



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Colossians 3:5-11

"Trashing the Old Rags, or the Grand Old Doctrine of Mortification" TRANSCRIPT

[Message] We also get a number of very interesting letters that we don't put on the side of the page in our bulletin, and some of them are very interesting, revealing the fact that they're a lot of rather weird people out there listening to the radio. [Laughter] And really seriously, we get some really strange letters. And recently we got one from a lady. Most of the time, I must confess, they come from men. But this one was from a lady, and she's from Florida and she wrote six pages and a very complicated argument based on her understanding of biblical numerics and things like this. It was almost like reading a mathematical formula strung one after another for about six pages, and then when she finished she said one comforting thing because I was unable to follow what she was talking about at all. She said I have sent this to a number of other preachers and not a single one has gotten anything out of it. [Laughter] So that was encouraging to me. I figured that I was missing something as she strung out her very careful argument. I filed that one away. That was very interesting. One of these days I think I'll write a little article on the people out there who are listening to radio broadcasts. They are rather strange.

We are turning to Colossians chapter 3 and verse 5 through verse 11 for our Scripture reading this morning. By way of brief review, remember the apostle has been

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speaking to a little church that met in Philemon's house and he has been seeking to encourage them and also admonish them with reference to some false teaching that they evidentially had been exposed to. And his essential answer to them is that Christ is sufficient for all of our needs, and we have no reason to go to heretical teaching other than that found in the divine revelation for the solution to spiritual problems. "In him," he has already told the Colossians, "are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." He has been talking about the doctrine of the union with Christ and the significance of it.

And finally, in verse 1 through verse 4 of chapter 3, he has said in verse 3, "For you have died, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." And you can see from this as well as other things that I will point to shortly that he has laid a great deal of stress upon our identification with our Lord.

Now in the light of that in verse 5 he continues his letter to the Colossians by saying to them,

"Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection," (or just passion) "evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them."

The apostle, incidentally, in that statement uses his tenses very significantly. He in the first clause says, "In the which ye also walked some time," and gathers up all of the Colossians life in this particular description of it that they were walking in these things of human sin. But then in the last clause he modifies his tense and writes, "When you use to live in them. And there lays stress upon the day-by-day kind of life that they were use to living before they knew Christ. "But now," he says in verse 8, "ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy." Incidentally, that term blasphemy here which we

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normally think of as slander of God is probably in light of the context slander of fellow men and fellow Christians. Notice the terms anger, wrath, malice, "filthy communication out of your mouth." So the slander here is probably slander of other men including, perhaps, Christians.

"Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; And have put on the new man, which is renewed," (or being renewed), "in knowledge after the image of him that created him. Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all."

That last expression, "Christ is all," literally all things, "and in all," maybe understood as saying in all things. But generally speaking, New Testament scholarship takes the view that the "all" is masculine. And so therefore, the meaning is Christ is all and in all, that is in all persons who belong to him. So probably we are to understand it in that way.

May the Lord bless this reading of his word. Let's bow together in a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we approach Thee through the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who has brought us by his marvelous atoning work into this grace in which we stand. We give Thee thanks and praise for the position that we enjoy in our Lord Jesus Christ. We thank Thee for his saving work for us. We thank Thee that he was our covenantal head and is our covenantal head and now lives at the right hand of the throne of God to see that all of the blessings that he has secured through his saving work may become the possession of all of his sheep. We thank Thee for such a great Shepherd and for all of the work that he has done and for his constant tending and caring for the saints and the sheep.

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We give Thee thanks for day in which we live and for the privilege of proclaiming the word of God. We thank Thee for Thy blessing upon its ministry in the whole church of Christ wherever the word of God is proclaimed today over the face of this globe. We give Thee thanks for the fruitfulness of the ministry and pray Lord that there might be even more fruit. Through the preaching of the word bring the lost sheep into the fold, and bring them to the knowledge of their Shepherd who laid down his life for them. We pray for the whole church then and for every member in the church. May today be a day of spiritual advance for all of us.

