

Colossians 3

Read Colossians 3: 1-11: This is about something good inside of you and something evil inside of you. Are both opposite forces a reflection of who we really are? Our life is not about our failures. It is about our acts of faith. A baseball player who hits .370 is doing very well; despite the fact that he is failing most of the time. God is looking for evidence of faith. The failures are expected.

For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. “He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.” (John 3:17-21)

God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. (2 Corinthians 5:19)

It is interesting that agents of God all fail and sin. God only looks at our acts of faith. We also have the opportunity to be faithful and do good.

...without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. (Hebrews 11:6)

There is a difference between *positional holiness* and *practical holiness*. When we receive Jesus Christ as our savior we become set apart for God's purposes. It is as if family members are not judged by performance. Our sins and actions no longer define us. We are categorized as clean people. There is, however, a responsibility that we do have to obey God; and turn from evil.

I replaced the air filter in our houses air conditioning return vent this week. It was full of dust and mold...and very unhealthy looking. The filter acts like a debris trap; to keep our breathing environment clean and healthy. Our conscience is like an air filter. It detects unhealthy things flowing out of us. The Holy Spirit urges us to act on our conscience. That is practical holiness. Luke is taking all of the good and evil things that are within us; and separates them into two groups. There are things that we should hang on to; and nasty stuff that we should throw out; before we get further-weakened and sick.

What is the point of taking spiritual inventory? Because we get used to unclean things if we continuously allow them. A born-again person has two natures within them. That is why clean animals have a split hoof (two natures). A natural person does not have this division. Paul sorts our opposing natures into *a living spiritual man*; and *an earthy and selfish man*. We carry two

natures within us. This chapter tells us how to segregate them. We are to starve the dark nature; and feed the *person of light* within us. Paul is telling us that the spiritually-minded man will still experience the old cravings. We can reduce the effects of the old nature by focusing on the new nature.

These conflicting thoughts and desires are present in our mind. Religion is tells us to ignore these natural impulses and act like they do not exist. The spiritual part of me allows me to have peace of mind, amidst these accusations and constant contradictions. Yes, my filter is dirty, and should be changed. I can point out my own sin and clarify the problems without bringing myself under condemnation.

Luke tells us to put on the new nature, as if it is a robe. The bible uses outer garments as identifiers. A *robe of righteousness* covers up the ugly mistakes and poor judgements from the past. It is also my passport to heaven; though I am fully aware of my past and sinful inclinations that keep re-growing.

I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, My soul shall be joyful in my God; For He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, As a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, And as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. (Isaiah 61:10)

Read Colossians 3: 12-17: God wants us to love him and love each other. That summarizes the whole Bible.

“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?” Jesus said to him, “‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.” (Matthew 22:36-40)

How do we do that, especially amidst our weaknesses and sins? These are not necessarily borne out of our willpower.

...do not worry about how or what you should answer, or what you should say. For the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say.” (Luke 12:11-12)

“It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” (Acts 1:8)

Paul is describing it like putting on a Batman cape. There is an invisible superpower uniform that the angels can see. These skills and love for each other have another origin.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. (2 Corinthians 5:17)

Why do I not feel like a spiritual superhero if I have the Holy Spirit in me? There might be a few good reasons. God equips us for the job at hand. We read about Peter and Paul waving handkerchiefs over sick people and healing them. That was called for in that moment. We do not tell God that it is time to speak in tongues or heal someone. It doesn't even work that way. Secondly, God is a master at hiding the divine in the mundane.

It is the glory of God to conceal a matter (proverbs 25:20)

Thirdly, we really do not see ourselves. We all have limitations or thorns in our flesh. We absolutely cannot handle much glory or accolade.

It seems odd to tell someone to be loving. That seems like an unreasonable request. It is easier to understand the commands to: be gentle, be patient, forgive, don't retaliate, build each other up, sing songs of appreciation, etc... Some are more action, and some seem more like an attitude. If we are obedient; the feelings will follow. As they say: "*Fake it until you can make it*".

Read Colossians 3:18-25: Now we combine spiritual characteristics with earthly relationships. As Christians, we are to love our brothers and sisters. Natural men are supposed to love their wives as well. There are some typical shortcomings that qualify for a *standard marriage*...but fall short of our calling. The wife is told to submit to her husband and the husband is told to not be bitter towards his wife. The critical word for the wives means *to yield*. The word for the men is love (agape) his wife. In other words, the wife has to respect the husband for his position; even though he has fallen short. Her job is to honor him publicly and privately. God will deal with him. Likewise the husband has to hold his wives' needs above his own...and to build her up...instead of being focused on how she can meet his needs. He is not to show her how it feels to not get what you want. The husband is to deliver on his part; and not worry about the rest of it. God will take care of that. Unfortunately, the couples do not typically hold to this higher standard; and they make up their own *field adjustments*. *Since you shorted me here...I will short you there*. This earthy dynamic progressively degrades until it is unsustainable.

The other examples of employment and child-parent relationships follow the same logic. There is the legal expectation; and then there is what God is looking for. He wants to capture hearts; and serve each other with enthusiasm and joy. The only way that we can do that is to have a servant attitude. That only comes from spending time in prayer. Otherwise; we just want to be served.

This whole chapter is about operating at a higher level than we are. We can provide the willingness to try (expectations aside). That baby step requires prayer and obedience to become real and part of our daily way of living.