

THE UNIFORM OF THE DAY

COLOSSIANS 3:5-11

**BECOMING A CHRISTIAN DOES NOT MEAN FIXING UP THE OLD ME.
IT IS CREATING A WHOLE NEW ME.**

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The Uniform of the Day

Colossians 3:5-11

So far Paul has hammered home the truth that Jesus is superior to any philosophy, religion, or school of thought. He is greater than angels or demons, and any human institution.

Paul went on to say that when we became Christians, we became children of God and we were instantly transported from the Kingdom of death to the Kingdom of life. We were liberated from Satan's kingdom and given life in God's kingdom.

And because of that, Paul said that our eternal destinies are in heaven. Therefore we should be preparing ourselves to live in heaven. Paul uses the metaphor of putting off and putting on clothes.

In the military, the commander determines the uniform of the day. Whichever uniform he wears, determines what uniform all the soldiers under his or her command wear for that day. Jesus is the Commanding General and we are to wear the uniform of the day as determined by Him. Whatever Jesus is wearing, we too are required to wear.

Jesus is pure and He is characterized by the fruit of the Spirit. We too must be sexually pure and not driven or motivated by anger. In addition, we need to be characterized by love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control. One of the things Paul insists on is that people tell the truth. I'm thinking that Bishop Warren Candler must have had a bit of a strained relationship with his congregation. He was preaching about the lies of Ananias and Sapphira and asked his congregation, "If God still struck people dead for lying, where would I be?" The congregation snickered a bit, but the smiles disappeared when the Bishop shouted, "I'd be right here ... preaching to an empty church!" (story taken from Warren Weirsbe's Commentary)

It still remains a strange concept to me that the church is so accepting of sexual immorality, lying, and outbursts of anger. How can that be? Paul is going to address that topic in this morning's text.

In order for us to understand the nature of our lives in Christ, we must let go of the notion that there is anything in us apart from Christ that is good or noble. The main idea of this morning's text is **BECOMING A CHRISTIAN DOES NOT MEAN FIXING UP THE OLD ME. IT IS CREATING A WHOLE NEW ME.**

In other words, baptism does not signify that Jesus picked us up out of the mud, washed us up, and set us on our new path. Baptism signifies drowning. We die to our old selves and Jesus recreates us a new beings.

I. SEXUAL PURITY (VS 5-7)

Sexual Immorality Is Incompatible With A Relationship With Jesus.

In verses 5-7, Paul reminds us that we are to be sexually pure. **SEXUAL IMMORALITY IS INCOMPATIBLE WITH A RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS.** We in such a sexually promiscuous and perverted society, that even Christian churches take a very lackadaisical and liberal view of sexual immorality. I have actually heard people say, "If we are going to make sexual purity a requirement for people to serve in the church, not many people will be qualified, and certainly almost no young people will be qualified." How can we take such a view? People tell me that I am out of touch with the world. If you think our culture is inundated with sexual immorality, the Apostle Paul had to deal with a world comparable to ours. Listen the early church in dealing with non Jews coming into the church had to lay just a few restrictions on their lifestyles. One of these restrictions was that they refrain from sexual immorality.

A. SEX IN THE CASKET (5)

Listen to how seriously Paul takes sexual immorality. He paints a picture of dying. In other words, verse 5 paints a pretty graphic picture of how absurd it would be for a Christian to be involved in sexual immorality. He says that it is as absurd as thinking about having sex in a casket. Look how Paul starts out verse 5. He says, "Put to death, therefore." Sometimes I think that we view salvation as something in which God makes a few minor adjustments on our lives; a little twist here, a little paint there, and viola, we are good to go. Salvation is putting to death our old selves. There is no fixing us up. It is putting us to death and then creating us new. Paul talks about his conversion to life in Christ like this:

"²⁰I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20 / NIV).

Certainly after we became Christians, we did not physically die, so what exactly are we to be dead to? Paul says that we are to die to our earthly natures. Literally it means that we are to put to death our earthly members. Earthly is contrasted to heavenly. In other words, we are to nurture and feed those desires that prepare us to live in heaven. Do you see the word "therefore"? It refers to what Paul was talking about earlier in the letter. Since we are to be preparing ourselves to live in heaven, we should put to death those things that make us more earthbound. The Apostle John labeled them, "the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life." Paul will deal with sexual immorality and uncontrolled anger as examples of earthly attitudes and behaviors.

Paul names it right up front. We are to put to death sexual immorality. The word in Greek is *porneia*. In its narrowest sense, it means fornication. Fornication includes all sex outside the boundary of marriage. In the broader sense it refers to adultery, incest, sodomy, homosexuality and any sort of sexual perversion one could think of. Furthermore, God uses the word to describe His children who chase after worldly things and other gods. The word is used figuratively of idolatry. That's interesting because Paul uses the word idolatry at the end of this verse.