We pray for our country. We ask, Lord, Thy blessing upon our President, upon the United States of America. Give wisdom to our President and to others in the government, and we pray also Lord that Thy wilt enable them to conduct their affairs as under God. May truthfulness and righteousness and justice characterize our government and the servants of it. We commit them to Thee for that end.

We thank Thee too, Lord for the ministry which Thou hast given to individual Christians in this assembly. We pray Thy blessing upon them as they seek to represent the Lord Jesus Christ in their families, among their friends, and their places of business and their contact with others. Give us, Lord, courage and boldness and love and concern for those who are about us who do not know the Lord Jesus Christ as personal Savior.

We pray especially for those whose names are in our Calendar of Concern, and who have requested our prayers. We ask Lord that if it should please Thee that the requests upon their hearts may find a favorable answer from Thee. We know that the things that happen to us happen to us within the providential will of our God. And Lord, if it should be within Thy will that healing and restoration to health be given to those who are ill and sick, we ask Lord that that may be their experience. Bless the families of those concerned and their friends. We give Thee thanks for the assurance of a God in heaven who loves and cares for his people.

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We pray, Lord, Thy blessing upon us as we sing now and upon the ministry of the word in this meeting. And we ask also Lord Thy blessing upon the meeting this evening. For Jesus sake. Amen.

[Message] Today we turn again to the exposition of Paul's letter to the Colossians, and our subject for today is "Trashing the Old Rags, or the Grand Old Doctrine of Mortification." The apostle has been stressing the covenantal union that believers enjoy with the Lord Jesus Christ, and the benefits that we have as a result of that union. I'm sure that if you have been following along and reading the Epistle to the Colossians as we have been reading it, and perhaps, studying it as well. You have noticed the stress that Paul has been laying upon union with Christ. For example, in verse 6 of chapter 2, he has said, "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him. Rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving."

And then in the 9th and 10th verses, verses that we've cited several times he says, "For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him." And continuing in the very next verse, "In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands. In the 12th verse, "Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead." And then in the immediately preceding context, he has said, "For ye have died and your life is hid with Christ." He has said, "If ye then be risen with Christ."

And so, it's evident that fundamental to the apostle's theological thinking is the union that believers enjoy with Christ. When we think of biblical doctrine, we call this the covenantal headship of the Lord Jesus Christ. We talk about him as the representative man. That is, he acted for those with those whom he is identified. So when he died, they died. When he was buried, they were buried. When he was raised, they were raised. And since he's at the right hand of the Father in heaven, we are there with him. That is,

he's our representative. He's our substitute. What he has done he has done for the people of God. That's fundamental to the theology. It's fundamental to the biblical doctrine of the New Testament. A covenantal headship of the Lord Jesus Christ or the federal headship of the Lord Jesus Christ, they are synonymous terms; federal and covenantal.

So when we think about Christ and what he has done, we are identified with him in it. Since he bore the penalty for sinners, he bore our penalty. And since he sits at the right hand of the throne of God, we too, have that position before the Lord God. In fact, this concept of union with Christ is one of the most important of all of the doctrines.

James Denney, Professor of Theology at the University of Glasgow, and a very famous theologian in the earlier part of the 20th Century use to speak as union with Christ as the "diamond pivot of Christian truth from the human side. And then the cross, the diamond pivot of Christian truth from the divine side."

And after the theology of union, it's naturally natural for the apostle to turn to the concrete expression and application of its meaning. Because after all, truth has it's most practical application. We don't intend to draw any kind of contrast between theological and practical. As we've often said there's nothing more practical than theology. In all truth theology is very practical. But there is a concrete expression of the truth that is to be seen in the lives of all of those who make identification with that truth and claim that truth applies to them. And that certainly is relevant for us. P.T. Forsythe said that the same act that places us in Christ has set us in the society of Christ. And so if we are in Christ, we are in it together. Therefore, we have relationships one to another. And in fact, we are in Christ and being in Christ we are still in the world and we have a relationship to the world that we are to live out as well.

