

So, the last couple of weeks, we've been talking about "growing in Christ", and how, when we grow in Christ, we grow in righteousness and holiness, but the section we've been in, has been dealing with false portrayals of righteousness and holiness...

- religious showiness;
- rule-keeping showiness;
- self-denial showiness; and
- spiritual showiness....

That stuff may serve to give an **impression** of growing in holiness, but in reality, **they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh....**

What we need, is "**Genuine** Holiness". And genuine holiness begins at the cross...

In our conversion & baptism experience, we have put to death our old self. Such that Paul can say "**with Christ you died**"... But when we Christians talk about the cross, to us, it's not merely a symbol of "death". If it was only about "death", it wouldn't be Gospel/Good News... For disciples of Jesus, the cross is most powerfully, a symbol of "life"

- new life;
- transformed life;
- redeemed life;
- eternal life...

... On the 3rd day, Christ was raised, and today He lives...
And that's Good News...

And for Disciples of Jesus, the resurrection of Christ, spills over into our **own** lives,,, such that Paul says that **you have been raised with Christ**

Our baptism symbolises this. When we go down under the water, we're dying with Christ. As we come back up out of the water, we are rising with Christ, to new life...

You know, we often tend to think of "being raised with Christ" as a thing for the future, and in a way, it is. But being "born again", is what happens today. And let me tell you, being born again, is such a complete re-orientation of who we are, and our existence, we have to talk about it in terms that **we have already been** raised with Christ.

Yes, the putting off of our temporary, physical bodies, and being raised into our eternal, spiritual bodies – that won't happen until Jesus returns,,, but the most radical transformation – the transformation of who we are, and what we're like – our personality – our motivations – our hopes and our dreams – **that** transformation happens **now**, and so we're raised with Christ now...

Righto: Now, the Apostle Paul, isn't all about theory.

Living the resurrected life, is very practical. If we are raised with Christ,,, (where is Christ? – He's **seated at the right hand of God**)... And so, if we're raised with Him, we should be seeking **heavenly** things – seeking the things of God, rather than the things of this earth.

V³ For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

What does it mean, for your life, to be hidden with Christ in God.

Well, I think it means 2 things...

Firstly, there's a present hiddenness, and a future visibility... Currently, people of the world, cannot understand, why those silly Christians live the way we do... I mean, why is a Christian willing to die, rather than deny their Lord? Why are Christians willing to preach the Gospel to a world who are offended by the Gospel (even when Christians are threatened, "If you offend me, I'm going to prosecute you under anti-discrimination legislation")???) Why do Christians preach the gospel and call sinners to repentance, even when threatened with fines/losing their jobs/jail...?

You see, the world, they cannot see our future, and they cannot understand why we do what we do... But V⁴ talks about the time when Christ will appear for the whole world to see, and we'll be right there with Him...

⁴ When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

At the moment, this is hidden from the world, but we know, that our future, is "Glory"... Now, when I say "hidden", it's

not a secret – this is what we preach – this is what we proclaim... It's hidden, because a hard heart produces blind eyes and deaf ears, that will not see, and will not hear the things of God.

And the second thing, being **hidden with Christ** means, is it's about being 'tucked away' in "safety", and we have an "assuredness"...

We're coming up to Christmas. Can anyone tell me how many shopping days are left until Christmas???

Has anyone already done their Christmas shopping??? Well, for me, the biggest challenge I have, isn't 'buying the right thing for Robyn' – I always know the right thing to buy her... Except for the year I bought her the:

- *hedge trimmer;*
- *spatulas;*
- *saucepans...*

Maybe I don't buy the right things...

Anyway, the biggest challenge for me, is finding a hiding spot, where:

- *Robyn won't find them;*
- *safe and not going to get stolen; or*
- *eaten by mice;*
- *not too hot so the chocolate melts;*
- *where I remember where I put it...*

But, if you have something valuable, that you want to keep for yourself, you hide it away, in a place that only you know

about – a safe place – a secure place – close to you – known to you...

And this is what it means to be **hidden with Christ** – we're safe/secure – no matter what happens to us on this earth, our future in glory, is assured.

Our position with Christ at the moment, is hidden, but when Christ returns/appears, **we will appear, with him in glory.**

Isn't that wonderful...

