



Sermon – June 13, 2021  
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**Verses Covered This Week**

*Colossians 3:9 – 11*

*Colossians 1:27*

Let me invite you to open your Bibles with me. We're going to be in Colossians 3, verses 9 through 11 this morning. Let me start off with a question. Did you show up this morning expecting to encounter God at church, to hear from Him? Are we just here going through the motions or are we coming to hear the words of the living God through the pages of Scripture? If you remember, last week we spent our time looking back at the way that we've been rescued from sin. Paul took us on this journey to look at our past sin to remind us of our life of brokenness. And now that we step into verses 9 through 11, we see that he's going to take us back to our past salvation to remind us of the new life that we have in Jesus Christ. And let's see the way he talks about it here at the beginning of the verse.

<sup>9</sup>Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices  
<sup>10</sup>and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of  
its creator. <sup>11</sup>Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian,  
Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.

Let's pray together.

Father, in this moment would You clear the distractions? Would you take away the cares of this world? Would you take away the burdens of our mind and the hardness of our heart and instead fill us with Your Spirit so that You might change us through Your word? And we ask these things in Jesus name. Amen.

I just got to know, is there anybody else in the room that's coming in here this Sunday a little bit worn out from Sports Camp this week? It's OK to admit it. We had over 600 children that participated thanks to nearly 300 of you who served as volunteers. Did anybody else besides me have a great time this week with that? Wasn't it great? I just love the chance to invest in these children. And it was such a highlight to go around and experience all the different sports and to see Bill Buchanan up here planting seeds of the gospel, to watch our leaders investing in those children from station to station, and our coaches in their sports. There was so much about Sports

Camp I loved. But if I'm being honest, there was one thing I didn't love. At the end of the night we'd come back in here for a closing session and when I walked into the worship center on night one, after all these kids had been running around getting sweaty and dirty, you stepped into this worship center and you didn't think it was a sanctuary, you thought it smelled like a locker room. There was sweat pouring from everyone; that smell emanating. And I'm sure if you're a parent like I was of children participating, you took those children home. And the first thing you did is you put away those old clothes, the ones that were dirty that were now soiled, they were sweaty and you discarded them so that they could be replaced with something new. You had to put off in order to put on. And when we turn our attention to the text this morning, that is the image that Paul is giving us of what happens at salvation. That when we are rescued from sin and set free to walk with Jesus, what happens is as if we are putting off those old clothing, that the clothes that are soiled with the stain of sin have now been discarded. And instead they've been replaced by robes of righteousness.

See, if you remember what's happening throughout Colossians 3, is Paul is moving back and forth between two dynamics for us as believers. In part, he's showing us who we are in Christ and then he's showing us how we're called to live in Christ. So we've already seen the way that we are hidden with Christ. We're united to Him by faith. And then over the last few verses, he's talked about how we are to put away sin, to put it to death. But now he's going to turn our attention back to who we are. That in the coming of the Gospel, we are new creations. And there are two new creation realities he's going to unpack for us this morning. That when we come to encounter Christ in a saving way, Jesus makes us a new person and He gives us a new community.

So let's look at the first of those back in verses 9 and 10, the way that Jesus makes us a new person. We already covered the first phrase of this verse, do not lie to one another, last week. If you remember, it's part of what he is naming there in verses 7 and 8, these sins that need to be put away. Those sins of hard hearts and harsh tongues. They must be put to death. And now he's going to give us the reason why. And that reason, as he says there, is seeing to it you have put off the old self. In other words, Jesus makes us a new person as He relinquishes us from our past. This idea of putting off, this is not the first time this word has shown up in the book. If you were to look back at chapter 2, in verse 11, he talks about putting off the body of flesh. In chapter 2, in verse 15, it talks about how Jesus has disarmed the rulers and authorities. It's the same term used in different places. It's to set aside, to strip off. It's to fully remove. And what is it that God tells us that He does in Christ at salvation? He puts off what? Well, look back at what it says there in verse 9.

<sup>9</sup>The old self with its practices.

