

PRACTICAL CHRISTIAN LIVING - Colossians 3:1-17

WHAT IS LIFE? There are many answers to this question. Life is defined differently by most people. Here's a few:

- NASA defines life as A self-sustaining chemical system capable of Darwinian evolution.
- Life is the embodiment of selfishness.

I like the Merriam Webster definition of **life - the quality that distinguishes a vital and functional being from a dead body.** **But it's not a complete definition without defining what that quality that distinguishes life actually is!** Maybe for some, playing ball is life. Family is life... work is life. Pleasure is life. Money is life. Politics are life. Music is life. Love is life. And people focus majority of their time on that one life quality, and it becomes the most important aspect of who they are... **WHY? FOR WHAT PURPOSE?** After physical death here on earth, what can those things bring? Nothing.

So for the Christian, what is life? Good works are life? Church is life? Bible is life? Kindness is life? Love is life? Forgiveness is life? **NO.** I mean all those things are great, but those things are not what not distinguishes me from being dead. Paul gives us the answer is verse 4: **CHRIST WHO IS OUR LIFE.** Jesus is the purpose driving everything in my life... Sure playing ball is not sinful! Loving my wife and my family is not inherently evil... Money is a necessity and I can't avoid that. Earthly things' are not all evil, but some of them are. Even things harmless in themselves become harmful if we allow them to take the place that should be reserved for the things above. Reserved for Christ.

This means that the way that I handle money, the way I love my family, the way I enjoy my hobbies and carry myself while playing ball, the way I treat others, the things I seek pleasure in, should all be filtered through the reality that Jesus Christ is my life! You may be thinking, how though? I can't stop giving into my desires, my purposes, **AND** when people see me, they don't see Christ? They only see the old me...How can I practically make Christ my life? Well if Paul was a college professor teaching a course through chapter 3 of Colossians, the name of the class would be Practical Christian Living 101. Paul is going to break things down into three sections on Practical Christian Living:

Practical Christian Living 101:

1. **FOUNDATIONS (1-4)**
2. **PUTTING OFF (5-9)**
3. **PUTTING ON (10-17)**

1. FOUNDATIONS

If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. 2 Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. 3 For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

The way we live our lives is based first on how we think, and how we see the world around us. AND Paul begins here by making it clear that **practical Christian living is built on foundations of theological truth**. Paul begins by saying we were raised with Christ. For us who have decided to follow Jesus and live for Him, our old man, our sin nature that looked like Adam was crucified on the cross with Christ and we were raised with Christ from the dead, being given a new man, a new nature that is modeled like Jesus. We have an identity with Jesus in both His death and resurrection.

IT is possible though to be alive and still live in the grave... During WW2, several Jewish refugees hid in a cemetery, and there was a child that was actually born in one of the graves. Likewise today there are tombstone christians who never leave the dead behind and raise up to life. After Jesus was resurrected, did he get comfortable in the tomb, kick His feet up and lounge? Install a TV and catch up on his latest Netflix binge? NO! He left the tomb and the old life behind and lived in His new resurrected body!

- I've been to the tomb where Jesus was laid, it ain't the kind of place you would've wanted to live in!

When he left the tomb He began discipling others and ministering to people! He lived in supernatural power and did the impossible. He looked forward to heaven, knowing He was about to ascend... AND because we were raised with Christ, we should do the same, leave the dead man behind, minister to people, be empowered by the Holy Spirit, and recognize our citizenship is in heaven.

We need to set our minds on things above, not on things on the earth... We need to set our minds on the truths of God's Word... rather where our society/culture at large today says we need to set our minds on self. Self-identification, self-gain...

This focus on self then degenerates to man setting their minds on Wealth. Materialism. Fame. Recognition. Sex. It is a pursuit of gaining as much happiness/pleasure as possible from the world. Pursuing Things that the flesh desires. **I believe the song 7 Rings from pop icon Ariana Grande perfectly encapsulates our cultures obsession with self-gain. Let me read some of the lyrics for you:**

"Lashes and diamonds, ATM machines Buy myself all of my favorite things Whoever said money can't solve your problems Must not have had enough money to solve 'em They say, "Which one?" I say, "Nah, I want all of 'em. I want it, I got it, I want it, I got it I see it, I like it, I want it, I got it."

