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A Bible Study

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### All Things New

(36 Spiritual Blessings)

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"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature:

old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." 2Cor.5:17

Many times the above text is quoted as a proof of being saved. If it is examined with any degree of care, however, it would put all to silence if it were the only proof text available. Let's notice what it does not say and what it does say.

It does *not* say that if any man be a child of God, such-and-such is so. If it did say that, we all might have real cause to examine ourselves to see if we be in the faith. Notice that it does not say that *some* things are passed away, but rather that old things are passed away and *all things* are become new. Not just the gross sins of life but *all things are become new*. And note how positive the statement is: "*are passed away...are become new.*"

Some years ago after preaching in a fine church, I accompanied the pastor, his wife and teenage daughter to their home for lunch. On the way, he shared with me what a great change came over his life after he trusted Christ. To this I heartily agreed. He then confidently declared, "Old things passed away and *all things* became new."

He was a bit surprised when I confessed that with regard to this final declaration I could not truthfully say the same. While a truly great change had also come into my

life, I had to confess that I still found myself failing far too often. "I'm sure," I admitted, "those who know me best notice these things, and then, *I know* other failures and failings they may never see."

Before we reached our destination this dear pastor and his daughter had quite an argument. They went at it "hot and heavy" for a short while until, finally, I said, "Is that what you mean by old things being passed away and all things having become new?"

Silence reigned for a few moments and then he asked: "Then what *does* the verse mean?"

It means exactly what it says--but notice what it *does* say: "If any many be *in Christ*, he is a new creature, old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." In other words, the Holy Spirit is telling us about our *standing before God*. The issue in II Cor. 5:17 is *not* our *behavior* but rather our new *identity in Christ*.

It is only as we come to realize *who we are in Christ* that this wonderful position can impact our lives the way God intends. If "all things" became new in the details of our walk the day we were saved, much of Paul's instructions concerning the Christian walk would be meaningless. Take for example Col. 3:5-9,

"Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; FORNICATION, UNCLEANNESS, INORDINATE AFFECTION, 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.

"BUT NOW YE ALSO PUT OFF ALL THESE; ANGER, WRATH, MALICE, BLASPHEMY, FILTHY COMMUNICATION OUT OF YOUR MOUTH.

"LIE NOT ONE TO ANOTHER...."

Yes, Christ was their life--they were dead, buried and risen with Him (Col. 2:11, 12, 20; 3:1, 4)--but observe again the things that should be "put off:" fornication,

uncleanness, inordinate affection (i.e., sensual passion), evil concupiscence (i.e., evil desires), covetousness, anger, wrath (i.e., rage), malice, blasphemy (i.e., slander), filthy communication, lies.

Are these things *never* indulged in by any of the supernaturally regenerated people of God? Sadly, we all know the answer to such a question.

Alas, if our possession of eternal life and assurance of getting to heaven depended on our not indulging in these sins surely the only real assurance we could honestly have would be that of being shut out of God's heaven--and that forever! The fact Paul exhorts that these things be "mortified" and "put off" is ample evidence that they will never pass away *of their own accord*. They must be deliberately *laid aside*.

And what is the motivation for the Colossians to put away these "old" activities and replace them with the "new"? Col. 3 goes on to exhort:

"...seeing that YE 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:"

"PUT ON THEREFORE, AS *THE ELECT OF GOO*, HOLY AND BELOVED, BOWELS OF MERCIES, KINDNESS, HUMBLENESS OF MIND, MEEKNESS, LONGSUFFERING" (Col. 3:9, 10,12).

We are what we are by the grace of God and all that is required in stewards is faithfulness. Our responsibility is simply to live consistently with who God has already made us in Christ; to allow our true identity in Christ to have its intended impact in our walk so that the world about us sees Christ through us.

The Christian walk is not struggling to bring our "state" up to our "standing"--an endless task! Rather ours is to simply *by faith* accept as true, literally, absolutely and instantly, our perfect place in Christ and thus recognize and reject as *unworthy of our present actual character* both our old self and all its workings.

II Cor.5:17 is a declaration of our *identity* in Christ as members of His Body--the "*one new man*" (Eph. 2:15). As our minds are "*renewed in knowledge*" by an appreciation

of the riches of His grace, as we refuse to define ourselves by anything other than what God says about us, our walk will be transformed by the life of Christ manifesting itself through us. Thus our focus needs to be more and more on Him and less and less on what we are doing. Only then will we be “*changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord*” (II Cor. 3:18).