Or more literally in the original language, the old man. Who you were is now gone. That former reality has been discarded. Or the way the prophet Isaiah says it. Our righteousness which was as if it was filthy rags have now been stripped off us, set aside. You can imagine one of those moms who comes home and their kid has had a blast at Sports Camp, that's sweaty and dirty. And she says, "Hey, I need you to put on these new clothes." And after the kid does that, he comes back out and he's just covered the old dirty clothes with the new ones. That wouldn't make any sense, right? Because unless you remove what is filthy, you cannot be made fresh. If you cannot remove what is nasty, you cannot be made new. And what Paul is showing us here is

that what Jesus does is He rips out that heart of stone in order to replace it with a heart of flesh. He takes the old man; He crucifies it on the cross with Him so that you may be set free from sin. But that's not all He does in salvation. He doesn't just relinquish us from our past; He also reshapes our future. That's part of what it looks like to become a new person in Christ. So you'll notice there the way that he speaks of it. And in the middle of verse 10, and we have put on the new self. So we put off the old self, now we put on the new self. This means to clothe yourself, to wrap yourself, to dress. And I want you to notice both of these terms, to put off and to put on, in the original language. They are things that are in the past tense. They have already happened. They are one time in nature at the moment of salvation. He pulls away that sinfulness. He replaces it with His righteousness. There is a putting off and a putting on. A removing those clothing that are soiled with the stain of sin and to be dressed in those robes of righteousness. And as Paul speaks of this here, he's picking up on pictures that his readers, his listeners would recognize are coming from the Old Testament. So think about, for example, one of the things that happens, described on a regular basis in the Old Testament. The high priest would go into the Holy of Holies once a year on the Day of Atonement to make payment for the sins of the people. And before He stepped into that place where the manifest presence of God was there, he would take off his normal priestly clothing and put on new garments so that he might enter into the presence of God. He had to be properly attired to be in that presence. And what the New Testament unpacks for us is this reality that Jesus is our great High Priest. He not only strips away that clothing of ours that is soiled by the stain of sin in our old self, He replaces it with those robes of righteousness so that we can be ushered into the presence of God by salvation. A salvation that doesn't have to take place annually but takes place once and for all for you and for me. See, Paul is reminding us of the reality that at salvation, we become a new creation. That what God does when Jesus comes into your life, is He doesn't just fix what is broken in you, He makes you new. He gives you this new self. He doesn't just say you're as good as new. Or I did the best I could. Or, man, this was a really hard fix but I finally figured it out. He takes what is broken and He replaces it with what is new, what is perfect, what is righteous. And as Paul is unpacking these realities, so put off the old self and to put on the new self, he is reminding us that there are representatives of both of these realities across the Scriptures. So that when you see Scripture unfold, the embodiment of this old self is right there from the first pages of Scripture in Genesis 2 and 3 with that first Adam. He is made in the image of God. He is called to walk with God in obedience. But we find that he partakes of that forbidden fruit and after he sins, what does Adam do? He hides from God with Eve and they seek to cover over their, the shame of their sin. They fashion those fig leaves. They make the first clothing that we find in the Bible. They seek to hide their sin. Think about how often we do the exact same thing when sin shows up in our life apart from Christ. We minimize it and say, "Ah, it's not that bad." We try to make up for it by doing extra things to offset that sinful reality. Or maybe we compare ourselves to others and say, "Well, it's not that great for me, but at least I'm not as bad as them." Or perhaps we blame it on someone else just as Adam did about Eve when he was there in the garden. But I want you to notice what happens in that text. That when they hide from God, seeking to clothe themselves in their own righteousness, they cannot stand before Him. But what does God do? He meets them in their brokenness. This one who embodies the essence of the old man, the one who is condemned in his sin and shame, and what happens as Genesis 3 goes on? God takes away those fig leaves that are of no value to cover for the shame of sin. And instead He replaces them. He puts off one type of clothing and puts on another. Fashioned from the skins of the first sacrifices in the Bible. God sheds the blood of innocent animals who die on behalf of the people of God so that they might cover over the sin of

the people of God as a signal, a first atonement of what one day He was going to do through His own Son. The embodiment, the representative of the new man that Paul is speaking of here. You see this contrast between the first Adam and the second Adam coming together in what God does for us in salvation. And that raises a question for us this morning. As you sit here today in this room, or you watch here online, are you reflecting that old self or that new self? Do you find yourself hiding from God with Adam in the garden seeking to cover up your own sin? Or hiding with Christ in the heavenlies having been set free by that Savior from your sin? Paul is showing us here there are only two ways that we can be. There are only two realities. You are either of the old man or the new man. And the difference is, what have you done with Jesus Christ? That's why he goes on at the end of verse 10 to tell us that how this new life unfolds. When he shows us that Jesus makes us a new person as He renews our present. So he says there, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. So here's this twist in the way that Paul is talking about our life in Jesus. He has just said that we are new and yet now he is saying we need to be renewed. How does that work? If we've already been made new, why do we need to continue to be made new over and over again. See, what's happening is he's reminding us that while this reality has already started, it has not yet been fully completed. That's why Scripture tells us that God's mercies are new every morning.

