The call to steadfastness

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 01 January 2000

Preacher: Rev Donald Lamont

[0:00] Will you turn with me now for a little time to a portion we read together in the epistle to the Colossians and the third chapter. And reading from the eighth verse of that chapter, Colossians chapter 3 at verse 8.

But now ye also put off all these anger, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his beads, and have put on the new man which is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him.
For there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision or uncircumcision, barbarian, scepcion, bond nor free, but Christ is all and in all.
These words. The apostle is here reminding the Christians at Colossae the state to which they have been elevated by the grace of God.
He uses terms which gives meaning and significance to this blessed condition of life and soul. He says you are risen with Christ, verse 1.
[1:12] You are dead and your life is hid with Christ. Verse 3. You have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man which is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him.

Verses 9 and 10. You are the elect of God, holy and beloved. Verse 12. And on the basis of this, what they are by the grace and mercy of God, the apostle proceeds to exhort them and press on them their obligation to walk in accordance with their newfound status.
You are, he says, to seek those things which are above. Verse 1. You are to set your affections on things above. Verse 2. You are to mortify your members which are upon the earth.
Verse 5. You are to lie not one to another, seeing that you have put off the old man with his deeds.
Verse 9. Now, what we would like to emphasize at this particular point is not so much the details of Christian conduct, which we have enumerated in this passage, anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication.
But rather the underlying work of grace itself. What gives meaning to these things in the life of a Christian.
[2:45] The basis from which the work of mortification in the believer's life must proceed. If the believer's members which are upon the earth, if they are to be effectively mortified, then it must be on a proper scriptural base.

If the body is to be kept under and brought into subjection, it must stem, this must stem from a base other than self. The energy and inspiration must come from out with oneself.
And this is the very matter that the apostle is pressing here in this particular passage. Seeing that you are risen with Christ, seek those things which are above.
Seeing you are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God, then mortify your members which are upon the earth. Seeing you have put off the old man and have put on the new man, then put off all these anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.
It is because of what you have become by the grace of God that you have the motivation and the enabling to be even more than what you now are.
[4:03] For as the work of grace proceeds, then the believer should become day by day more than he now is. Let's look then at the radical nature of the operations of divine grace in the soul.

And the apostle uses two terms here to describe this work. He says that it is a putting off on the one hand and it is a putting on on the other.
First he says you have put off the old man with his deeds. Now then the term old man is not to be equated with indwelling sin.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

Indwelling sin still remains in the new man. And of course it will be flying in the face of scripture and of Christian experience to claim that indwelling sin has been completely put off and has been totally crucified.
This very apostle, you remember, emphasizes, says in Romans chapter 7, makes it clear in Romans chapter 7 that sin is still there.
[5:15] And it is the new man who is speaking. For I know, says he, that in me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing. For the will is present with me.

But how to perform? That which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not. But the evil which I would not, that I do. I see, he says, another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin and death that is in my members.
The term old man, therefore, is not to be equated with indwelling sin, but rather with the unregenerate nature. So you see, in the unregenerate nature, in the unconverted state, a man's life is governed, whatever he may think himself, a man's life is governed by a selfward bias.
It is a living for self, and it is a living to self. We are not in saying this, we are asserting that there is no natural benevolence or unselfishness governing the conduct of men by nature that will be patently untrue.
It will be contrary to observation and to reason. There is, we know, a vast reservoir of natural kindliness and compassion among men.
[6:44] There is, after all, common grace operating in the sphere of human life. And this is one of the ways in which common grace, we believe, finds expression amongst men and women.

But this doesn't offer my premise that self is at the helm for every act that is performed by man, however excellent that act may be in itself, that doesn't have at its end and aim the glory of God and the honor of God.
It's an act that is projecting self and drawing honor and glory to the self. And this is the very emphasis which Paul gives, as you remember, in Philippians chapter 2 where he is referring to his own life, to that fundamental change that had occurred in his life, what he was before that change had come.
For we, he says, are the circumcision which worship God in his spirit and rejoice in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh, though, he says, I might also have confidence in the flesh.
If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more. And he goes on to describe why he could boast, circumcised, the eighth day of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, and Hebrew of the Hebrews, touching the law, a palacy concerning zeal, persecuting the church, this is precisely how he was.
[8:21] Self was being projected constantly. And it was the pride of his heart that was being seen. So you see, the unregenerate life is governed by this self-word bias.