Look, I have heard it all. People have come to me and tried to convince me that oral sex, mutual masturbation, and other things are not sexual immorality. Let me just make it clear. If your mouth is on someone else's genitals or visa versa, if your hand is in someone else's pants or visa versa, or if you're touching yourself while watching pornography, you're being sexually immoral.

It's not just the act; it's the attitude. Note that all these things we have to put to death are pretty much related to sexual immorality. The next thing we are to put to death is impurity. This is an interesting choice of words, especially for religious Christians or legalistic Christians. I can't even begin to tell you the times people have asked me, "How far can I go and still not sin?" In my mind, a Christian would never ask that question. It's almost as if they would ask me, "Can we kiss, can we fondle one another, etc. and what is the line that we cannot cross?" Again, a true Christian would never be trying to go all the way up to the sin line and quit just before they cross it.

The word used here for impurity is *akatharsia*. I'm sure you recognize the word catharsis. Catharsis means that we cleanse ourselves. The "a" in front of the word negates it. It is to unclean one's self. The word is used in the Old Testament sense of ceremonial uncleanness. One could become ceremonially unclean through sex or moral lapses. We know there were non sinful ways to become unclean but the kind of uncleanness we are talking about here has to do with being sexually unclean. This is an intentional attitude or behavior. When we entertain sexual immorality through pornography, petting, or imagination, we are making ourselves unclean. We are moving rapidly towards that sin line. In reality, we have already crossed the line. Here is what Paul recommended to the Corinthians:

"¹⁸Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body" (I Corinthians 6:18 / NIV).

In other words, we should be running towards things that will make us clean and we should be running away from worldly things that incite our lust and carry us towards sin.

No wonder Paul next tells us to put lust to death. Lust is a passionate pursuit of worldly things. Primarily, lust is easy to understand when it applies to sexual matters. But lust is even more seductive in other areas. People lust for power, lust for riches, lust and for possessions. Jesus said that if one lust's in their heart, they have already committed adultery.

You see, if we learn to cultivate heavenly desires, we won't end up lusting for worldly things. So we are to next put to death evil desires. I'm sure people spend a lot of time thinking about how they would like to find someone to love them and find them attractive in a sexual way. The problem when we start down this road becomes greed. We always start to lust for more. The nature of sexual immorality, impurity, lust, and evil desires, is that we always want more and what satisfies us today won't satisfy us tomorrow. That's why pornography and the sex industry make so much money each year. That's why children are sold into prostitution. That's why our culture gets more perverted and more violent each year. Our culture continues to be so self-centered and seeks self-gratification so much that we are destroying ourselves.

I want to make this as clear as possible because Paul went out of his way to make it clear in his letters. You can be sitting here this morning thinking you are a Christian or right with God and living in sexual immorality. It is idolatry. If you are acting out sexually you are worshipping a false god. You are worshipping Satan. Listen to what Paul wrote to the church in Ephesus:

"⁵You can be sure that no immoral, impure, or greedy person will inherit the Kingdom of Christ and of God. For a greedy person is really an idolater who worships the things of this world. ⁶Don't be fooled by those who try to excuse these sins, for the terrible anger of God comes upon all those who disobey him. ⁷Don't participate in the things these people do" (Ephesians 5:5-7 / NLT).

B. THE EXPLANATION OF THE DRESS CODE (6-7)

In verses 6-7 Paul gives an explanation of the dress code for people who call themselves Christians. I think these two verses are critical for Christians to understand. First look at verse 7. Paul says that as Christians, we must put on purity along with the spiritual fruit, especially self-control. In dealing with self-control in regards to remaining sexually pure, Paul will call on us to use self-control in regards to our anger. Paul says that acting out sexually or acting out in anger is not consistent with those who belong to Jesus. In other words, unbelievers have no problems with being sexually immoral or speaking and acting out in anger. But Christians are to be dressed in purity, self-control, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, and faithfulness. That's the uniform of our Commanding General. It is to be our uniform of the day.

Verse 6 deals with the part of God most of us would like to forget. People who act out sexually and who act out in anger can expect the wrath of God. These are not my words. These are from the Bible. I'm not sure how bad of a pastor this makes me. But after counseling, and teaching, and praying for someone for a long period of time, and watching that person continue to reject instruction and counsel, there comes a time when I have to emotionally detach from them or I'll go crazy. My detaching from someone may cause them a bit of emotional distress, but think about if God detaches from us because of our rebellion. Listen to what Paul writes to the Romans:

"²⁸When they refused to acknowledge God, he abandoned them to their evil minds and let them do things that should never be done. ²⁹Their lives became full of every kind of wickedness, sin, greed, hate, envy, murder, fighting, deception, malicious behavior, and gossip. ³⁰They are backstabbers, haters of God, insolent, proud, and boastful. They are forever inventing new ways of sinning and are disobedient to their parents. ³¹They refuse to understand, break their promises, and are heartless and unforgiving. ³²They are fully aware of God's death penalty for those who do these things, yet they go right ahead and do them anyway. And, worse yet, they encourage others to do them, too" (Romans 1:28-32 / NLT).