And if Ariana basking in the delights of instant gratification wasn't enough, **KIDZ BOP Enterprises has taken this song and branded it to kids in a music video led by 6-12 year old children. KIDZ BOP's goal has always been to give kid-friendly versions of pop songs to kids... and sure the curse words and expletives in the song have been changed, but the message of this song is not so kid-friendly!** This is what our culture says is important to the next young generations and they are being told to set their minds on self.

But realize all of the fame, wealth, shopping, alcohol, money, diamonds, looks, sex appeal, can't fill the void in man's heart that can only be filled by salvation and life in Christ! Those things Arianna is singing about are worthless, temporal, and not fulfilling. BUT it is everything the world wants right? That mindset of I see it I like it I want it I got it... HOW SAD....

CS. LEWIS - It would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a vacation at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.

When we set our minds on things below, we focus on momentary pleasure/happiness VERSUS setting our minds on things above, and focusing on the spiritual realities that bring eternal, everlasting, infinite joy... Remember Paul is talking about the foundations here. **What you set your mind on determines what you are willing to be identified with.**

I am NOT saying you need to avoid being a part of everything earthly! Instead, I am saying don't set your mind on those things of the earth! Set your mind first on Christ and your identity in Him. We need to look at earth from heaven's point of view.

THIS IS OUR FOUNDATION in verse 3-4, that you died, and your life is hidden with Christ. CHRIST is our life, and when he appears, we will also appear with Him in glory.

- I have been crucified with Christ, thus I am dead to the flesh and to the things of the flesh and to the life of the flesh; I should not be living after the flesh. My new life is hidden with Christ in God. This means because of the cross victory was won over the old sin nature that wants to control us! Jesus broke the power of sin over you...
- ONE DAY, when Jesus returns all the world will see the saints of God for what they really are, not as they merely appear to this world. One day they will envy the life and the glory that they once couldn't see hidden in our lives.

SO POINT #1 in Practical Christian Living: **Remember your foundation.** You died and rose with Christ, made new and alive. Dead to the things of the flesh and alive in Christ. SO set your mind on the things above, not on the things of the earth. **CHRIST IS LIFE.**

With this understanding of the basis of our foundation, now Paul addresses specific things which the believer must put off and put on as a new person in Christ. **POINT # 2 is PUTTING OFF.**

As a Christian you are a new person! There attitudes you need to put off and attitudes you need to put on! Those old habits, those old outworn clothes are nasty, kinda smell, got holes in it, and yet you've still been holding onto it you know who you are...or it is now way too small it doesn't even really fit you and you look ridiculous when you wear it but it reminds you of the time you had as the old you..... Throw it out! A new man needs a new wardrobe! Put on the new thoughts, the new habits, the new lifestyle that comes when Christ is LIFE!

2. PUTTING OFF

5 Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. 6 Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, 7 in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them.

One of the most important words we are going to read this morning is that 1st word in verse 5, "THEREFORE". Paul is trying to slow us down and realize that the only way we can put to death those things in our lives is to understand point #1, our identification with Jesus!

The next two points of practical Christian living are only possible in light of point 1, our foundations. Paul is going to talk about sins we need to put off and godly attributes we need to put on, and NONE of it is possible without first understanding your foundational identity in Christ. NONE of this putting off and putting on is possible in your own efforts.

We are so quick to jump to a list of do's and don'ts, we want to be told the 7 step process, and we want to know how to put in the work and take control. But we can't succeed in Christian living, apart from the power of Christ in our lives who has broken the power of sin and given us a new nature.

Paul tells us to put to death our members which are on the earth... Paul said it another way in **Romans 6:11-12 - 11 Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

If you grew up in the south, you know the word **reckon** right haha... and you may not see this in me much, but I have some country roots. We have some country bumpkins in my family! I love em, and I reckon they love me too.

Reckon here means to calculate, to conclude! Conclude yourself to be dead to sin and alive to God! God doesn't tell you to crucify your old man! He already did that when you first came to Him to accept Him into your heart... What you and I need to do now is conclude our old man is dead.