Now I think it's rather striking and certainly relevant for us in 1986 to notice that when the apostle turns to the practical application of this doctrine of union with Christ and his saving work that he should begin by saying, "Mortify therefore your members which are

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upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry." As you can see the great stress of this opening list of ethical facts is laid upon sexual sins. And that's the kind of society as we all know that we are living in. We live in a society that is literally obsessed with sex. And of course, with the issuance of the Meese Committee on Pornography, we've even had more emphasis upon it than just the recent past.

Pornography, sexual sins, sexual abuse characterizes our newspapers. Constantly, every week it surely seems to those of us who read the newspapers we have some out breaking flagrant sexual kind of sinning. Our society is engaged in a great deal of discussion over questions like that. In fact, our society reveals a great deal about itself by the way in which we discuss such things. That's not to mention the other evils that plague us, such as the drugs, and various other types of ways in which we express rebellion against the Lord God.

One of the newspaper commentators that I frequently read is Georgia Anne Geyer. Occasionally, to my mind, she makes some very significant and very true observations on our society. Ms. Geyer is an expert on Latin America. She spent a lot of time there. She also has an acquaintance with the world in general as most of our media people do. She occasionally appears on Washington Weekend Review, and you may have seen her if you ever listen to that program. But last week she had a column entitled, Language: Key to Ourselves. And I must say that I was very much impressed by what she had observed in our society. It had rather surprised me because I've never thought of her as being a very conservative kind of commentator. But she revealed to my mind a great deal of insight into our society. She was talking about how we refer to the things that happen in our midst.

And specifically there came before her the way in which two of our young athletes so well known have recently died as a result of cocaine. She comments, "The television commentators have repeated over and over cocaine killed him. He was killed by cocaine.

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Cocaine, the killer drug. And so it seemed to go," she said, "in the current language of drugs and death." After discussion the way in which the newspapers presented this, "Cocaine killed him," she said, "I think I would have put it a different way. I would have put it this way. An athlete being of sane mind and blessed with free will voluntarily broke the law and took cocaine, an illegal drug known to be unusually addictive, potentially fatal, and thereby died." And from that she went on to say our society by its language expresses the fact that it does not have a sense of responsibility. And so when things happen it's because of "cocaine" and not because of the individual person who took the drug. And she cites some other illustrations of that. In fact, goes on to talk about how when she learned Spanish that was one of the things that characterized the Spanish language.

Now since I've never taken Spanish I cannot vouch for this, but I know she speaks Spanish very well and has studied it for a long time. But she said, "In Spanish that's the way in which the Spanish express many of their verbal actions." In other words it's not so much the person doing it as things take place. In Spanish in many cases the thing causes its own action.

So no one is responsible. The tree fell down. The glass smashed itself. Things happen to him. Now you who are Spanish speakers you can justify her comments or not, but the point is that in our society we do have that approach to things. If you will look at our newspapers, it's the way in which things are presented. The idea of human responsibility is largely lost.

Now when we talk about biblical doctrine of the grace of God and sovereign grace, we should never lose the other side of our doctrine of sovereign grace; that is, human responsibility. We're not talking about free will. Ms. Geyer has used the term, freewill. I think probably the better biblical expression would be simply human responsibility. We have human responsibility. And so consequently, when in our society we have so much

that is contrary to the Lord God, in fact, rebellion against God, we need to remember our human responsibility.

A person last week the same day, I think, that Ms. Geyer wrote her column wrote a little note to the editors saying, he put this quite well, I think. He said, "The tragic death of Len Bias serves a reminder to us all that a moment of rebellious pleasure can reap the same rewards as a life time of rebellious pleasure. Unfortunately the deaths of Byers' momentary rebellion and Rock Hudson's life time rebellion will have little or no effect on those who consider the perversion of their bodies and minds and spirits to be their God given right. Short term or long term rebellion against God is rebellion against God. The Bible calls it sin." That's well put. I think that the apostle would put it very similarly. That is, our sexual sins are ultimately rebellion against God.