We're starting to feel that Texas heat come upon us, aren't we? And I'm sure if you're anything like me, you're starting to wonder, "Where could I go to get away from this heat?" Well, one place you might not have thought of previously is Fort McMurray, Canada. Maybe you've never heard of it. But if you were to check the meteorological statistics for June and July, the average high temperature is only 77 degrees. Doesn't that sound just right right about now? There's only one catch. If you go up there, it's one of the most northern cities that is inhabitable in Canada. And while you might top out at 77 in the summer, guess what the average high is in the winter. It's 10 degrees. I think I'd pass on that one, right. Well, I had a friend of mine from Nashville who got transferred with his job with Caterpillar up to Fort McMurray, Canada. And I remember speaking to him at one point over the course of the summer and they had gone two weeks and it had never gotten above 0. And there's something that he told me about with the equipment sales that he did there. See, there's oil shales in those areas. It's one of the largest oil producing areas in North America. In order to work, Caterpillar has to supply the equipment to those that are working in that region. And one of the things that he told me that I'll never forget is he said, "During the wintertime, that ground becomes so hard, so frozen, so resistant to movement that when they put the new claws on a backhoe at the start of the day," he said, "We're fortunate if we can get 8 hours of work out of them before they're destroyed, broken, and needed to be replaced." Even if those claws are brand new, they must be continually renewed. Why? Because there is resistance to them. There is a hardness around them. If they are going to pursue the mission they're on, they're going to encounter that resistance and must be restored so that they can work in the way that they are intended to function. And when Paul speaks here of how we are both new and yet being renewed, that's the image that he's giving us. That in Christ, we are made new. We are hidden now in salvation with Him and yet, by His Spirit, God continues to work and renew us so that we can walk faithfully in the mission that He's called us to. In a few minutes after the message here, we're going to have our Parent Dedication. And behind me are going to stand a number of families who are committing to you as a church that they want to raise their kids in a way that pleases God. And if there is anyone who needs prayer and especially this prayer for renewal, isn't it parents of young children? The exhaustion, the demands, the difficulties, the challenges. If you turn inward in those moments to depend on your

own strength, you will never make it in a way that pleases God. But instead, if as verse 10 calls us to here, you are being renewed in the knowledge of the image of your Creator, then you can walk in the manner that God has designed you to walk as a faithful parent. You see, Paul is telling us here, we need to be renewed in something specific. Do you see what it is there at the end of verse 10? In the knowledge of the image of their Creator. That in other words, as we come to know God more, we grow in God more. That when we behold Him, we become more like Him. And we realize that reality is true and that Paul is speaking of it in contrast to the false teachers that were showing up right there in the Colossian church who said they were the ones with the knowledge. They were the ones who could be trusted. They were the ones who had the keys to unlock the mystery of God's kingdom. And yet as we've already seen back in chapter 2 in verse 3, Paul has spoken of the reality that in Jesus are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. And so when God renews us by the power of His Spirit, He is allowing us to understand and know Jesus more so that we might become more like Him. We are renewed in Him so that we might reflect Him to the world around us. And that's why Paul here is speaking first of the way that at salvation we become a new person. But notice how he goes on at the second part of this passage to speak about how in salvation Jesus also gives us a new community. So notice how he says it there speaking of the church. He says,

<sup>11</sup>Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarians, Scythian, slave, and free; but Christ is all, and in all.

So he is showing us here that at salvation God doesn't just change who we are, but how we gather. That new creations experience new relations with one another. He's giving us this window of what the church is designed to be as a unity in the midst of diversity. That God celebrates our unity even when there are the appearance of things that would be natural divisions in the world around us. And as he says there, he begins verse 11 with this word, here. He's talking about this local body of believers that he is writing to there in Colossians. And I imagine that when they heard these words, they could look around that small room where they were gathered and for the first time, they're hearing Paul's letter being read to them. And they can see in the room around them Jews and Greeks, slave and free, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian and Scythian. They're likely all there gathered together and that is the image that Paul is speaking of. That at salvation, God invites us into a new community that bonds us together that overcomes the divisions. In fact, the same types of divisions that these false teachers would seek to foment and to cultivate and to pull people apart rather than to bring them together in the type of unity that Paul speaks of here. And the danger the church faces throughout the ages is to be pulled towards division rather than unity. And it often shows up in several ways that Paul unpacks here. Paul's going to show us 4 primary divisions that can appear in the church. This is the only place in the New Testament where he covers all of these all in one place. And let's see the way that he talks about them. The first one there that we see are racial divisions. He draws this contrast between Jews and Greeks. There's this ethnic distinction between different people that would be gathered there in the church. Now this word, Greek, would be a reference or another name for the Gentiles; those who were not Jews. And they were particularly proud of their cultural heritage, their superiority in the Roman empire. At the same time, you would have these Jews, who by their background would be separated out from the rest of cultures. They would see themselves as the only ones who had a knowledge of the one true God. There would be natural divisions by which they would see themselves as separate and irreconcilable from one

another. And yet, I want you to look back with me at Colossians 1:27 and see the way that God brings them together. Here's what the text says.

