

Imagine you were off on holiday on Tuesday. What would you pack? In terms of clothes you'd probably put in some casual gear rather than the working clothes you wear each day. In terms of books well probably travel guides rather than work manuals and while you may take your ipad, tablet, or whatever it will be in the hope that it is not work emails you are dealing with.

I hope you can see the point I'm making, that life is different on holiday to during the normal working week, whatever our normal is and whatever our work may be. We live differently on holiday don't we?

The thrust of what Paul had to say to these Christians in Colossae, as we come into Chapter 3, is that now for them as Christians things are different. Therefore the way they live should reflect that.

I have seen people sitting on the beach answering work emails. I have seen people on the beach preparing sermons but it should not be so.

So how did Paul envisage them living the Christian life and what does that have to say to us here in Christ Church this morning or listening to this on download?

1. Their new situation v1

Paul begins "since you have been raised with Christ". That is their new situation.

This change has come about through the gospel as we have been seeing in the first two chapters. Through the gospel they had been rescued from the dominion of darkness (1:13) and qualified to share in God's kingdom (1:12). Through the gospel these Christians, though alienated from God (1:21), had been reconciled (1:22) through the death of Jesus. Through the gospel these Christians, though "dead in your sins" had been "made alive with Christ" (2:13). They had been raised to new life with Christ. That new life was marked by friendship with God, being in his kingdom and accepting Jesus as King.

Things have changed for them. Things are different and the way they think and live should reflect that.

Before we move on let me ask is that true of you? Have you, through the gospel, been made alive to God and raised with Christ? If not then let me tell you that while we have started our Christianity Explored course you can still join it a week on Tues and find out what God has done for us in Jesus. But for those of us who say yes I have been raised with Christ then we too should be living a different lifestyle.

If through the death of Jesus we have been made alive to God, become his friends and entered his kingdom that means a very new lifestyle. Let's see how Paul sees our lives as children of King Jesus working out.

2. The essentials of the new life v1-2

So now you are on holiday let's just think about what happens.

You wake up in the morning then what? You perhaps turn over and go back to sleep as you don't have to go to work. Or perhaps you do get up because you are on holiday and each day is a new day filled with new things to see and do.

The joy of going on holiday is that you can forget about your normal life at home and all the things that you normal do. You can focus on new sights, new experiences, a different style and pace of life and so on. Your goals are different and so is your thinking.

So, as they and we live as Christians, having the new life in Christ, Paul is saying our goals and our thinking should be different. "Set your hearts on things above not on earthly things" is the encouragement. That is we should be focussed on those things which enhance and grow our life with God, which have eternal value rather than the things of this world which we know deep down are fleeting and have no lasting value.

To do that we need as Paul says here to "set your minds on things above not on earthly things" that is we should make it our goal to "live a life worthy of the Lord" (1:9) and that should be our mindset. Friends this is not the "so heavenly minded as to be no earthly use" concept. It is rather recognising that now as Christians, as those who have new life in Christ, we have different values and different goals in life. That is in our thinking about every part of life we are recognising that we live with a new King who is Jesus and that should affect our thinking.

If you get married it should affect the way you live and that will be through your thinking and where your heart is set. I remember years back having taken the wedding of a young couple. Some months at a Sunday evening I casually asked the new wife how the weekend had been. It appeared her husband had spent most of the weekend off either with his friends or playing sport in one way or another. So I took him aside and explained that now he was married things were different. He had a new allegiance and with that new commitments and that should affect his lifestyle.

Paul called them and us to recognise our new allegiance to Jesus as King and to live our lives in him and for him. Paul's prayer for them was for God "to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding" (1.10). Getting their thinking right would affect their living. It has to doesn't it? But the point is that if we are 'in Christ' then our minds should be focussed on him and what his will for our lives is and not on what Paul here describes as 'earthly things'. So, for example, if you are looking for a new job is it salary the things of earth that is the overriding factor or the work life balance to enable you to serve Jesus that is key. You are moving house, is it the nature of the house or it being somewhere where you can easily get to a good church that is important? The mind focussed on heaven affects the desires of our hearts.

3. Why should they live this way? V3-4

The reason for this change of heart and mind is because of what was going on in their lives.

a. “For you died” v3, not literally but there has been a fundamental change in their lives. Paul has mentioned this in the previous chapter where he spoke about “putting off the sinful nature” (2:11) and “having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through faith” (2:12). Their Christian life had begun and it had started with a radical change that can only be described by the death of the old life and the start of the new. In his book *Risen Indeed* Michael Bourdeaux described many Christians who suffered for their faith behind the then iron curtain. One, Vasili Koslov, had become a Christian while in prison on criminal charges. Not long after coming out of jail he was arrested for Christian activities. He described the trial. “I remember my first trial as a Christian in 1961. The public prosecutor wanted to reproach me with a reference to my past. He lifted a big volume of my former convictions high over his head and shaking it he shouted, “Look at his past! He was a thief, a gangster, a criminal! And now he has turned into a holy apostle!” In my defence speech I replied, “yes I was a thief and a criminal for which I served my sentence deservedly. But now I am dead to sin and to my past. The power of the blood of Christ has cleansed my wicked heart. Now I am a new man. The book the prosecutor is waving is no more than my former sinful self. But Koslov the criminal and gangster died a long time ago and was buried while today, by the grace of God, Koslov the Christian lives”. So with anyone who has begun with Jesus the past is dealt with. The old self has died. We start a new life in Christ and the way we live should reflect that. In Christ you died, your old life is over. That is the past so Paul is saying don’t live in the past.