So when we read here, we are not reading about good advice. We are reading commands from the eternal and sovereign Lord of this universe, and through his servant, the Apostle Paul, we receive the instruction, "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry." Lying back of this little paragraph is a figure of speech. You can see it particularly in verse 9 and verse 10, where the apostle writes, "Don't go on lying to one another since you have put off the old man with his deeds and put on the new man."

Now in ancient times in the mystery religions, the change that took place when a person became a member or a initiate of the religion, that was frequently spoken of under the figure of changing clothes, and in fact, certain times, certain actual changes of clothes took place. Whether Paul had that in mind or not is definitely questionable, because we don't have any instances in ancient literature of any one putting off an old man and putting on a new man. In fact, in the language of Christianity, when a person was baptized, the figure of speech that was frequently associated with it was the taking off of clothes, because the individual took off his outer garments to go down into the water to

be baptized. I won't say whether he was sprinkled, poured upon, or immersed. That's, of course, up for you to make your own decision with regard to that. But then when he came out of the water having expressed his faith in Christ he put on his clothes. So the taking off of clothes and the putting on of clothes again was a figurative description of a person's baptism.

Now baptism is an ideally designed to represent the change that takes place when a person believes in the Lord Jesus Christ and becomes a new man in Christ. So the figure of changing clothes is very suitable even for Christian practices. Baptism is that which expresses our change of life which is, of course, the product of the ministry of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. And also, may have been the kind of thing that someone influenced by the mystery religions would have understood as well. And it's likely that in Colossae there was some influence from that.

So Paul is using then that figure of changing clothes to describe what has taken place in us who are believers and how we should respond to the salvation that we have. Clothes don't make the man, but they sometimes reflect the man and often reflect the man very accurately. And therefore, the things that we wear as Christians, speaking figuratively, express the kind of faith that we have in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Well, now let me very quickly go through our section here. And first of all, we'll look at the imperative of mortification in verse 5 and verse 6. Now you can tell if you are reading Paul carefully that when he says, "Mortify therefore," he's drawing an inference from the preceding context.

Now mortify means to put to death. It means also to render impenitent. So to mortify is to put to death or to render impenitent. And it is a command, an imperative that is an inference from a preceding declarative statement. As scholars like to put it, the imperative is based upon an indicative.

Now the indicative of the preceding context is the death, the burial, and the resurrection of the believer with Christ. So in the light of the fact that we have died and

we have been raised together with Christ, we are united to him, "Mortify," or put to death, "therefore your members which are upon the earth. One might ask why didn't Paul go on to talk about being raised with him and being ascended with him and seated with him at the right hand of the throne of God. Well in other places Paul does make some of those applications. But if you think about the ministry of our Lord as the ministry of his death, his burial, his resurrection, his ascension, his session at the right hand of the throne of God, the one essential activity is his death. That's the most essential of those things. Certainly, as far as our redemption is concerned it's the ground of our redemption.

So the apostle is laying stress upon that for probably that reason. The one item fundamental to his redemptive work then is his death. So put to death "therefore your members which are upon the earth." And again he is using members in the sense of a figure of speech and the figure of speech for these sins: fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, and so on.

You know it's never pleasant to put anything to death. And Paul, I think, would heartily agree when we say it's not pleasant to carry out the apostle's injunctions. When we read put to death your members and then specifics sins are set out we shouldn't look upon this as something easy. Anyone who has thought of his inner man and reflected about what goes on in his mind, the thoughts that he has, the actions that he is responsible for would surely agree this is not an easy thing. That's why it's called in the Bible; I presume one of the reasons, put to death. It's not pleasant.

So we don't want to create the impression that it's very pleasant work to do what the apostle calls upon us to do here. It's not. It's very difficult, but nevertheless, it is there as the expression of the will of God. One of the things also I think that we ought to remember in connection with this is that when we have this command, "Mortify therefore," given us by the Apostle Paul through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, we have the assurance that not only is it necessary for us to mortify our members, but it is possible that we may be able to do that. The very fact that we've been given this imperative, this

command, is something that emphasizes that we must do it, but along with that is the possibility that it may be successfully done.

