

**Get undressed! – Colossians 3:5-11**  
**Basil Howlett - Carey Baptist Church – 21 September 2008**

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False teachers had come to Colosse and were saying that to be a first class Christian and really sure of heaven, it wasn't enough to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, you also had to observe certain Jewish rituals and worship angels. To counteract this falsehood, in the first two chapters Paul gives all that wonderful doctrine about the sufficiency of the Lord Jesus Christ. But sound doctrine should affect our behaviour, so in chapters 3 and 4 Paul tells us how we should live and behave as Christians.

He begins this practical section, as we saw last time, by reminding us that the old guilty people we were have died and we have been raised to a new life in Christ. But that does not mean that we are perfect. We are still tempted to do some of the things we used to do and to wear some of the rags we used to wear, so Paul says, '*Put to death those things (verse 5)...take off and get rid of those filthy clothes (verse 8).*' He is speaking metaphorically. We must deal with sins radically, treating them like deadly enemies, stripping them off like filthy clothes.

**A. Enemies we must put to death (verse 5).** Paul is telling us to stop doing those sins which belong to the old guilty way of life we used to live. Root them out and kill them. They belonged to the old people we used to be, not the new people we are. Things like:

- **Sexual immorality.** There's nothing wrong with sex in and of itself. It's a beautiful gift of God to be enjoyed in the marriage relationship, but outside of marriage it becomes sexual immorality. That's a great sin which has no place in the life of a Christian. It should be killed off.
- **Impurity.** There are many actions which fall short of actual immorality but which are impure. Watching sordid films, videos and dvd's, reading salacious novels and magazines, downloading pornography. Such things must go (Ephesians 5:3). 'Kill them' before they kill the soul.
- **Lust.** There's some debate as to what Paul means by that word, especially as he goes on to mention 'evil desires'. The AV refers to '*Inordinate affection*' '*Excessive affection.*' As Christians we should love one another (that is lawful affection), but here the apostle is warning against '*unlawful affection*' where a man or woman lavishes too much attention upon a person whom they are not free to marry.
- **Evil desires.** The real trouble is that behind these evil deeds we have evil desires. Some Christians feel smug because they've never done the deed, but according to the Bible the evil desire in the heart is just as bad (Matthew 5:27).
- **Greed.** The sin of craving for more money, more possessions, more luxuries, bigger returns, bigger salaries, bigger bonuses while millions of people in the world live in abject poverty. Paul puts greed in the same category as sexual immorality, lust and evil desires. In fact, it's idolatry. The person who lives for money and possessions is making a god of them. We can also be greedy for power and position.

These things are not only enemies of our souls, but enemies of God. He hates them so much that one day he will pour out his wrath on those who persistently indulge in them (verse 6). They may have been our 'friends' at one time (verse 7), but now we have a new life in Christ they have no place in our lives.

**B. Dirty, ragged clothes we must strip off (verses 8-9).** In our unconverted days we used to wear a lot of 'filthy rags' in a spiritual sense but there's no room for them in the Christian's wardrobe.

- **Anger.** There is such a thing as righteous anger (Mark 3:5, 2 Kings 17:18). We should be angry when the honour of God is impugned, when his Son is belittled, when lost sinners are led further astray by false teachers. But we must never be angry simply because someone upsets us, or says something nasty to us, or because we can't get our own way (Matthew 5:22).
- **Rage.** In a fit of temper things are said and done which wound others very deeply and take an age to heal. When a Christian loses their temper it's a bad witness.
- **Malice:** is ill-will towards another person. It's the very opposite of the gospel of forgiveness.
- **Slander.** If there is malice in our hearts towards another person it won't be long before we start to make unkind remarks about them and to say things about them that are just not true. That's a dirty rag if ever there was one.
- **Filthy language.** That covers swearing, cursing, smutty and border-line jokes (Ephesians 4:29, 5:4).
- **Lying (verse 9).** The Bible condemns lying. Proverbs 12:22 '*The Lord detests lying lips.*' Lying is totally against God's nature and he hates it (Titus 1:2, Hebrews 6:18, Proverbs 12:22). In this world of lies the Christian should be known as a person of integrity and honesty.

Those are the dirty ragged clothes we must take off and throw away. They belonged to our 'old self'. They do not belong to our 'new self' which has been created by Christ and is being renewed in knowledge day by day and will, one day, be like Christ.

**C. Divisions we must ditch (verse 11).** In NT times the world was full of racial, cultural and social divisions but in the church all such divisions must be ditched.

- No divisions over race. We recognise there are different races with different features but all are welcome and valued.
- No divisions because of education and intellectual ability. You don't have one church where all the graduates go and another where all the dunces go. We are all one in Christ.
- No divisions because of social standing. A Christian may be at the very top of the social ladder or they may be a slave right at the bottom: it doesn't make a scrap of difference. They are on the same level in God's eyes: in Christ, sinner's saved by amazing grace (James 2:1-6).

The big thing in the church is not a person's race, colour, education, social standing or wealth but their relationship to Christ.