And then too, of course, the unregenerate life of a man is governed by a carnal disposition. Without that life being necessarily, outwardly, scandalous, or sinful, or in any way degrading in the eyes of man, a carnally-minded man may conceivably be governed by a very precise moral code.
And in his outward walk, he be blameless and upright in the eyes of his fellow men. We have no reason to believe that the Pharisee who features in the Lord's parable of the two men who went up to the temple to pray was not precisely as he himself said he was in his prayer.
God, I thank thee that I am not as other men, are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this public. Luke chapter 18. And Jesus doesn't suggest that he was wrong in this external assessment of himself.
The reason why Jesus spoke the parable is because, as it says in that chapter at verse 9, certain people trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others.
[9:56] You see? Certain men trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others. This is what we mean and what we believe the scriptures mean when it refers to the carnal mind being enmity against God and the natural man receiving not the things of the Spirit of God.

The carnal mind is the antithesis of the spiritual mind. It is the mind which governs him in a state of nature. And so then, an unregenerate life is governed by a carnal disposition.
And then too, it is clear that an unregenerate life is governed by a present perspective. That is, a living for and an exclusive emphasis on the things of time and on the things of sense.
An eating and a playing and a drinking without thought or regard for tomorrow, for the hereafter and a relationship which tomorrow and the hereafter ought to have in, on the present.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

Man in his unregenerate state is governed by the kingdom of sense and its tangibles. Let me, he says, knock down my barns and let me build greater ones.
[11:15] Well, you say, there is, what is wrong with that? There is nothing very wrong with such a sentiment. And, assuredly, there isn't. Every man should be diligent in improving his own lot and also the lot of others.

He is not by any means to forget his neighbor. But when, at the same time, he relegates, as he says that, when he relegates the concerns of his soul and pushes these things out of sight, then he is acting in a criminal manner and he is giving his undivided concern to the things of the present hour, to the things of sense and what is material.
Whereas God, on the other hand, commands him, seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you.
this then is what we are to understand by what has to be put off and regenerate nature.
The second part of what the apostle says here is that you have put on. You have put off on the one hand, but you have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.
[12:37] Verse 10. This old man, new man operation is not to be seen as two separate activities of the Holy Spirit, but essentially as one, we believe.

The regenerating work of grace, the bringing to life of the spiritually dead. It is as if a man were stepping out, being brought out of one element into another.
When he leaves his former element, he leaves behind the practices and the principles which governed his thinking and his conduct in that element.
It is as radical as this. He is now to be governed by a completely new and different set of principles by a heavenly code.
And so the apostle says of this new man that he is a creation. A new man which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.
[13:45] Now the basic meaning of the word create is the forming of something quite new. All of us know. We of course use the word in connection with many things in life.

God has given gifts and powers and talents to men and women so that they may use those talents and powers to create beauty.
We are called upon to create beauty and happily of course those same talents can be used and are frequently used in creating what is ugly and sharded and revolting and monstrous.
but this is the talent of God of course being vitiated and being prostituted in just the same way as a drunkard or a drug addict prostitutes the gift and the beauty which is like itself.
But the creation of beauty is something which through the goodness and the grace of God man is capable of doing. He is required to do.
[14:50] Now remember that when God created man he created the masterpiece of his works. He left man to the very last and so that he would be the crown of his creative activity that he would be the glory of that activity and that he was it's clear from the fact that God himself was well pleased with what he produced.

he was well pleased with the man that he came from his hand. It was something of beauty. Something that pleased God and nothing but beauty can please him.
And when we think of the new creation the regenerating of a man under the dominion of sin and of death then we are to think of the same thing of beauty.
You see my dear friends death and sin they are ugly and they are beastly. They are unnatural monsters in the realm of man. They were never intended to be there in the first instance and when a man when God creates a man regenerates a man he is bringing him by his grace from this realm of ugliness and making him into something of beauty.
knowledge. It is a creation. It is something quite new. And it is also a creation that assumes a particular form.
[16:27] The new man he says which is renewed in knowledge is after the image of him that created him. now of course when we think of this activity as exercised by men that of creating something of beauty we know that the creator of that thing has a picture in his mind before he has ever touched anything.

