

Ninth Sunday after Pentecost – Epistle

Renewed In Christ

Colossians 3:1-11

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Analysis by Betty Krafft

Colossians 3: 1 So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth, 3 for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ who is your life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory.

5 Put to death, therefore, whatever in you is earthly: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed (which is idolatry). 6 On account of these the wrath of God is coming on those who are disobedient. 7 These are the ways you also once followed, when you were living that life. 8 But now you must get rid of all such things – anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive language from your mouth. 9 Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have stripped off the old self with its practices 10 and have clothed yourselves with the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator. 11 In that renewal there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all!

DIAGNOSIS: Dead

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) – *Doing*

On the surface it seems pretty logical, even easy enough: To live a Christian life simply get rid of anger, wrath, malice, slander and abusive language (v. 8). Put to death fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire and greed (v. 5). Do not lie (v. 9).

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) – *Trying*

But if we are honest we have to admit that those vices take on a life of their own. We resolve to put away abusive language and situations arise that are guaranteed to make us curse. We try to put greed to death and suddenly temptations and desires rise up in technicolor. The result of our own efforts will only make us aware of how truly we are bound to our vices we are.

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) – *Failing*

Yet the judgment is clear: The wrath of God is coming on those who are disobedient (v. 6). God is not impressed with our efforts-we have tried and failed and are still found guilty. Left to our own devices, there is no escaping God's judgment.

PROGNOSIS: Raised

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution) – *Crucified and Raised*

The way out is in verse 3: For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When we are crucified with Christ, all of our greed, passions, and evil desires are put to death with him as well. Christ is the one who takes on the wrath of God for our sins and dies in our stead. But that is not the end of the story. For Christ has been raised and thus has triumphed over all those forces that would keep us imprisoned and separated from God. We have truly been raised to new life in Christ.

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution) – *Clothed*

Since our old life has been crucified with Christ, in him we are stripped of the powers and principalities of the old Adam who used to control us (v. 9). We are clothed in Christ's righteousness (v. 10). Living in Christ, our new life is hidden—not from the world, but hidden in the divine mystery of God (v. 3). Our lives are reoriented; we are no longer focused on greed (v. 5) and getting ahead of the earth (e.g., secular society), but on the things “above,” that is, on Christ (v. 2).

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution) – *New Self*

Clothed in the new self, “according to the image of the creator” (v. 10), we are now free to live in Christ for service to one another. We recognize that Christ is all in all and therefore all boundaries between people (Greek and Jew, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free, etc.), all ethnic, cultural and social distinctions are dissolved (v. 11). We are free to be who we are, renewed and alive in Christ alone.