Put to death here literally means to make dead! Very strong wording. It suggests that we are not simply to suppress or control evil acts and attitudes. We are to wipe them out, completely exterminate the old way of life. (Vaughan)

The first he mentions is FORNICATION - greek word is pornea. Means All sex outside of heterosexual marriage. You recognize that word pornea, its where we get our word pornography. This is a catch-all statement. Pornography, homosexuality, adultery, crossing the line with your boyfriend, All sex out of a heterosexual marriage is fornication. Uncleanness, passion, and evil desire are also referring to this sexual sin.

- Sexuality was designed by God for a husband and a wife! Sex before/outside marriage is not blessed by God and He does not approve of it! Even though it may seem right in the moment!

Have you ever put a glass of rubbing alcohol next to a glass of water? They look identical when put right next to each other...There are poisons that look like crystal spring water. The two look alike next to each other. But one has death in it, the other life. You have to discover by other means than drinking of the two glasses.

In the same way there are many things in life that are deadly, but have the seeming appearance of goodness. This is why we must make choices on the basis of God's Word, not on the basis of appearance.

Fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire... put it death... cut it off... and you can't cut it off on your own, there's no 10 step process to stop giving into lust, but only by holding fast to the power of God that conquers sin.

Paul also mentions Covetousness which is idolatry... greed, desire for other people's stuff, greed is a form of idolatry... We idolize having the material wealth, goods, life that other people have, because it what the world says we need! He continues in verse 6 saying that

Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, Realize plainly that these sins invite the wrath of God... And as the world continues in sin, it adds to their condemnation. Greater consequence.

Verse 7 though, Paul says these sins are in the past tense for the Christian! You once walked in these things when you lived in the flesh! So we must ask ourselves are we still walking daily in any of these things? Simply put, A Christian should not be living like the world lives! Christians can not be comfortable in habitual sin. I like what David Guzik said **"Christians once walked in these sins. It is possible – though tragic – that these sins should occasionally mark a Christian's life, but they must not be a Christian's walk, their manner of living."**

Now verses 8-9 Paul tell us to put off another lists of sins. Some people may not even regard these things as sins at all and rather are just normal parts of being human. We may be tempted to overlook some of these things...BUt we need to put off the old man in every area of our lives...

8 But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. 9 Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds,

Each of these sins are mainly committed by what we say and how we treat others... Much of our Christian life is practically lived out in the way we interact with the people around. The first he tells us to put off is:

- ANGER - greek implies a festering, stewing anger that leads to further sin
- WRATH - thumos - a hot volcanic anger, an explosive temper that erupts...
- MALICE - pleasure in someone elses misfortune
- BLASPHEMY - CONTEMPT, treating people like they are worthless, or beneath consideration...
- FILTHY LANGUAGE - profanity and demeaning words...
- DO NOT LIE: DECEPTION, verbal-nonverbal, lies destroy trust and honesty in relationships.

Pauls tells us to put these things off... These sins have no place in the life of the new man in CHrist! **Once the caterpillar has been made a butterfly,** the butterfly has no business crawling around on trees and leaves like a caterpillar again. Christian you are butterfly, get up off the ground, you're not a caterpillar anymore.

To the same illustration, a caterpillar trying to fly without first being made into a butterfly is not fooling anybody but himself.... (look at me I'm a beautiful butterfly)

WHICH OF THESE DO YOU RELATE TO? I am sure we all can relate to some of these attitudes if not most of them... How we treat people is a reflection of who we say we are and what we believe. If you are constantly treating people with anger, exploding in a raging temper ,for whatever the reason is, what does that say about who you are and who the God you believe in is?

IF you are often speaking to people with demeaning words, or if you're using filthy language to fit in at work, or deceiving people to get what you want, what kind of representation of God are you portraying? And this is what I have heard so many times: BUT THEY DID THIS TO ME!! HOW COULD I NOT LASH OUT IN ANGER? I HAVE SAID IT SO MANY TIMES!!