So we should look at this as something that is possible for us by the enablement of God the Holy Spirit. It is possible for believers to mortify their members which are upon the earth. That is the will of God and you can be sure of this my Christian friend, if by God's grace you have been given the will to do this he will give you the power to enable you to do this very thing that he has set out as a command.

Sexual sins we've said predominate in this first list, "Fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry." You notice as Paul lists in other places ethical matters, sins, fornication heads at least three of the lists. So in Paul's day and surely in our day that is one of the sins that a Christian must guard himself against constantly.

Just this week one of my former students in theological seminary, his name came up in discussion, a man about forty-five years of age now. Forty to forty-five years of age. So often I hear of former students of mine or fellow members of those who preached the word of God, of how the men have departed from the moral standards of the word of God and have been guilty of adultery. In this case, this relatively young man, relatively young man, real young man, only forty-five, President of a Bible College, well respected, his wife had recently been guilty of adultery. They now have been divorced. He's left the ministry, and according to my mutual friend who told me about this Friday morning, he said he is still so upset over, he's living in Texas in another city and working with a brother of his, that he cannot even discuss it without really breaking down. They have children. A ministry of at least fifteen years or twenty years, perhaps.

So the things that the apostle warns us and admonishes us against are the things that are characteristic of the society in which we live and even the Christian society of which we live. I think it's rather striking that the apostle includes covetousness here; the tenth commandment. "Thou shalt not covet."

Now we sometimes are inclined to think, well if I had not been guilty of the act of fornication or the act of uncleanness or the act of passion or the act of evil concupiscence, then I am perfectly innocent. But we forget and forget how our Lord treated thou shalt not covet, that we are guilty even when we have not committed the act. We can see that in the Garden of Eden. When Adam and Eve sinned, they sinned before they partook of the fruit. As a matter of fact, when Eve took of the fruit that was the product of sin that already had begun in her heart. There initiated was the thought of rebellion against God. It expressed itself in the will, and finally, culminated in the act of partaking in the fruit.

So long before she and Adam actually ate of the fruit, they had swallowed a sinful idea, and thus, in our moral life it's helpful for us to remember that we're not guiltless when we have not committed the act if we have coveted; so covetousness.

Now when we think about how are we going to do this, how can we mortify our members which are upon the earth? I think of some of the practices of gardeners, because I'm a gardener, amateur gardener; not very good. I have things dying every day. [Laughter] So in that sense I'm everyday in the gardening business. But you know when you graft something which I've done very rarely -- but if you'll take a graft, a cultivated scion and you graft it into wild stock which is the ordinary way to do it, one of the things that you have to be careful about is that if there should be a shoot that comes up from the wild stock, you must be careful to get your clippers out and snip it off. In fact, you have to watch your grafts in that way. So any shoot from the old stock is to be snipped off, because the strength of the plant is weakened thereby.

Well the apostle in Romans chapter 8 says something that is so similar to that that I think that he would have applied it to the situation here. If we had asked him how can we mortify our members which are upon the earth? Well, I think the apostle might well have said what he said in Romans 8, verse 13 where he says these words, "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body,

ye shall live." And notice he says, "You through the Spirit do put to death the deeds of the body."

So relying upon the Holy Spirit, we can expect that God will give us success as we seek to put to death our members which are upon the earth. Covetousness; that seems so out of place. Well perhaps, we could think of covetousness in a sexual sense as our Lord did. A person guilty of adultery even though he has not committed the act. But perhaps also, in the light of the clause that follows which is idolatry, he's really thinking about what we think of as covetousness. R.C.H. Linsky, the Lutheran commentator who is a typical Lutheran. He believes in the grace of God, but he's opposed to Arminianism. He believes that Roman Catholicism is heretical, and in the course of his discussion of this particular passage, he makes this comment. He said that a Roman Catholic priest had made a comment concerning confession which was very interesting. He had listened to many confessions through the years for he had been in ministry for a long time. And he made the comment that in all of his years of listening to the confession of various people, he had never had one person confess the sin of covetousness, but it is a sin.

