

Your Are Changed. You Can Change.

Colossians 3:1-17

Throughout Scripture, God shows deep concern for our growth in godliness. Many passages teach us how to live as followers of Christ. Because we are sinners, this instruction often emphasizes our need to change—our actions, words, thoughts, and ultimately our mindsets.

When we approach a text like this one, with commands to do this and not do that, it can be easy to fall into a works-based mindset (I just need to try harder) or a defeated mindset (I just can't change). However, the gospel gives us a different paradigm. We are changed; therefore, we can change. This passage walks us through who we are in Christ, and then outlines how this identity informs and empowers us to put off those things that are un-Christlike and to put on the behaviors and mindsets that reflect Christ.

Because Christ is raised from the dead, our lives are reoriented to his kingdom priorities (vv. 1-4)

V. 1 – If you have been given a resurrected life through faith in Jesus Christ, the implications are that your passions, desires, and orientation in life should all be focused on Christ.

V. 2 – Your priorities on earth need to be shaped by a heavenly (righteous) ethic. Your living in this world is now dictated by a kingdom-of-heaven mindset, not an earthly one.

Vv. 3-4 – We have died. Our old self is gone. Who we are is now hidden and kept in Christ, and it is a guarantee that we will be with him in glory. As a Christian, you can have confidence in your perseverance because it is not up to you. It is up to Christ who will keep you. If Christ died for you, raised you from the dead, and keeps your life hidden in him, there is nothing that can separate you from him.

Because Christ is raised from the dead, we can put to death our sinful ways (vv. 5-11)

Vv. 5-6 – Sexual immorality

Sin distorts that which is good. And we know from places like Romans 1 that our sexuality is often a place where the enemy wreaks havoc. When you see error enter the church, you most likely will see sexual sin.

This list of vices goes from the external actions of sexual sin to the internal motivations of those sins and shows how idolatry is at the heart of our rebellion. We love other things more than God. In this case, our own sinful appetites, expressed in sinful sexual behaviors, get in the way of living as God has designed us to live. And because of this, the wrath of God is coming.

Vv. 7-10 – Angry disposition

This list focuses on anger and its close companions, wrath and malice, and the language that comes from these sinful dispositions. Scripture shows us a close tie between our sinful hearts and the words we use: Jesus says, “The things that come out of the mouth come from the heart” (Matt. 15:18; see also James 3.) The words we speak show the disposition of our hearts.

V. 11 – We are no longer regarded by worldly categories that divide us, but rather, what defines us is Christ. This doesn't diminish our unique heritage or flatten any distinctions about us. Rather, it refocuses us on what unites us – and that is Jesus Christ.


Because Christ is raised from the dead, we can choose to live righteously (vv. 12-17)

Vv. 12-15 – Dwelling together in unity

Paul focuses on what is true for the church: you are chosen, you are holy, you are beloved. This is both the motivation and the power that allow us to actually put on all these qualities that reflect the character of Christ. It's both and: you are...and you are becoming.

As we put on Christ, we can change. When we practice compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, bearing with one another, forgiving one another, and loving one another, we begin to relate to each other in a way that reflects the reality of our new identity in Christ.

Vv. 16-17 – The more you put on thankfulness, the more you put on these new attitudes and behaviors, the more they become natural. The more you put on these clothes, these characteristics of Christ, the more they fit.

CHANGE GOAL	DOING/NOT DOING	HIDDEN COMMITMENTS	BIG ASSUMPTIONS (BELIEFS)
Be more patient with my child/spouse/roommate/parents, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I react quickly to their mistakes • I'm constantly critical • I shut down conversations • I don't give them my undivided attention • I don't give them my time • I don't listen • What else? 	Worry box: <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 5px 0;"> I'm worried that I am going to be inconvenienced. What else? </div>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'm committed to not being inconvenienced 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I deserve a well-ordered house because of how hard I work. • I deserve a life with no disruptions. • What else?

*Adapted from *Immunity to Change* by Robert Kegan and Lisa Lahey (2009)

Questions to challenge your big assumptions:

1. Are these really true?
2. How would running these through a gospel grid change them?
3. If I change my big assumptions, how would that impact my commitments and my behaviors?