- My mom won't give me what I want and let me do XYZ at home, and I know better than her, how could I not explode on her in a rage if she's being like this!
- THAT person said this about me, called me this name, went behind my back, hurt our friendship, how could I not curse them out and call them hurtful names too!
- THERE IS NO WAY this person will ever see things how I see them, so I have no choice but to lie and deceive to get what I know that I need.

In my early years of high school was so characterized by these things that I don't even know why anyone would've wanted to be friends with me! Every word out of my mouth was laced with filth and derogatory language... of course I never showed that side of me when I was at church though! That was my secret and for awhile I thought it was okay and normal for me to be this way...

A lady once came to Billy Sunday and attempted to rationalize her angry outbursts. She said, "There's nothing wrong with losing my temper. I blow up, and then it's all over." Mr. Sunday replied, "So does a shotgun, and look at the damage it leaves behind!" Think of the damage we cause to the representation of Jesus when we treat people with anger, and malice, and deception... it is not okay to continue in these things...

You and I have no excuse EVER to treat people these ways and sin. It doesn't matter the reason, we have a choice whether or not to be the new man or the old man...

Paul says put these things to death... Put it off, exterminate this old way of life... after grasping hold of the foundations of our identity in Christ, that identity will change the way we think and act and live. Put off the old man who has already been crucified on the cross with Jesus...

NOW in verse 10 we'll open our 3rd and final point on practical christian living, putting on.

3. PUTTING ON

10 and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, 11 where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.

It is time for a wardrobe change! Take off the old man and put on the new man in Jesus. And realize in Jesus, there is no difference between any of us! There is no special elite group of Christians. There is no special club! In verse 12 we are called the elect of God! If you are in Christ God considers you special! You are elected by Him, chosen! NOT elite, where you must earn your status. Christ is all and in all... SO be the new man! PUT on the new things of CHRIST! Paul lists some of the new pieces of clothing we need to add to our wardrobe and wear!

12 Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; 13 bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. 14 But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. 15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. 17 And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

PAUL TELL US TO PUT ON:

Tender mercies: If something is tender, it is sensitive to touch.

Kindness: It is the word used when Jesus said, 'My yoke is easy.'

Humility: parent of the meekness and longsuffering:

Meekness: ACTION: I will not dominate, manipulate, or coerce for my own ends, even if I have the power and the ability.

Longsuffering: REACTION: I will not become impatient, short, or filled with resentment towards the weaknesses and sins of others.

And the big one, FORGIVENESS: Forgive in the same pattern that Jesus forgives us! That's a tall order! We need to forgive like Christ forgives us... God is Longsuffering and patient waiting for us to turn to Him, quick to forgive when we do come, adopts us after forgiving us even though he knows we'll sin again, and decided to bear all of the penalty of that sin, in order to completely restore you and me.

We need to forgive others this way...

Paul continues in verse 14 and says ABOVE ALL PUT ON LOVE: the bond of perfection.: LOVE is the summary of all of these things... "The other virtues, pursued without love, become distorted and unbalanced."

No one has ever proved their love like Jesus did in dying for us. Love is dying to self, and living for others. Not selfish gain, but promoting one another... That's what Jesus did as He screamed out in pain as your sin and my sin was laid upon his shoulders... That is love...

Do you treat the people in your life with love? Not just A “I know deep down that they love me” OR “because they have to love ” “family relation” kind of love, but can people actually experience the love you have for them? Do you die to yourself for others? I know I fail at this... I get selfish with the people I love and choose to die on a hill of pride rather than die to myself and love.

Oh that we would love like Christ loves us, think of how different things could be...

V.15 **And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.** peace should characterize the community of God’s people! God’s peace should be like the **umpire that’s behind home plate**, calling the shots, helping us discern what God’s will is and isn’t.

Paul wraps it all up here in verse 17... **And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.** This is the culmination of what Paul is saying... **BE LIKE JESUS!** DO EVERYTHING IN LIGHT OF JESUS. BEFORE YOU DO SOMETHING THINK ABOUT WHAT JESUS WOULD DO/SAY? ANd the only way we can be more like Jesus is to put off the old man and put on the new life He’s bought for us... We have to make a daily conscious decision when we look in the mirror to recognize that the problem is me, my flesh and I need more of Jesus in me!