So those of you who are looking for a Jag or another kind of automobile instead of the one that you've got, the reason I was late this morning is because my poor example of an automobile broke down, and I was late. To covet is linked with these other sins as well.

So Paul's talking about these moth eating garments that characterize the old life. The consequences of the acts he speaks about in verse 6, "For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience." We who are believers often think God can be complacent with our sins, but the Bible says very plainly that God is a righteous and holy God. He is not complacent with our sins. "The wrath of God comes upon the children of disobedience," and disciplinary action from the Lord God is carried out by the Lord with reference to the believers. Paul makes an historical observation in verse 7. He says, "In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them."

Well, it's a wholesome thing, isn't it for Christians to glance back at the pit from whence they were drawn. And as my old New Testament professor used to say, "And shudder a little at the kind of life that characterized us before we came to know our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." That's why I think Paul looks at the past. He reminds them of what they were and what God has done for them. But coming finally, to verse 8 through 11, the imperative is continues and the theological justification for it is given. And remember that figure of the removal of garments like the removal of soiled clothing and the donning of a new clean outfit. He says in verse 8, "But now ye also put off all these," a change of spiritual clothes.

Now instead of sexual sins Paul mentions here sins of temper and speech. They become prominent. As the Psalmist said, "Set a watch, oh Lord, upon my mouth." How decisively we need that. We say so many things that are offensive to the Lord and offensive to our fellow Christians and offensive to our fellow men.

So "put off all of these: anger, wrath, malice, (which is the source of anger and wrath), slander, filthy communication out of your mouth." These things destroy the harmony of believers and their relationships one with another. They destroy the harmony of families and their relationships with one another. They destroy the harmony that may exist among men in the world. Filthy communication, well that may not be precisely the sense. Shameful speech is really the sense of the Greek term. But it surely includes this, foul language, off-color stories. Christians say so many things around their homes that others find out about, incidentally. You know you can tell a lot about a Christian home by attending Sunday School. You can find out the things that the kids are hearing at home. We recently had a case of that in our Daily Vacation Bible School. You would never know that a certain home was characterized by a certain kind of language, but the kids, the little kids, were coming out with language that they could only, they were so little, that it could only have derived from home. Filthy communication; well that's not necessarily filthy. It was not certainly becoming to the Lord. But the filthy kind of

conversation that we hear today is surely included by that. How many Christians participate in off-color stories? You know when we do that, do you know how my feeling is at times? Occasionally there is a great deal of humor in off-color stories. It's humor. So you find yourself inadvertently laughing and then you spend the rest of the day ashamed that you did. Ashamed that you didn't speak up or ashamed that you didn't indicate that you really weren't pleased with that fundamentally.

Paul when he says here, "Anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth," that's an opportunity for us to represent what we really are. "Lie not one to another." Lack of love, the social effects of untrustworthy speech is astounding and amazing and enormous in every realm of our society. Lack of truthfulness. I don't know how many times I get down on my knees and ask God to help me to be truthful in my speech that I engage in with others, because it's so easy to be untruthful.

Our world is so filled with it when our nations are characterized by untruth. The Nazis were so famous for this in their day. When they were asked what was truth? They would say, "Truth is that for the benefit of our people." So anything that is for the benefit of our people is truth. Friedrich Nietzsche, in one of his books, the well known European theologian, in one of his books he describes the experience of a friend of his who was speaking with the Nazis in the last war. They thought he believed a certain thing, so they went in their conversation with him along a certain line in order to express what they believed as truth is that which is for the benefit of us. And then when in the course of the conversation the individual said, no that's not what I believe. What I am trying to say is this the man quickly turned and took an entirely different viewpoint, because truth is that which is for the benefit of our people.

I do believe that that is the way that the Soviet leadership feels too. Truth is not truth as we think of truth. That is, that which is true before the Lord God. But truth is that which is for the benefit of the Soviet people. And I must say I get the feeling that in the United States we have a lot of the same thing. Truth is that which is for the benefit of

the American people. Not truth, but simply truth for the benefit of us. And anything that is for the benefit of our people, or perhaps even worse, for the benefit of the administration, well if it's for the benefit of the administration it's truth whether it's truth or not. That's far from Christian morality, far from Christian ethics.

