was yet sinful Christ died for me. When I had nothing noble within myself Christ sought me out and placed His affection upon me. When I was wicked and dead He came and gave me life and righteousness. This is not of ourselves for it is His gift to us. This is motivation for us to want to put off and put on. Have compassionate hearts that are sympathetic and gracious. Put on kindness which is graciousness towards others and benevolence in action. Put on humility which is the perfect antidote to self-love. It is a lowly state before the Lord and others. Meekness is the willingness to suffer insult and injury rather than inflict insult or injury on someone else. My heart is more wanting to throw insult and injury out rather than to receive it. Put on patience which is self-restraint and long suffering which endures injustice and troubled circumstances with the hope for coming relief.

We are to put on these things and forgive one another. He doesn't say to forgive when you feel like it or if the person comes and asks for it. We must forgive just as the Lord has forgiven us. Then we are to put on love which is the supernatural adhesive for the church. Love binds all of those things we are to put on together in perfect harmony. This is love in action. These things we're to put on are also mentioned in I Corinthians, the love chapter.

Colossians 3:15 says *[15] And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful.* Within the body of Christ there should be peace. The Greek word for peace here shows as it rules in your heart and it serves as an umpire. Peace rules your decisions and relationships. The Bible tells us that as far as it is up to you then you are to be at peace with all men. So we should seek to be peace makers and not peace keepers. Are you quick to be a peace maker or are you quick to bring division?

Colossians 3:16–17 says *[16] Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. [17] And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*

If you read Ephesians along with Colossians there are some similar patterns. Ephesians 5:18–20 says *[18] And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, [19] addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, [20] giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

We see in these passages that the Spirit and the Word work together to produce the same results – a heart that sings. There is harmony in relationships that give God the glory and honor due Him. When we do things in the name of the Lord Jesus we do things with respect to His authority, with regard to His glory, with reliance upon Him and we do things as His representative/ambassador.

The bottom line that we see in these passages from Paul is to continue eliminating sinful behaviors from our lives and to continue cultivating Christian virtues in our lives. Put off and put on. John 1:5 says [5] *The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.* No matter how dark the world gets or how difficult the day becomes, the darkness has not overcome light. We are to shine as children of the light into this dark, twisted, corrupt generation. You shine when you put off the deeds of darkness and put on the deeds and character of Christ.

As you think through this passage this is a great opportunity to evaluate your life in regards to these Scriptures and its truth. Are you putting off or are you putting on? Is your life more characterized by what is earthly and of the flesh or what is heavenly and of Christ? A life not evaluated isn't worth living for we have to stop and evaluate our life. When we open up the Word of God it is a mirror to our soul. It will challenge us. For me it helps me to think how I treat my children and my wife. How am I treating the one who has a different political platform than mine, and they are attacking you? How are you treating the waitress or the neighbor? How are you treating, not just those who love you, but those who don't? Do we treat them with the deeds of the flesh or with the deeds of the Spirit?

You can tell what a man does by the clothes that he wears. Is he a baker, policeman, fireman or soldier? He has a uniform that reveals what he does. We as believers have a uniform as well. We are to put off the clothing of the world and to put on the clothing of Christ so that the world might know that there is a living God who loves and pursues lost sinners of which we were and who take those lost sinners and makes them into saints for His glory and grace. It is not to us or what we have done but to what He has done and who He is. Then He calls us to continue to put off and put on. This is the great precious process of sanctification. Shine as light into the darkness. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You so much for the opportunity to work our way through this passage. Lord, I pray that we would be people who would rejoice that You have done a great work for this and You have promised to carry out that work to completion. You have not forsaken us and You don't leave us alone in our sanctification and the process of walking through this world. You have divinely placed us in such a time as this even though when we look out there is great darkness, but Lord, You desire to shine brightly through us. You tell us in order to do that we need to put off and put on and as we shine the darkness will never overcome the light. Father, I pray that we would shine brightly for You. Your Word says not to hide this light under a bushel but we will be a city on a hill that gives light to the world. Our country needs to see the light of Christ. May we shine brightly in our homes, our neighborhoods, our work places, those places we serve in and in this city so that the world might know You are. May we put off the deeds of darkness and put on the character of Christ in all we do, in Christ's Name I pray, Amen.