<sup>27</sup>To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

So notice what he says there. That this promise of salvation, that from the dawn of history was promised for the people of God that He narrowed the line through Adam, then to Noah, then on through the patriarchs into Abraham and his offspring. Ultimately into the people of God in Israel, the Jewish people that promise that seemed exclusive to them, Paul reminds us, has now been opened to the world. That the way that we can overcome division between Jew and Greek is because for each of us, Jesus is the hope of glory. That's one of the reasons I love just a few weeks ago when we had the opportunity to bring Arturo Pena up here on the stage and introduce him to you as our new full time Hispanic Minister. It was one of my top priorities when I came here as your pastor was to move in that direction as quickly as we could. And one of the things I've heard from a number of you since that day was, remember, was not just Arturo and his family that stood here around me. We invited all of you who are a part of our Hispanic Ministry to come on stage. And I've heard from a number of you who were blown away by just how many people the Lord has brought to us that we are already getting to serve in our Hispanic Ministry. And even now, over the first few weeks of Arturo being here, I love to watch his faithful work in reaching this community. And if we want to be the type of church that reflects the new community that Paul is calling us to in verse 11, then we want to desire to reach our entire community. And what happens is when we seek to reach our whole community, then we will begin to reflect our whole community and our ethnic makeup and the diversity that we have in the growth of our Hispanic Ministry. In all these things, Paul is showing us that God doesn't pull us apart through ethnic division, but instead, brings us together in spiritual unity. But he goes on after that to show us a second division that can pop up there right in the middle of the verse. Those are not just racial divisions, but religious divisions. So in this case he talks about circumcised and uncircumcised. This was a shorthand way to describe what he's already said the difference between Jews and Gentiles. The circumcised, those who were ethnic Jews who had gone through the rituals of the law, been marked out and set apart as people of the covenant. And then those that were not part of that. These Gentiles, these Greeks, those that had not performed the rights and passages of the law. There were inherently religious differences amongst the people that were there at the Colossian church receiving this letter. Some of them were devout Jews. Some were complete pagans. They had everything in between and yet despite their religious backgrounds, they are now one at the foot of the cross. And I'm sure if we were to go round this room right here, we would see that same reality. If we looked back at your religious upbringing, we could hear story after story of different ways that God was at work to take you from where you were, now to where you are in Jesus. I know in this room there are former Atheists, former Mormons, former cultural Christians, former cradle-roll Baptists. It doesn't matter what your religious background is, if we come together as one church united in the gospel of Jesus Christ, we don't look back at our religious past, we look forward to our spiritual future in Jesus. He is the one that brings us together as one spiritual body.

But he goes on right after that to draw us to a third division. Those of cultural divisions. So notice there he speaks about both barbarians and Scythians. This term, barbarian, would refer to foreigners, to natives, the rough crows, the ones that wouldn't fit in in polite society, and

therefore are forced to the margins. And if those barbarians are bad, the Scythians were worse. They were seen as the worst of the barbarians. The ones most likely to be rejected and marginalized by society. In fact, you could read in the ancient literature that the Jewish people had a great disdain for the barbarians. They saw the Scythians as their enemies. And yet what Paul is reminding us of here is even when there is cultural division, even when there for no other reason would these tribes come together, they are brought together by the blood of Jesus Christ. That He is able to overcome even the greatest differences. Whether it's from insiders and outsiders, majority culture and minority culture, in this case, barbarians and Scythians. This division would be worse than anything we see today. Democrats and Republicans. Aggies and Longhorns. Whatever division you might be able to come up with, this was the defining division of that day. And yet in Jesus, He surmounts these cultural divisions so that we are no longer defined by what separates us but instead, defined by what unites us. In other words, rather than be divided by tribalism, Paul is reminding us that in Jesus that we are unified in truth in ways that can overcome even the strongest cultural divisions. And that takes us to the fourth division that we see right there. That of economic divisions.