The apostle says stop lying one to another. You have put off the old man with his deeds. You've put on the new man. What does he mean by the old and new man? Well simply, put very simply when he says you have put off the old man and put on the new, he says you must remember that when you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ you, in effect, have come from being a member of the whole unregenerate man or a member of the first federal man, Adam, and you have now come to be a member of the Lord Jesus Christ.

So the old man is the whole unregenerate man conceived of as a member of the first federal man, Adam. The new man is what we have become since we have come to be in Christ. And these two positions, the old man and in him the new man and in Christ these are the two positions that have characterized our lives. As Christians we were a member of Adam, as believers in Christ we are in Christ.

Now, of course, we cannot reenact that, but we can realize what has transpired in our Christian experience. We now have put off the old man. We have put on the new man. We don't have to do that. It has been done. We are in Christ and the new man is being renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him. The necessary entailment of this Paul says is, "There is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all." Not distinction in spiritual status among Christians. We all have the same privileges. Paul in Galatians chapter 3 says, "Male or female."

Now, of course, he is not saying that essential distinctions have been removed entirely, but he's saying in Christ they have. The male and the female have the same spiritual privileges. The Scythian or the barbarian, they have the same spiritual privileges. The Greeks, the Jews, we're all one in Christ.

"Trashing the Old Rags, or the Grand Old Doctrine of Mortification" by S. Lewis Johnson
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Now in other spheres and functions those differences still pertain, but so far as being in Christ is concerned, and the spiritual privileges involved in that, we have the same spiritual status.

So let me conclude for our time is up. A believer who is spiritually down at the heels and out at the knees and elbows with frayed collar and soiled shirt is a disgrace to the profession with his moth-eaten garments. Many of us I'm afraid are really spiritually pretty much like that. My counsel I think would agree with the Apostle Paul is those old garment ought to be burned. Don't even bother to give them to the Goodwill. Burn them, because they characterize the old life. They are definitely a shame and disgrace for Christian. All of these things that the apostle talks about they do not comport with the life in Christ.

The concluding words I conclude on myself. "Christ is all, and in all." What Paul is saying is he's the central person and the centrality of biblical doctrine resides in the Lord Jesus himself. He is central in salvation. Looking at it from the Colossians standpoint, he's central in salvation for there's no place for angelic mediation. He's the one mediator between God and men. He has the central place in sanctification, and thus, legality in ascetism, various ways by which men have sought to sanctify themselves are out of place. And he has the central place so far as human satisfaction is concerned, and there is no need for human philosophy. There is no need for the deeds of the man of old. He fills the whole life. All substitutes for him are hindering and harmful.

May the Lord help us as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ to recognize the tremendous change that has taken place. The old man has been put off. The new man has been put on. Our spiritual clothes should correspond to that marvelous position that we enjoy.

If you are here today and you've never believed in Christ, we remind you that the only way in which you can possess eternal life is through the saving work of the Lord Jesus who is all in all in salvation. Believe in him. Come to him. He has offered an atoning

sacrifice for sinners, and you may have eternal life as you acknowledge your lost condition before him and your need of Christ and lean upon him for eternal life. Don't trust your good works. You have none before God. Don't trust your education or your culture or reformation or your religion or anything like that for Christ is the only Savior and through him alone we may have life. My prayer for you is that by God's grace you may recognize your lost condition and flee to him for salvation.

May we stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for these ethical injunctions and admonitions which the apostle has given to us. So many of us who profess to believe in him, we ask Lord that our lives may harmonize with the profession that we make. Deliver us from the kinds of sins that the apostle speaks about, and enable us by Thy grace to guard our lips that the things that we say may be pleasing to Thee.

We pray Lord that if there is some in this audience who have not yet believed in Christ that at this very moment they may give Thee thanks for him who died for sinners and through whom they may have life. May in Thy grace and mercy receive him as their personal Savior and the forgiveness of sins and eternal life that come with him. Go with us now as we part. In Jesus' name. Amen.