He is working in accordance with a certain pattern in his own mind. and this was likewise the case when God created the greatest thing of all when he created man in his own image.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

This was the pattern that God had his own image. He was created we read after the image of God. The divine creator had a particular pattern in view and according to this pattern he worked and the same holds through in the activity of grace.
In the regenerating activities of God's spirit we read that we are created in Christ Jesus after good works.
This creation is after the image of him that created him. In other words the same principle is followed here as is followed in the original creation of man the believer is pattern on Christ and while he does not appear what we shall be we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him for we shall see him as he is so this creation is a creation that assumes a particular form and we we believe self illuminating and self condemning the same time the man is says the apostle renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him now then the true artist the real creator of beauty whose work will bring delight and pleasure to so many will they will see his work from quite a different light to the man himself who created that particular thing the man who created that particular thing it will give pleasure to him it will have happiness to him no doubt when he sees it but he will also see what will distress and what will disturb and what will condemn him because he will see the blemishes that no one else can see he will see those things that will fix on those things that will bring sorrow to him and they will always be there to remind him of the imperfection of his work and a true artist he will never be fully satisfied with what he has patterned what he has formed and it is so very different my friend in the realm of grace the new man in
[19:45] Christ Jesus rejoices in his new found status in his happiness in the beauty of that status we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory he he he knows he knows that all things have become new that he is a new man in Christ Jesus and he can never be the same again because the hand of God has wrought mightily upon him but so long as he is in his body he will also lament he will mourn because he will be saddened by the shortcoming which he sees in himself the blemishes that he is conscious or too conscious of these faults and these failings he knows them better than any other man and so he will have again and again and again to cry out for the apostle wretched man that I am who shall deliver me from the body of this death so while at the same time he as he is renewed in knowledge and as he is able to rejoice in what he sees he is also grieved and saddened by the fact that he is not what he would like to be and he is not what he hopes he will be one day when he is made perfect in holiness this then is the radical work of grace to which the apostle is referring to in these terms the old man the new man you have put off this this is a once for all activity of the grace of

God you have put off the old man and you have put on the new man and then we see the radical result which this operation produces in human relations verse 11 where there is neither Greek nor Jew circumcision or uncircumcision barbarian Scythian bond nor free but Christ is all and in all in other words in this new manhood there are no racial boundaries there is neither Greek nor Jew but Christ is all there is no master race no superior ethnic group no inferior citizen in the kingdom of grace the gospel of the grace of God is the one only genuine power that can obliterate racial boundaries he doesn't claim to obliterate racial distinctions and it was never meant to this is perhaps where a great many well meaning people err today imagining that they can obliterate racial distinctions something that is utterly impossible and the gospel never attempts to do something that is quite impossible something that is quite contrary to nature racial distinctions have been there from time immemorial and each race has its own social ethos and its own distinctive culture and this the gospel recognizes and doesn't overthrow but ah racial boundaries that is another matter and the gospel of the grace of
God it overlaps racial boundaries so that black white yellow whatever they are one in Christ Jesus there are no racial boundaries where the gospel of the grace of God is effectively operating in this man in this new manhood there are no racial boundaries and what is more says the apostle here in this new manhood there are no religious boundaries such as one has in Judaism Mohammedanism animism Hinduism and all the other isms we have scattered throughout the earth in various brands of world religions we know how each one has its own clothes chops its own customs barriers its own passport documents but in a new man in a new manhood which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him the central focal point of meeting is the
Lord Jesus Christ here Christ is all and in all religious distinctions there are and will be in the manner in which men worship but the tie of grace overlips all these and every newborn man meets at the feet of Jesus Christ and worships there he is one great unifying factor in religious exercises of