You know, so many people are filled with fear at the moment. Some are afraid that:

- they're going to catch a virus and die;
- the Government is restricting freedoms; and
- they might have to do what they don't want to do...

But as Disciples of Jesus, let us never be afraid of anything this world tries to throw at us... The Spiritual reality – a reality that the world cannot see – is we are hidden with Christ, and when He appears, we will appear with Him, in glory... (I can assure you of that).

Righto, because we're hidden with Christ – tucked away with Him in the throne-room of God – because our hope is above, Paul says: **⁵Put to death therefore what is earthly in you...** (that's a reasonable directive). If we are hidden away with Christ (at the right hand of God) there is no place, for us to drag earthly pollution into this...

A number of times through the New Testament, we'll find various catalogues of vices, listing examples of transgressions that betray our worldly nature.

And in today's reading, we find 2 of these catalogues... And I find it intriguing, that the first one, is about personal sin, and expressly about sexual transgression, some churches might be of the attitude, "Oh, we'd never let that creep into our church",,,

but the 2nd catalogue is more about relational sin – the way we relate others, and that same church might be rife with:

- anger;
- wrath;
- malice;
- slander...

One commentary I read said this:

Many Christians tend to concentrate on one list or the other: one knows of Christian communities that would be appalled at the slightest sexual irregularity, but which are nests of malicious intrigue, backbiting, gossip and bad temper,,,,, and, conversely [they might know of other churches] where people are so concerned to live in untroubled harmony with each other that they tolerate flagrant immorality. The gospel, however, leaves no room for behaviour of either sort.ⁱ

So, the 1st catalogue:

⁵ Put to death therefore what is earthly in you:

sexual immorality

Any sexual interaction against God's design (one man; one woman; married to each other). Everything else, is sexual immorality.

impurity

unclean-ness / impurity / indecency...

passion

He's talking about "Lust" – uncontrolled passion

evil desire

Is a desire for something forbidden

covetousness

Is to have an insatiable appetite for more – ruthless greed...

And he tells us, this is idolatry...

In Ephesians 5:5 (ESV)

⁵For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

Greed, is idolatry, and sexual greed, is idolatry...

Is it any wonder that the pagan worship (which was once the Colossian way of life, often included temple prostitutes)...

And think of King Solomon... If there was ever a man with sexual greed, it would've been him. 700 wives; 300 concubines... And some of his wives worshipped other gods, and Solomon turned away from God, and into idolatry...

An often repeated story, is when a Christian starts dating a non-Christian... And they have in their mind, "I'll convert him" – rarely does that happen. And usually it works the other way... sexual desire pulls them away from God, and into idolatry...

Anyway, Paul says: ⁶ On account of these the wrath of God is coming.

On account of what? Sexual sin? – Well, **all** sin... And that's the thing – with these catalogues of sin, they're just examples...

But when it comes to "the Wrath of God", this is a topic that many many churches will never ever talk about...

We live in an age like never before, where many in our society believe it is their right to never be offended... And to talk about the wrath of God – that's offensive...

And this has become very topical again, right now, because finally after about 3 years, the Federal Government are introducing their Freedom of religion bill to parliament... And they've watered it down...

Many of you will remember when Israel Folau (on his private social media account), listed a catalogue of sins (not unlike this one here), and said that if people who do these things don't repent, they'll go to hell... Pretty much what Paul's just said here...

And people were offended, and so his employer sacked him... BTW, The religious discrimination bill, wouldn't have protected him...

Why is the wrath of God so offensive? I'll tell you why – it's because it reminds us that we are not accountable to ourselves – We are accountable to a God, who is going to judge...

And many folk are of the attitude, "If God is a god of love, he won't punish people"... Rubbish. Because God is a god of love, He is also a God of justice... And if those who do evil, are not subject to the wrath of God, where would the justice be???

And so the wrath of God is coming. He's holding off, giving us time to repent.

But as Christians, it is really important, that we don't become the sort of people, who point the finger at everybody else... Paul gives the Colossians a reminder: You used to do this sort of stuff too, (before you were saved), but not any more...

And as disciples of Jesus, we're very aware of this, aren't we... We didn't become Christians because we were sinless –

but because we have a saviour... Someone once described evangelism as *“one beggar showing another beggar, where to find bread”*... And that’s so true. *It’s one sinner, who’s been rescued by the Saviour, telling another sinner, how to be saved...*

So, we’re **not** to be pointing the finger, but he’s **also** reminding us, that God has called us out of our old ways/lives, into a new way...