He speaks here of those who are slave and free. Who are on both sides of the economic spectrum. From those who have been purchased and are now owned, who are in forced labor under the direction of someone else as slaves. To on the other spectrum, end of the spectrum, those that are free who can live in the way they want to, engage in economic activity in the way that they desire to live. And if you looked around that room in the Colossian church, you would have seen the full spectrum. You see, in our culture, just like theirs, the culture loves to divide us into economic classes. You hear about the lower class, the middle class, upper class. And yet, what happens is that through the blood of Christ, those economic class distinctions don't go away. They're still a reality of who you are, but now they no longer define you. What defines you is not your economic status, but your spiritual status. See, he takes this economic division and replaces it with Christian unity. That's why the church is one of the only places in the world where you might come across a sanitation worker who is mentoring a white-collar executive. That would never happen in any other situation. It would seem like one was superior to the other and yet the gospel upends that to where we can invest in people across economic lines. We can, we can do that because Jesus has brought us together. And what now defines us is not how much you possess, but how much Jesus possesses you. That's why the text ends here by answering the question, how are these divisions overcome. That's why he says at the end of verse 11 that Christ is all and in all. The way that these divisions are overcome is through the gospel of Jesus Christ. Then when He makes us a new person, He brings us together as a new community. Christ is all. He's reminding us that everything is from Jesus and all of Christ is present in each one of us if we know Him. But it's not just that Christ is all. He is also in all. That everything is for Jesus and Christ is present for all of us and in all of us.

And if we can just get real practical for a minute as we draw this sermon to a conclusion, this has everything to do as we prepare our hearts to enter the next season and search for who God will bring us as a new worship minister. We brought before you last Sunday the way that God is calling Steve Holt away to South Carolina to serve as a worship minister at a church there. We are so sad to see Steve go. Here's one thing I know. In certain churches, opinions about worship can be about as divisive as anything in a church. People have strong preferences, opinions, desires when it comes to that. And it can be very easy in this time of transition during the interim period or as we're preparing to bring somebody new, that we could focus on those

preferences, drive ourselves towards those divisions rather than as Paul is modelling for us right here, to seek unity, to seek God's desire. Here's what I know for us, Central family. In the same way that God put a call on your life to go to South Carolina, Steve, right now God is likely already working to put the call on the life of another man to come and stand as our next worship minister. And during this season of transition, our desire should be just like that right here at the end of verse 11. Not to be defined by our divisions, but brought together in a unity that marks our life.

At the start of the service today, we talked about the Baptist Student Ministries 100<sup>th</sup> celebration. And if we have it, I'd love to put the picture of myself and Joel Bratcher, the head of the Baptist Student Ministries, up on the screen right now as I'm bringing things to a close. You see, we got to celebrate 100 years of faithfulness and I wanted to talk to Joel and tell him how much I appreciated his ministry. He came in 2002 while I was a student at A&M and I watched him work in those early days. And so I had Cami grab a picture of us right quick. But the image that you're looking at there on the screen is not actually the original. If I were to show you the original, you would notice it's zoomed out a little bit more and in Joel's left hand he's holding a cup and a water bottle. And what I did is I cropped that out of it. No need for you to see that. And if you were to look at the original, you would notice that the colors on our shirts and the colors in the background were a bit washed out because the lighting wasn't good. And so I took that original photo and laid a filter over it to make it look new. To show it in its appearance what it would have most naturally been designed to be. And once I cropped it, once I filtered it, now it is ready to be shared and experienced by our community. So often in our social media culture that's the way that we handle pictures. Before we bring them to the community around us, they must be cropped, they must be filtered, so that they are prepared to experience a community that they are going to be shared with. When Paul speaks here of what God does in our life in salvation, that is the spiritual image he is giving us. That by the Gospel of Jesus, he has cropped that sin out of our life. He has put it off so that He might now filter our life through the blood of Jesus, that we are made new so that we can be shared in a community of believers around us. Marked out as a new community for whom Christ is all and Christ is in all. That's what Paul is showing us this morning, Central family. That is the work of the Gospel in our life and that is what should shape who we are in Jesus.

Let's pray together.

Father, we're in this moment right now, we are praying that You would show us more of Yourself. That You would set us free from the sin that destroys us. The weight of this world that so easily entangles us. And instead, equip us to follow Jesus. Lord I pray that as a church that we would be of one heart and one mind. That we could stand together in unity. And even right now in unity, God, we are praying for the hundreds of our students and our leaders that are at Wired Camp for one last night. God, would You do a mighty work in their hearts? Would you perhaps even today put off hearts of stone and replace them with hearts of flesh there just as we cry out that You do right here in this room this morning. Would You unite us together in one purpose, in one mind, in one heart, knowing that we've been made new by the blood of Your Son. And we ask these things in His name. Amen.