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

all those who have felt the irresistible power of his grace and of his love upon their own hearts and upon their own lives it is the common lord before whom they gladly bow and submit themselves and to whom they render joyful allegiance there are no religious boundaries and in this new manhood it is evident from these words that there are no cultural boundaries where there is neither barbarian nor
Scythian says the apostle it is reckoned by the historians that these Scythians mentioned here were indeed a warlike a cruel and a savage people and in that sense they would be considered barbarians by the so-called more cursed nations such as the Jews and the Greeks and the Romans and the Egyptians but remember these people had their own distinctive culture just that the others had and so far as the gospel of the grace of God was concerned this presented no problems when the Goths you remember the other and other tribes of northern Europe who raided who overcame the Roman Empire in the fifth century these were considered barbarians of the worst order but yet when they came face to face with the ambassadors of the gospel we believe that many of them were conquered themselves were overcome and conquered by the grace of
[26:38] God and submitted themselves to the power of that gospel this new manhood knows nothing of cultural boundaries it recognizes a legitimacy and a propriety of different ethnic cultures and what it does is to add a new dimension to that particular culture in its practical outworking therefore it will not only proclaim its basic message of reconciliation but it will also enable that culture to pursue a healing educational and charitable ministry among its own people this is the power the practical effect of the gospel of the grace of God and this new manhood in this new manhood says the apostle there are no social boundaries there is neither bond nor free there is the apostle here and remember he was writing in an age when where there were many bond men and his words must have sounded very strange on the years of some by and large the age in which

Paul lived and labored was a harsh and a cruel age especially so far as the unfortunate slave was concerned and there were thousands of them scattered throughout the Roman Empire but the gospel which he was commissioned to proclaim was not limited to one particular social group in society it was as able to make new men out of slaves as it was to make new men out of free men and when it did as the letter to Philemon so clearly demonstrates it radically altered the relationship between master and servant for in asking Philemon you remember to receive Onesimus back he says not as a servant but above a servant a brother beloved specially to me but how much more unto thee both in the flesh and in the
Lord these words must have sounded revolutionary to many in Paul's own day but they were but the words of soberness the words of the spirit of God and we believe that they expressed the very essence of the gospel of that of the grace of God which the apostle was commissioned to proclaim so that is the radical result which this operation produces amongst men ■■■■ but this operation demands but put on therefore. You see he had laid down the basis first of all and then he comes now to the practical application of what he had been preaching. Put on therefore as the elect of God, holy and beloved. You are a chosen of God, you are a holy and beloved people, then put on bowels of mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long suffering, forbearing one another and forgiving one another. If any man have a quarrel against any as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.
And this is a restructuring and a refashioning that must go on all the time in the Christian's life. The elect of God simply cannot afford the luxury of concluding that all is well because if they do, then they are making it abundantly clear that everything is far from well. The words of scripture here make it very clear indeed that this is a continuing and a constant exercise of soul by the believer. Put on therefore, keep putting on as the elect of God, bowels of mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long suffering, forbearing one another and forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you. One could spend a long time dealing with those graces separately, but there is nothing obscure about any of them. We all know, I am sure, what they signify.
And I would just close by urging you, as I urge myself, to put them on. Do not ever rest satisfied with your measure of progress in this direction, the measure of progress you have attained to already. And at the same time, do not be discouraged if you feel that you are making so little progress in this way. If this, my friend, is how you feel, then it is very likely that your progress is such as to cause concern to the adversary, so that he is making a determined attempt to dissuade you from making any effort at all. But however you feel discouraged on the one hand or encouraged on the other, bring the matter to the Lord himself. Spread it out before him. Tell him how things are.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

[32:44] Beseech his enabling grace so that you would persevere in this task. For it is he himself who is directing you to put on, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, these practical risks, to pursue with all the energy, the energy that he gives you, those things, so that you would evidence in your conduct, in your relationship with others, that you have a divine basis on which your life is operating, on which your life is being lived.

You ought to be, we ought to be, all of us who profess the holy name of Jesus, to be different in our conduct, in the way in which we live. It ought to be seen in us that we are putting on bowels of mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, forbearing, forbearing one another and forgiving one another. Because this is the mind of Christ.
This is how Christ lived and this is how he expects his followers to live. In a world where there is so little of these practical things, where there is so much of selfishness and harshness and everything else that militates against the good of mankind.
this then is a radical restructuring that you and I have to pay attention to day by day, as we seek to have, to show forth the life of Jesus Christ, as we seek to live that life to his glory and to his honor, as we seek to project him in a world of darkness and of distress. May he grant grace to each one of us to put these things more into practice day by day than ever we have done hitherto. Amen.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host