I never want to push God to a point where it becomes necessary for Him to punish me or even cut Himself off from me. If we want to call ourselves Christians, then we have to be sexually pure in mind and body, and we must keep our anger under control. In fact, demonstrating self-control when it comes to sexual thoughts and behaviors along with being kind and gentle is a demonstration of our faith.

Saving faith is based on the actions we take based on what we believe. If we are acting out sexually, then we have no reason to call ourselves Christians because we have chosen to reject God and worship the world which is really worshiping Satan. It's that simple. Let me restate it this way. **SEXUAL IMMORALITY IS INCOMPATIBLE WITH A RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS.** I'm sure you could be sexually immoral and fool me. You could be telling everybody that you are in love with Jesus. You can fool a lot of people. You may even be able to fool yourself but the fact you can't fool Jesus.

II. ANGER (VS 8-9a)

Uncontrolled Anger Is Incompatible With A Relationship With Jesus.

Likewise, angry people are described in verse 8 through the first half of verse 9. In other words, **UNCONTROLLED ANGER IS INCOMPATIBLE WITH A RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS.** Many of you know that I wrote my doctoral paper on how to identify and correct unresolved guilt and anger. Anger is one of those things that has the potential to destroy us and people around us. Paul also recognizes the harm of uncontrolled anger.

A. THE ORIGIN AND CYCLE OF ANGER

The origin and cycle of anger starts when the feeling of anger wells up in us. Guilt alerts us to the fact that we have done harm to someone. Anger alerts us to the fact that we perceive harm coming our way. Now since anger is an emotion, we have very little control of the appearance of the emotion. What we do have control over is how we act on it. Paul says the emotion is so dangerous that we should rid ourselves of it immediately. We should take it off like a jacket that has caught fire.

If you look at this list Paul tells us to rid ourselves of, you can see that they all have to do with acting out in anger. The word for anger here is *orge*. It has to do with acting out impulsively on anger. So two things we have to keep a close watch over in our lives are first of all, are we easily angered. And added to the danger is if we are impulsive. Here is the danger. As I said earlier, anger is the emotion that God gave us that alerts us that we feel threatened or in danger. The reason impulsive people are dangerous to themselves and others is that they don't take the time they need to evaluate the reality and seriousness of the threat. For example, if a person is headed at us with a knife in their hand, the anger will give us the energy and adrenaline to fight off the attacker.

However, I have to use a little more reasoning if I am angry because I haven't gotten my way. At this point, the impulsive person is unable to make the distinction between not getting my way and having my life in danger. When I counsel people who are trying to conquer uncontrolled anger, I usually ask them to first rate the level of anger. Impulsive people rate almost every instance in which they are angry at a 10 on a scale of 1 to 10. They are unable to rationally think that this instance should be a 2 or a 3, not a 10. When people are able to do that, they have made a great deal of progress in getting well.

B. RAGE

The problem with angry people is that the people around them never tell them the truth because they don't want to become objects of an angry person's wrath. That's sad, because the only way

an angry person is going to learn to deal with his or her anger is for people around them who love them enough to confront them with this behavior.

But because they are afraid of the person's anger, they usually go along with the person and suffer fearfully under their wrath. They are intimidated because when first confronted, the angry person acts out in rage. This is an emotional and animated word. *Thumos* has to do with passion and emotion. It is when the angry person starts to yell and to scream, perhaps throw things or even hit people. Have you ever seen people scream and yell and their face turns as red as a beet and they shake? It really is a sad sight.

C. MALICE

But what happens next is really sad. When they meet people who don't cower under their threats and anger, they usually go to the next step. They start to plot evil. The NIV calls it malice. The NLT translates it malicious behavior. The Greek calls it *kakia*. Simply put, it means badness. Over the years, I have met some pretty angry people and it is amazing how much time and energy they are willing to put into plotting and planning revenge for people who stand up to them.

D. SLANDER

And one of the ways they do this is by slander. Actually slander and filthy language go together. These are two sides of the same coin. Let's deal with slander. The word for slander is the same word used for blaspheming against God. It is *blasphemia*. This has to do with spreading hate-filled speech behind a person's back. It often has to do with out and out lies about the person or taking half-truths and mixing them with lies in order to make the person look bad. Slander is harmful because it damages a person's reputation to the point that even when proven false, people who have heard the slander hold on to a lot of it as truth. Slander can destroy a person and a community.

