

Christ is all and in all

By Bob Young

Text: Col. 3:1-17, verse 11

Introduction

To declare and defend faith and truth does little good without demonstration

Personal lives must not deny the doctrines we profess to love (professing to know God, in works denying him, Titus 1:16)

Pagan religion says little and demands little of personal morality. Belief and behavior not connected.

But Christianity connects doctrine/duty, logic/living, creed/conduct. This was a new concept. We share his death, resurrection, life; united with Christ. He cannot live in us by his Spirit when we live in sin.

I. Looking UPWARD, 3:1-4, changes our priorities

Anthropos, common etymology, "the upward looking one"

1. We died with Christ, fullest explanation in Rom 6

2. We live in Christ, Christ is our life. (He that hath the son hath life—1 John 5:12)

We are dead and alive at the same time—dead to sin, alive in Christ. "Life is what you are alive about..."

Is it baseball, ice cream, new toys? For Paul, Phil. 1:21; 3:8-10 ILLUS: Two youth became Christians—were invited to parties with old friends. We regret we cannot attend because we recently died.

3. We are raised with Christ. Not if, but since.

4. We are hidden in Christ.

We cannot be found unless we want to be found—do you give yourself away in the spiritual game of hide and seek? The world does not know this life because it does not know Christ. In this hidden life, the things that attract and excite us belong to heaven, things above...

5. We are glorified in Christ.

We have already been glorified (Rom. 8:30). But this glory is not yet revealed, 1 John 3:1-3

6. We are seeking and thinking about above things where Christ is seated.

"So heavenly minded that we are of no earthly good." Political commentary on Washington DC: Where you stand depends upon where you sit. True spiritually—how I stand and walk, depends upon where I sit, and how much I am aware that I have been seated with Christ in the heavenlies.

Joshua and Caleb, on edge of promised land, believed God. Endured the 40 years of wandering, because minds and hearts were in Canaan. Abraham was looking for a city...

When we look upward, we see Christ who is our LIFE.

II. Looking INWARD, 3:5-9, leaving behind, changes our way of living

There are two aspects of this inward look—negative/positive, backward/forward

1. Negatively, looking backward to what has been left behind, what has been put off and discarded.

Paul's picture is that these things have been mortified—put to death.

This is a negative. Some do not like the negative; they only want the positive. Positive talk will not cure appendicitis. Cookbooks do not taste good. TV shows on gardening do not get rid of weeds.

Put to death, just as the old person has been crucified with Christ (Gal. 6:14, Gal. 2:20), consider yourself dead to sin (Rom. 6:11).

Negative--Put off...

Fornication--Sexual immorality in general

Uncleanness—impurity connected with luxury, loose living

Inordinate affection—excitement after the forbidden, especially sexual impurity

Base desires—kill the appetite, replacement therapy

Covetousness—idolatry

Do Christians commit such sins? We can find lots of sermons against the sins of the saints. The gospel preaches to the lost about sin. Sin in the life of a Christian is different from sin in the lives of others. It is worse. Such are often sins in good standing.

We are so accustomed to anger, criticism, coarse humor, that we do not even see such sins.

The biblical picture is of changing clothes—exchanging grave clothes for grace clothes.

Anger, wrath, malice

Blasphemy, abusive language, lying

2. The second aspect of the inward look is positive, looking forward, putting on.

This is illustrated in our understanding of “renewal.”

Two words for new—neos is new in time; kainos is new in quality, fresh

The believer puts on the new person, as a consequence is renewed, changed in quality, becoming like Jesus. It is not only that God sees us differently because of Christ, we are different. We are new creatures, 2 Cor 5:17.

How does this happen? Knowledge; the better we know Christ, the more we are like him, Phil. 3:10.

Created in image of God, formed in his image, deformed by sin, tempted to be conformed to world, but transformed by Christ. Renewal; transformed to his image, 2 Corinthians 3:18; conformed to image of his son, Romans 8:29; becoming like him, 1 John 3:1-3.

Thus in Christ Jesus all human distinctions disappear. In Christ there are no nationalities, no recognition of previous religious differences, no cultural differences, no economic or political differences.

This concept changes how we do church. It is wrong to build fellowship on anything other than Jesus.

Do not build ministries on human distinctions—race, color, social standing, poverty... One evidence of spiritual growth and spirituality in the church is to receive and love all who sincerely seek to know Christ and glorify him.

We see that Christ is all and in all.

III. Looking AROUND, outward, 3:12-17, changes the way we do church

A. This section is about US, plurals.

We are elect, holy, loved

We are to put on...hearts of compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience

We are forgiven, we forgive one another, forbearing, overcoming quarreling.

The body is charitable, putting on love.

B. Peace rules. This is not only character, but conduct. Rule is athletic term: presiding at the games, distributing the prizes. Col. 2:18, let no one declare you unworthy of the prize. The peace of God is the umpire between believing hearts. In his will, we have peace, which we lose only when we step outside his will. This is God’s will, not mine.

When we have peace in our hearts, we will be at peace with others in the church.

Peace in the heart, praise on the lips. In confessing sins, the song returns to our hearts.

C. The word of Christ dwells within us, among us. Dwell, parallel to Eph. 3:17.

There is a danger that in our shared life that we minimize the word of God, that we focus on everything else—10 minutes max for the sermon. Churches suffer from lack of simple Bible teaching in church, classes. We want topics, applications, but that is beginning in the wrong place. Many Christians cannot honestly say the word dwells in them because they do not take time to read, study, and memorize it.

D. This failure to let God’s word dwell richly causes us problems in singing. Too many Christian songs were written by people with little or no knowledge of God’s word. We are blessed to have today hundreds of songs written by faithful brothers over the last few years. Paul moves from a focus on the word to a focus on admonishing and encouraging in song: psalms, hymns, spiritual songs. We tend to devalue spiritual songs; some tend to devalue recent songs. Vibrant faith is living, growing, expanding...

Three important books: God's book, pocketbook, songbook. I sing to myself, express praise to God. To fail to continue to grow in this area is to rob us of spiritual enrichment. This is an evidence of the spirit's presence (Eph. 5:18).

When we look around, we see Christ who is our authority and name.

Conclusion

Christ is our authority. He is our identity. We wear his name, we act by his name.

A great privilege, a great responsibility.

Three great concepts:

1. Perhaps you have not looked upward to Christ for the direction of your life, and you need to walk with him, knowing him as your LIFE. If never begun, come to him and find the newness of resurrection through baptism. If begun but fallen, come home.
2. Perhaps you have struggled with things inside, failing to put off, failing to put on, failing to find genuine repentance and renewal, reaffirm: Christ is our EVERYTHING.
3. Perhaps you have not looked around in the spirit of Jesus, seeking his will and way, letting him set the agenda of love, peace, indwelling word, spirit evidence in the song in our hearts.