The world doesn’t need more Andrew Taylor. More of my voice! The world doesn’t need more of any of us! The world, us included, needs more of Jesus. We are so foolish to think our voice matters more than that of Jesus Christ..

As we close I want you to consider one glaring problem for many Christians when looking at practical Christian living. This problem is the reason why unfortunately so many Christians end up living defeated Christian lives.

The problem is we are so quick to skip the foundations... point#1... our identity in Christ, and instead jump to focusing on point #2 and #3 putting off bad habits of sin, and putting on new godly traits... And without our foundations laid, we start trying so hard to prove ourselves before God and we get trapped in a cycle of legalism... Trying to be good enough for God’s approval. I’ve been there!

I’ve tried to prove myself to be good enough for God, trying to earn His favor. In that time I felt powerless, I still felt trapped in bondage to my sin, my lust, NOT FREE like I heard I was supposed to be FREED from my sin... the problem was I was trying to drag around my old man!!

I was living with one foot in the tomb and one foot out! Trying to drag around this dead weight of the old man, not letting go of my old identity in my flesh... **I was living the Weekend at Bernie’s Christian life, carrying around my dead man. I was doing this honestly out of fear just like Larry and Richard...** Fear of giving up the comfortability of my flesh... let’s face it we get comfortable in those old ratty clothes we’ve had for forever, comfortable in those old habits and lifestyles we had before we chose to follow Jesus... And let’s be honest, those clothes kinda stink don’t they? They smell horrible, like the dead rotting flesh of the old man...

BUT we must reckon and conclude the old man dead and stop placing our identity in the old man! He’s dead! You’re better off without him! You’re now a new you! **You’ve been FREED!** Freed from the power and bondage of sin.

The ideas of putting off and putting on are rooted in knowing your new identity in Jesus. We must make a decision to leave the old man behind for good... and begin changing out our wardrobe, putting off the old and putting on the new... We need to be daily changing out this wardrobe too and updating it to be filled from wall-to-wall with more of Jesus.

That's what Calvary Chapel did when they purchased the castle Schloss Heroldeck in 1988. The castle is located in Milstatt, Austria overlooking Milstatt lake. The wealthy Vianese family who owned the castle were forced to sell it to the Nazi regime in 1938. The Nazis bought the castle in order to use it as a training ground for SS Officers/Soldiers. You can see the Nazi flag actually flying in the picture here...

But today it has become a conference center for the Calvary Chapel's in Europe, and a place where missionaries come to serve and to be served. A place that was once used for evil, to train wicked men, a place where the Nazi flag once flew above, is now a place used for God's glory and to minister from.

Now I don't just bring this up to tell a piece of history, but I want you to consider this thought as we close... What if Calvary Chapel would have just decided to say "hey why don't we just keep the nazi flag up still? For memory sake! I mean I know this castle is ours now, but what's the harm... let's fly the nazi flag..."

What would you think if Calvary Chapel did this? ARE YOU CRAZY??? !! How dare they! Why would they honor a dead evil regime that only used this old castle for harm....They would have never done this! It's unthinkable....

IN the same way... when we hold onto the old man it would be like if Calvary Chapel decided to raise up and fly a nazi flag at the castle today... How unthinkable! But we do it... We hold onto the memory of the old man. We've been given a new body, a new castle, that is built and used for God's glory... yet some of us are still flying the old's man flag...

And then we wonder why we struggle to practically live life for Jesus... If you are struggling in your walk with Jesus, first you need to get back to your foundations... Remember your identity in Christ! The old man has been crucified on the cross. Stop flying the old man's flag...

The key to practical Christian living begins with recognizing that the old man is dead and you made alive in Jesus Christ... Remember these foundations! Set your mind on things above. And only then let's go PUT OFF the old sinful habits, and PUT ON more of the love and forgiveness of Jesus... You don't have to live the defeated Christian life! We can walk in the victory and freedom of our risen lord Jesus, Amen.

Let's Pray.