b. “your life is now hidden with Christ in God” v3. This is present in which their life is with Christ. They are living with Christ and for Christ, “Christ in you”. How is that life hidden? All that our life is or could be is not seen or experienced yet. We live in the now and not yet. Many may look at us and not see that we are followers of Jesus. They may look at us as a church and think that we look weak and ineffective. In the present we live with Jesus but we know our lives are often weak and imperfect. Our life with Christ is hidden but

c. “you will appear with him in glory” v4. One day all will be revealed and when Jesus returns his people will be with him in glory “Christ in you the hope of glory”. It is as we live now looking to that day that Paul encourages us to set our hearts and minds on heaven.

This is why Paul was so keen, as we have seen in earlier sermons, to encourage them to continue to live in Christ. See what Christ has done for you. See the cost to him of bringing you new life now let us live with Christ as King so that one day we will reign with him in glory.

4. How in practice would they do this? V5-11

Imagine for a moment that you have been doing some manual work. It may be cleaning the house, painting a fence, mending the car, gardening or whatever but you are dirty and now it’s time to go

out to a restaurant and eat. So you take off the dirty clothes, shower down and get dressed in smart clean clothes as is appropriate. In a way that is what Paul is speaking about here.

How were these Christians to live? Well as we have been seeing in a way that was fitting their new life.

In v5 he lists a number of things they were to “put to death”. Why is that? Well v7 those things marked the way they used to live, v5 they are the result of our earthly fallen nature and above all v6 they lead to us coming under God’s wrath.

Have a look with me at these things in v5 sexual immorality, impurity, lust. We might think he is only speaking about sexual sins here but then he mentions greed which opens it out and what he is really referring to is what we might call the sins of the flesh, those things we associate with our sensual desires. We are sensual people. That is how we were made. But we know that we can be tempted through our senses, the things we see, touch, taste and so on. Last Tues at Christianity Explored Gordon was saying he couldn’t eat his meal because he’d eaten some biscuits before “they were in the tin calling out to me to be eaten” he said.

Isn’t that how it is? Our sensual nature responds to the things of this world. As the hymn puts it “The world is ever near; I see the sights that dazzle, the tempting sounds I hear.”

These things are part of our old life and not fitting in the new yet they tempt us. How can we get rid of them? Well in 2:23 Paul acknowledges that human commands such as “Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch” (2:21) can’t help us. It is only as we set our hearts and minds on heaven not on earthly things that the pull of these things begins to fade, “Turn your eyes upon Jesus look full in his wonderful face and the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of his glory and grace”. We know we can’t overcome these things on our own we need to set our hearts and minds on heaven and through that allowing our love for Jesus and the power of his Holy Spirit to help us in what will be a battle throughout our lives.

Then in v8 and into v9 we have another list of things the Christian is to “rid yourselves of” many of which relate to how we speak to each other.

Paul sees them as part of the ‘old self’ what they were before they heard the gospel. They are part of our old self and they are destructive aren’t they?

They are totally inappropriate to the new life these Christians were now living as inappropriate as preparing sermons on the beach in fact more so because these things in no way reflect the life of Jesus that they and we are living, “since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self”. Having been raised with Christ the old self has gone. In Christ we are a new creation and the way we live and the way we speak should reflect that.

As we think this term about how we can be built together these things have much to say to us. Just think of the damage in a congregation that these things can cause and you'll understand why Paul encouraged these Christians to get rid of such things.

These things don't fit their new life which, Paul goes on to show, is being renewed in the image of God. These things certainly don't fit in the new community of faith where there are no divisions because "Christ is all and is in all". We are one in Christ who is in each one of us. So friends let's hear Paul's encouragement to get rid of them.

Paul's words are very clear and very applicable to us. In life and word we should live as befits our new life in Christ. We have been rescued, reconciled raised and are being renewed and the way we live should be consistent with the fact that those who have been raised with Christ, as those who are destined for glory not wrath. As you read these words what are the things or attitudes you need to be putting off. Obviously the lists are not exclusive but if we are to run the race before us we need to "throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles" (Heb 12:1).

You have been raised with Christ. Your past life is over and has no claim on you. You live now with Christ so set your hearts and minds on the things above so that you may be able to live a godly life putting to death the things that were part of our earthly nature and ridding ourselves of the things that relate to our old self. Then we will be able to "continue in your faith established and firm." (Col 1:23)