

“¹ If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. ² Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. ³ For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ, *who is* our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. ⁵ Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: ⁶ For which things’ sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: ⁷ In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them. ⁸ ¶ But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. ⁹ Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; ¹⁰ And have put on the new *man*, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him: ¹¹ Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond *nor* free: but Christ *is* all, and in all.” (Col 3:1-11)

I. If you are a Christian, then there is conflict in you.

- A. Being a Christian does not mean that your struggle with sin is over; rather, your war with sin could not begin until you became a Christian. The Bible presents the natural man as being under the total control of sin, the flesh, and the devil. God is not at all in his thoughts; the devil takes him captive at his will. There is no warfare, for sin is in complete control.
- B. There may be the kind of struggle the pagans described, as conflict between the body and the mind, for the unsaved can know that kind of struggle. The desires of the body very often lead the ungodly into fleshly sins that cause them embarrassment and anguish. But even this embarrassment and anguish is self-centered and will soon vanish if reputation somehow can be restored. [Illustration: FR] There is no desire for virtue, only the desire for the reputation of virtue, and the rewards that virtue brings.
- C. But these things changed when you became a Christian. If you are a child of God, there is something in you that desires your heavenly father--the Holy Spirit has put something of heaven in you. That something is the restored image of God, the "Spirit of Adoption" which recognizes God as its father, and believes in the Lord Jesus Christ. A new principle of life has been implanted within you. See Romans 8:15-17.
- D. This means that the struggle with sin has just begun, because the old nature that you inherited from Adam is not eradicated or up-rooted. It continues to be at enmity with God. It continues to strive against the truth. This conflict is described in Galatians 5:14-26. Note several things:
 1. The fruit is peculiar to its own nature. This is what Jesus said. "A good tree...."
 2. Good fruit is not pinned on to the old tree; nor is the old tree redirected to produce good fruit. The old tree--the natural man, the flesh--can only bring forth one kind of fruit, and it will always be evil.
 3. Evil fruit is always the manifestation of the flesh and the old man.
 4. Those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh: this is the key. There is only one way to overcome the works of the flesh, and that is by faith: faith in Jesus Christ. "Have crucified..." You have accepted God's verdict concerning your flesh, and the conflict has begun. Having begun to live in the Spirit, we are called also to walk in the Spirit.
- E. Ephesians 3:14-19. This is the key to walking in the Spirit: Strengthened by might in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; knowing the love of Christ, rooted and grounded in love. This is the new tree taking root in your life; this is the walk of the Christian.

- F. So If you are a Christian there is a war in your soul; there is conflict; there is no doubt as to the end result of this conflict, for you have been predestined to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. But there may be a great deal of struggle and anguish along the road to that predestined end.
- II. This blows away all forms of perfectionism: the idea that some of us have "arrived," and have won the victory.
- A. The victory is predestined, but it will not be seen in us, until the Lord appears, and we see Him as He is. "Beloved now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." I John 3:1. But these things are certain:
- B. The Lord knows his sheep. We do not know. We do not know what is going on in the hearts of people. I do not know what conflict rages in your soul. But the Lord knows, and He also knows whether or not there is His work in your soul. But that is what I am trying to connect with this morning; for the preaching of the word does two things:
1. It calls forth life out of deadness: regeneration. It brings life where there was no life. The preaching of the Gospel is to them that perish foolishness, but to us which are saved it is the power of God. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God.
 2. It connect with the new life that has been called forth. The Lord's sheep hear his voice. They follow him. I pray that both things will be done this morning: that there will be life where there was no life; and that where there is life, there may be life more abundant.
- III. Let us look at the text.
- A. vs. 7: You walked as you lived. Where you live, is where you will walk. If you live in yourself and for yourself, there can only be one outcome: the works of the flesh. He has already said to put off the gross things: sexual uncleanness that so characterized the pagan world; and always becomes prominent again when paganism rears its head. This characterizes the life of the lost, and must not characterize the life of the saved. Don't live like you are not a Christian. The way you live will not make you a Christian; nor will it unmake you as a Christian; but if you profess Christ, bring you life into conformity with your confession.
- B. vs. 8. Just because you have put off some of the gross things; don't think that you have arrived. This is a common trap for God people. They have come to Christ; they have had something of a change in their lives, and they think they have arrived. Paul is saying, "No, you still have a long way to go." This stuff is also to be put off:
- anger: same as wrath in vs. 6. The risings of the old nature are displeasing to God, even though we may try to sanctify it. Why should you be angry with God's people?
 - wrath: anger is the sudden outburst; wrath is the settled disposition. These things characterize the old nature, Adam. How many people live constantly in anger and wrath!
 - malice: general wickedness: probably refers to malicious speaking and gossip.
 - blasphemy: speech directed against God; or actions flying in the face of his righteousness and holiness. It is blasphemy to say we love God, when we war against His people and speak and act against them.
 - filthy communication out of your mouth. The word for "filthy" meant "foul or filthy" speaking. It also could mean abusive talk. In general it meant dirty talking and abusive talking. It was that that did, or should, cause shame. "It is

a shame even to speak of some things" is the word of the Apostle. Certainly coarse talking, coarse jesting, crude and filthy talking are to be put off, according to the commandment of the apostle.

C. As the H. C. #109 puts it:

Does God forbid nothing more in this Commandment than adultery and such gross sins?

Since both our body and soul are temples of the Holy Ghost, it is His will that we keep both pure and holy; therefore He forbids all unchaste actions, gestures, words, thoughts, desires, and whatever may entice thereto.

- D. Paul says that these things are of the old man, and they are to be put off.
- vs. 9. The Christian faith begins in truth, and it walks by truth, and it will be consummated in truth. Lies characterize the old man. He and his deeds are to be put off. Do not lie to each other, to yourself, or to God. He doesn't lie to you; and you are not to lie to Him.
1. Lies of commission: saying things that are not true: bending reality.
Illustration: funny mirrors.
 2. Lies of omission: allowing an untruth to stand, because we are not willing to be good witnesses.
 3. Lies of appearance: pretending something different than the reality, though we may not utter a word.
- E. vs.9-11: What is this we are doing: removing the image of Adam; being renewed in the image of Christ. Christ is all. Nothing else matters. What is the pride, the illusion that you and I cling to, but that there is something in ourselves that needs to be preserved? We hold to it with all our strength. Christ is all. There is nothing else. If he died for us, then we are all dead. We must no longer live for ourselves, but for Him who loved us and died for us. If you are a Christian there is something in you that responds to what I say, when I speak of Christ. But because you are also a sinner, there is something that rebels, and tries to cling more firmly to the illusion and dream.

IV. How can we do this? You say, "I have tried a million times to be better. But I keep falling." We fall because of one reason alone: we live in our own strength.

- A. Remember Eph. 3:14-21. Read again. Paul knew how difficult the struggle is; but he also knew how to overcome. "You need strength in the inner man"
- B. Galatians 5:16 "Walk in the Spirit..." You have to walk where you live. The key is the Spirit of God. We need His power and His work in our lives. And Christ has promised Him to us: See two verses:
 1. Luke 11:11-13 Give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him.
 2. This is the secret: to seek from Christ; yes, rather, to give yourself to Christ. He will see what you pray in secret, and will begin to reward you openly, in the manner of your life, and in the blessings of grace upon you.

May God bless you.