

Over the last few weeks we have been looking at hindrances to sanctification... things we are to avoid... things we are warned against. And last week we focused particularly on things inside of us that we are to put off... lay aside... put to death. They are things associated with our old way of life before Jesus took up residence in our lives. Things associated with the fleshly lusts of the “old man” and things associated with misplaced pride and arrogance.

In weeks to come, we will be looking at those things we are to pursue... It is not enough to just put off... we are called to put on as well.

Col 3:9ff. *“since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices, 10 and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him— 11 a renewal in which there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all. 12 So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; 13 bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. 14 Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.”*

1. The first thing that is talked about in the context of putting on is the “new self” in vs 10. But it stands as something distinctly different than the other things we “put on”
 - a. Notice it is not speaking of “putting on” but “having put on”; past tense
 - i. *“since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices, 10 and have put on the new self”*
 - ii. We see the same distinction throughout Colossians
 1. Col 1:13ff. *“For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”*
 2. Col 1:22ff. *“He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach”*
 3. Col 2:6 *“Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him”*
 4. Col 3:1 *“Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above”*
 5. Col 3:12 *“So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved”*
 - iii. Everything that God, through Paul, is asking us to do is based upon something **He has already done.**

- b. It is virtually impossible to put off the things... the behaviors... of the “old man” if we have not been freed from bondage to it. Nor can we “put on” the things of the new man unless we have been made a new creation by Christ’s redemptive work
 - i. Rom 8:5ff *“For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit... However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you... the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, 8 and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.”*
- 2. It is of critical importance that we understand and hold to this foundational truth for two reasons
 - a. It is critically important in our presentation of the gospel of Christ to the world
 - i. We must be certain that we do not present the gospel of Christ as an “ethic” to be followed instead of a faith in God’s love, holiness, mercy and power... a faith that requires surrender to His lordship and will.
 - 1. Heb 11:6 *“And 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 seek Him.”*
 - a. Our faith, at its core, is not simply a way to make us better. It is the way by which we return to relationship with the God who made us.
 - i. Col 1:22 *“in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach”*
 - 1. The more important part is “before Him”. He makes us to be holy and blameless so that we can stand before Him and enjoy fellowship with Him
 - b. Otherwise, It becomes an exercise and appeal to pride; of ritual without substance. (Pharisees)
 - c. It is supremely unloving to ask or expect someone to do that which they are unable to do.
 - i. Eph 2:12 *“remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.”*
 - ii. Look back to Rom 8:7,8 *“the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the*

law of God, for it is not even able to do so, 8 and those who are in the flesh cannot please God."

- b. It is critically important in determining the reality of our salvation and the possibility of our sanctification
 - i. 2 Cor 13:15 *"Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you—unless, of course, you fail the test?"*
 - 1. Not easy or necessarily simple... for a while, they can appear the same
 - a. Matt 13:24ff. *"The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field. 25 But while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went away. 26 But when the wheat sprouted and bore grain, then the tares became evident also. 27 The slaves of the landowner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?' 28 And he said to them, 'An enemy has done this!' The slaves *said to him, 'Do you want us, then, to go and gather them up?' 29 But he *said, 'No; for while you are gathering up the tares, you may uproot the wheat with them. 30 Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn"*
 - i. The difference is one bears fruit, but that might not be immediately apparent
 - 2. But what is "fruit"
 - a. Not simply deeds... good works
 - i. Matt 7; "works" of Prophecy, miracles, exorcism. But Christ's response? "Depart from Me, I never knew you"
 - b. Internal condition Gal 5:19ff. *"Now the deeds of the flesh are evident... those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law."*
 - i. So, is it one strike and you're out? I hope not...

- ii. Let's return to our text in Col 3:1 *“Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth”*
 - 1. We can be “raised up” but not “seeking”... not “setting our minds on”... things above” but rather “things on earth”...
- iii. We can be “chosen of God, holy and beloved”, yet be deficient in compassion, kindness, humility, patience ...Same truth Paul expresses in Rom 7:15 *“For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate.”*
- c. There are some that would explain this by appealing to “positional righteousness”; that we cannot be rightfully accused of practicing the deeds of the flesh because they are all covered by the blood of Christ. And that is true. But that is not the feel and sense of these verses.
 - i. Context is practical and behavioral, not positional
- 3. Our faith is validated, not in our perfection but in our inclination... our desire... our ongoing practice and mindset.
 - a. This truth is recognized by Paul when he writes in Rom 7: 15,21 *“For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate... I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good. 22 For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, 23 but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind.”*
 - i. We see Paul’s desire to do good; to follow God
 - b. Same desire is expressed by David in Ps 139:23ff. *“Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts; 24 And see if there be any wicked way in me, And lead me in the everlasting way.”*
- 3. So we see our faith is validated and proved by the inclination of our hearts; the evidence of Christ’s character and transforming work in our hearts. But in God’s word, we find other things that validate our faith as well

a. Perseverance; continuing on

i. 1 John 2:19 (speaking re: false teachers) *"They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us."*

ii. Parable of the sower Luke 8:13ff. *"Those on the rocky soil are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no firm root; they believe for a while, and in time of temptation fall away. 14 The seed which fell among the thorns, these are the ones who have heard, and as they go on their way they are choked with worries and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to maturity."*

iii. Note...Based upon God's preserving work, not our steadfastness

b. On a similar note... endurance in trial

i. James 1:2ff. *"Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. 4 And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing."*

1. One of the reasons for rejoicing in trial is that it provides opportunity to validate our faith; to have confidence that we are His

c. Love for God and His people

i. 1 John 3:16ff; 4:20. *"We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. 17 But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? 18 Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth. 19 We will know by this that we are of the truth, and will assure our heart before Him... If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen."*

d. Fruitfulness; a fruitless faith is not a saving faith

i. We cannot say that our hearts are inclined toward God if there is no evidence of His transforming work and character in our behavior

1. 1 Jo 1:6,7 *"If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; 7 but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin."*

2. Matt 7:16ff. *“You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they? 17 So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. 18 A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. 19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 So then, you will know them by their fruits.”*
3. 1 Jo 2:5 *“whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: 6 the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.”*

Beloved, we have spent the last several weeks examining warnings in regards to our sanctification... our walk. The writer of Hebrews was moved to give similar warnings to those he loved... those struggling with understanding and embracing this new faith and belief. Allow me to close with his words of affirmation to those he loved

Heb 6:9 *“But, beloved, we are convinced of better things concerning you, and things that accompany salvation, though we are speaking in this way.”*

Let us pray