

THE NEW YOU

TEXT: COLOSSIANS 3:1-1

■ Some scientists, according to a story by Harold Bredesen, decided to develop a fish that could live outside of water. So, selecting some healthy red herring, they bred and crossbred, hormoned and chromosomed until they produced a fish that could exist Out of water.

But the project director wasn't satisfied. He suspected that though the fish had learned to live on dry land, it still had a secret desire for water.

"Re-educate it," he said. "Change its very desires."

So again they went to work, this time retraining even the strongest reflexes. The result? A fish that would rather die than get wet. Even humidity filled this new fish with dread.

The director, proud of his triumph, took the fish on tour. Well, quite accidentally, according to official reports, it happened -- the fish fell into a lake. It sank to the bottom, eyes and gills clamped shut, afraid to move, lest it become wetter. And of course it dared not breathe; every instinct said no. Yet breathe it must.

So the fish drew a tentative gill-full. Its eyes bulged. It breathed again and flicked a fin. It breathed a third time and wriggled with delight. Then it darted away. The fish had discovered water.

And with that same wonder, men and women conditioned by a world that rejects God, discover Him. For in Him we live and move and have our being.

(Larson, 131)

Have you gone beyond what the world thinks you should be to discover the New You? Too many Christians are conditioned by the world to believe that there is no way around sin and impurity. Don't buy into the lie. Jesus has made a way for you to be what He wants you to be.

Paul was concerned about the Colossians' spiritual life. The last thing he wanted was for them to fall short of a victorious Christian life. His point is simple, "Let your new spiritual nature have control." In other words, "If you are a new creation then live like it." But HOW? Paul lays down several *principles* that the Christian is encouraged to follow.

I. SEEK WHAT IS ABOVE (vv. 1-4).

A. Our desires tell us who we are (v.1).

B. Our mind determines what we seek (v. 2).

■ As the story goes, penny pinching Jack Benny was walking along when suddenly an armed robber approached him and said, “Your money or your life!” There was a long pause as Benny did nothing. The impatient robber said, “Well?” Jack Benny replied, “Don’t rush me! I’m thinking about it.”

C. Our bond with Christ gives us security (v. 3).

We are "hidden with Christ in God."

D. Our reward is connected to what we have sought (v.4).

II. WALK IN PURITY (vv. 5-8).

A. Purity is a choice (v. 5).

The understood pronoun is “you.” As one translation put it, (you) put to death

whatever is worldly in you.”

B. Judgment is certain for the disobedient (vv. 6-7).

C. Purity is possible through Christ (v. 8).

■ Chambers writes, “The purity which God demands is impossible *unless* I can be remade within, and that is what Jesus has undertaken to do by His redemption.” (150) (Italics added)

III. LIVE AS A NEW CREATION (vv. 9-11).

- A. Don't return to the ways of old nature (v. 9).
- B. Cultivate your new nature (v. 10).
- C. The transformed nature changes all relationships (v. 11)

1. Human relationships are changed.

There is "the destruction of racial barriers ("Greek or Jew"), religious barriers ("circumcised or uncircumcised"), cultural barriers ("Barbarian, Scythian") and social barriers ("slave or free")." (Hughes, 99)

2. Spiritual relationships are changed.

There is no more fellowship with the "unfruitful works of darkness." Christ becomes the center of all we are.

CONCLUSION

■ Living without Christ is like driving a car with its front end Out of line. You can stay on the road if you grip the steering wheel with both hands and hang on tightly. Any lapse of attention, however, and you head straight for the ditch.

Society in general -- educators, political leaders, parents -- exhorts us to drive straight and curb our destructive tendencies. But it is a ceaseless struggle.

Coming to Christ is a little like getting a front-end alignment. The pull toward the ditch is corrected from the inside.

Not to say there won't be bumps and potholes ahead that will still try to jar us off the road. Temptations and challenges will always test our alertness to steer a straight course. We can hardly afford to fall asleep at the wheel. But the basic skew in the moral mechanism has been repaired. (Larson, 40)

These basic *principles*, when applied, can enable us to stay the course that we began when we started out with Christ. You are a new creation! My question is, "Are you living like a new creation?"

References

Chambers, Oswald (1935). *My Utmost for His Highest* Westwood, NJ: Barbour and Company, Inc.

Hughes, R. Kent (1989). *Colossians and Philemon*. Westchester, ILL: Crossway.

Larson, Craig B. (Ed.). (1993). *Illustrations for Preaching and Teaching*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