E. CURSING

Filthy language is the other side of that coin. This kind of cursing is different from other types of foul language. I have confessed many times that I have used foul language in the past. I have pretty much overcome that. Any type of foul language is wrong but the filthy language here seems to refer to cursing a person to his or her face. That is really destructive. If the angry person is angry enough he or she may curse at the person who is standing in their way. I don't know about you, but I have seen angry people yelling at and cursing people out. It is very uncomfortable to watch. This is what Jesus is getting at when He says:

"²²But I say, if you are angry with someone, you are subject to judgment! If you call someone an idiot, you are in danger of being brought before the high council. And if you curse someone, you are in danger of the fires of hell" (Matthew 5:22 / NLT).

F. LYING

And angry people are usually so consumed with anger and so self-focused, they lie to keep trying to get what they want. Again, I have noticed that people who lie get to the point they don't even realize they are lying. In fact they are often able to convince themselves that the lying and deception are actually true.

Earlier in verse 6 we said that God's anger burns towards sexually immoral people and angry people. The interesting thing about that is this. Look here in verse 8. The word used to describe God's anger in verse 6 is the same word used here for anger. We have seen that just being in proximity to angry people makes us targets for their anger. However the frightening reality is that angry people will themselves become targets for God's anger. **UNCONTROLLED ANGER IS INCOMPATIBLE WITH A RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS.**

We have seen the uniform of the day for unbelievers. Unbelievers are self-centered and self-absorbed. They are out to be self-satisfied. Part of that satisfaction is to give in to and act out sexually. And the second half of part of that uniform is acting in anger towards people and even God if they perceive them to be standing in their way.

III. THE UNIFORM OF THE DAY (VS 9b-11)

We Should Be In The Same Uniform As Our Commanding General.

But as we have said earlier, the uniform of the day for believers is to imitate our Lord and Savior Jesus. In the second half of verse 9 through verse 11 describes the uniform of the day. In other words **WE SHOULD BE IN THE SAME UNIFORM AS OUR COMMANDING GENERAL.**

A. NEW CLOTHES (9b-10)

Our new clothes are described in the second half of verse 9 through verse 10. Paul will flesh this out as the letter goes on but for now he describes this new type of life as taking off an old set of clothes, throwing them away and putting on a new self. In other words, the old self ought to be dead. Listen how he describes it to the Corinthians:

"¹⁷Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" (II Corinthians 5:17 / NIV).

We have talked often about the fact that we become transformed into the nature of Jesus by the renewing of our minds. And our minds are renewed as they grow in the knowledge of God while at the same time allowing that knowledge to humble us and shape us into the men and women God wants us to be.

B. NEW ATTITUDE (11)

And that should lead us to a new attitude as described in verse 11. We have talked about this point over and over again so I will just summarize it here. In Christ, there is to be no characteristics that are to separate. Ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds are not things to be proud about and they are not to be used to separate us from one another.

C. THE NEW LOOK

The new look is that Christians are not to be united because of race, culture, ethnicity, gender, or even religion. We are to be united in Jesus Christ alone. For the Christian, Jesus is our all in all. Our goal in life is to be conformed to the image of Jesus. Like in the military, **WE SHOULD BE IN THE SAME UNIFORM AS OUR COMMANDING GENERAL.**

IV. EPILOGUE

We make a fatal mistake if we think that we are pretty good and Jesus needs to just make a few adjustments. We need to put to death our old selves. **BECOMING A CHRISTIAN DOES NOT MEAN FIXING UP THE OLD ME. IT IS CREATING A WHOLE NEW ME.**

We do our friends and family a disservice if we do not confront them with sexual immorality and uncontrolled anger. Further if we don't deal with these types of sin in a church we will destroy the church. I don't know who wrote this but listen to what happened to Alexander the Great because no one ever confronted him with his angry behavior:

"Alexander the Great was one of the few men in history who seemed to deserve his

descriptive title. He was energetic, versatile, and intelligent. Although hatred was not generally part of his nature, several times in his life he was tragically defeated by anger. The story is told of one of these occasions, when a dear friend of Alexander, a general in his army, became intoxicated and began to ridicule the emperor in front of his men. Blinded by anger and quick as lightning, Alexander snatched a spear from the hand of a soldier and hurled it at his friend. Although he had only intended to scare the drunken general, his aim was true and the spear took the life of his childhood friend.

Deep remorse followed his anger. Overcome with guilt, Alexander attempted to take his own life with the same spear, but he was stopped by his men. For days he lay sick, calling for his friend and chiding himself as a murderer.

Alexander the Great conquered many cities and vanquished many countries, but he had failed miserably to control his own spirit."

Sexual immorality and uncontrolled anger always leave destroyed lives in their wake. Be sure that you are not acting out sexually or in anger. And be sure to stay far away from people who are. They will destroy your life.