You see, when it comes to “righteous living”, some of us (in the church) feel “I can’t insist on a particular standard, because, before I was saved, I did that sin... And so I can’t expect others in the church to ‘not do’ what I ‘used to do’”... But that’s the whole point. “Used to, is gone/erased – nailed to the cross”... And every Christian has been called to a new holiness...

So, as Christians, we **used to walk** in the ways of the world, but he says in V8: **⁸ But now you must put them all away**

You see, when it comes to being saved, and when it comes to holy living, there is the Divine initiative (what God does), and there is the Human response... God has saved us, but now we’re being told that **we** have to put away our old ways... (put off our old ways)

Back in the day, when I was an Ag-Dag (student at Ag College), the rules were pretty strict, and there was a dress-code...

- *Casual clothes you were allowed to wear around the dorms; (Shorts; sandals, whatever).*

- *Work dress:*
 - *long sleeve shirt;*
 - *long pants (jeans if you liked);*
 - *belt;*
 - *pocket knife;*
 - *Boots & socks;*
 - *hat;*
 - *notebook & pen...*

And if you turned up for a practical subject without those clothes, you'd be sent back to the dorm to change.

- *Town dress:*
 - *Long good pants;*
 - *long good shirt;*
 - *dress boots (RM's – definitely not sandals);*
 - *dress hat (not the work hat)...*

And to have dinner at night, you had to knock off work, have a shower, get into town dress, and go to the dining room... And on Saturday morning, if you wanted to go down town, you had to be in town dress...

It was very clear – down the paddock was the place for work clothes... But if you were a student of the DAC, if you went to town, you would be in town dress...

And that's the sort of image that Paul's giving us here...
Because we're raised with Christ to life, we take off our old

way of living, and now we live in righteousness and holiness...

And so we come to the 2nd catalogue of vices:

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.

This catalogue, is about the way we relate with others...

We take off:

- Anger;
- wrath – We're not the ones who are responsible for wrath – that's what God does – we don't pay people back for the wrong they've done;
- malice – that's vindictiveness;
- slander – telling lies about others and putting them down;
- Obscene talk
- Lying... The truth should always be on our lips

You see, our conversion isn't just about turning away from our old life – it's also about embracing the new life (that God has saved us to). It's a complete, new change in our personality... You cannot be saved, and remain as the same person... We're being renewed, after the image of our creator.

Man / humanity – we’re not just another animal. Humankind were created in the image of God. And what makes us human, is the potential to be raised... Those who are in Christ, will be raised to glory... Those who reject Christ, will be raised to wrath...

Now, throughout Colossians, there is an underlying drive for Christian fellowship and unity in the church. Last week, we talked about how the church is a body, knit together, and together we grow, with a growth from God.

And yet, some Christians are of the attitude, “If Christ is all I need, then it doesn’t matter if I’m not connected to the church”... Paul will have none of that sort of attitude:

¹¹ Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.

This new kingdom, that we’ve been raised to, isn’t a kingdom:

- racial prejudices;
- where the colour of skin matters;
- that judges you on what religion you were (before you were saved); or
- what you repented of;
- what language you speak (that’s what the word “barbarian” meant to the Greek – those who couldn’t speak Greek [bar; barr; baar; bar])
- employer / employee;
- slave / master...

But here's the important bit: We are all one in Christ, and Christ is in all of us... If you reject your Christian brother, you reject Christ... If you refuse to fellowship with your brothers and sisters, you refuse to fellowship with Christ...

Let's pray:

Lord Jesus Christ,
we thank You that You have saved us through the cross.
We thank You that You have bestowed on us,
and are growing in us, genuine holiness...

Lord, how wonderful it is,
that we are hidden in You;
That no matter what this world throws at us,
our future, is that we will appear,
as You appear, in glory...

Lord, help us respond to Your Grace
as you would have us respond.
That we would take off our old ways,
like dirty old clothes to be thrown away;

And that we would put on this new life of holiness;
As is befitting our position, hidden in You,
to be revealed, in Glory.

Amen.

ⁱ Wright, N.T., 1986. Colossians and Philemon: an introduction and commentary, Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.