In order to more fully appreciate our identification with Jesus Christ we list below some of the marvelous things which happen the moment a person rests his faith in the finished work of Christ at Calvary. Although this list is by no means exhaustive, it does illustrate the completeness of the "*all spiritual blessings*" which are ours in Christ (Col. 2:10, Eph.1:3).

The *instant* a person trusts in the Lord Jesus Christ they are:

1. Saved by God's plan, promise and provision (Eph. 2:8, 9, II Tim. 1:9-11, Tit. 1:2).
2. Crucified with Christ (Gal.2:20, Col.2:20).
3. Dead unto sin and alive unto God (Rom.6:3-13).
4. Dead to the law and living under grace (Rom. 6:14; 7:4-6).
5. Regenerated, quickened, made alive--given eternal life as a present possession (Rom. 5:21, Eph. 2:1, 5, I Tim. 1:16, Tit. 3:5, 7).
6. Made nigh unto God (Eph. 2:13).
7. Given unlimited access to God (Eph.2:18, Rom.5:2).
8. A possession of Christ's (I Cor. 3:23, Gal.3:29).
9. A partaker of God's promise (Eph. 3:6).
10. A recipient of the merits of Christ's atoning blood (Rom. 3:25; 5:6-11).
11. Justified in God's sight--declared righteous by faith (Rom. 3:22-26; 4:4,5; 5:1)
12. Reconciled unto God (Rom. 5:10, Eph. 2:16).
13. Redeemed (Rom. 3:24).

14. Totally forgiven all sins (Col. 1:14; 2:13, Rom. 4:6-8, Tit. 2:14).
15. Baptized by the Holy Spirit into the Body of Christ (I Cor. 12:13, 20, Rom. 6:3, Gal. 3:27, 28).
16. Sanctified (Rom. 1:7, I Cor. 1:2; 6:11).
17. Glorified (Rom. 8:30).
18. Unconditionally accepted in Christ (Eph.1:6).
19. Adopted into the position of Sonship (Eph.1:5; Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:1-7).
20. Delivered from the power of darkness (Col. 1:13, Acts 26:18, II Cor. 4:6).
21. Translated into the Kingdom of God's Son (Col. 1:13).
22. Made an heir of God and a joint heir with Christ (Rom. 8:17, Eph. 1:11).
23. A part of the household of God (Eph. 2:19).
24. Sealed with the Holy Spirit as a guarantee of salvation (Eph. 1:14; 4:30, II Cor.1:22).
25. Made one of God's peculiar people (Tit 2:14).
26. An object of God's love and grace (Eph. 2:4; 5:2, Rom. 5:5, 8).
27. Light in the Lord (Eph. 5:8-13, I Thess.5:4-6).
28. An inheritance of God (Eph. 1:18).
29. Given a heavenly position and citizenship (Eph. 2:19, Phil. 3:20).
30. Indwelt by God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:6, Rom. 8:9, 10).
31. Made a new creature (II Cor. 5:17, Eph.4:24, Col. 3:10).
32. At peace with God (Rom. 5:1; 15:13).
33. A recipient of Divine Power (Eph. 1:19, Phil. 2:13, I Thess. 2:13).
34. Delivered from wrath to come (I Thess.1:10; 5:9, Rom. 5:9).

35. Become one of the elect (Eph. 1:4, Col.3:12, II Thess. 2:13, 14).

36. Seated in heavenly places (Eph. 2:6).

All this--and "*much more*"--is what it means to be a "new *creature*" in Christ--to have "*all things new*." And, my friend, our identity in Christ is no side issue--it is central to experiencing a genuine Christian walk on a daily basis. Only as we have a firm grasp on this blessed truth will we have the confidence to walk by faith as the person God says we are.

The world seeks to have us *love ourselves* more; religion demands that we *love God* more; the grace of God tells us of *God's love for us*--and it is His love that motivates and empowers otherwise failing creatures to present ourselves to Him as vessels through which He lives His life. Only then do our lives truly become what *He* is doing of *Himself*.

### **"MAINTAIN GOOD WORKS"**

"And let ours also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful."--Titus 3:14

As a faithful pastor, Titus was to teach his people to *work*—"to *maintain good works for necessary uses*." And the reason is clear: "that they may *not* be *unfruitful*." From this unusual wording it is clear that the natural expectation for believers is that they be fruitful. Paul obviously considered an unfruitful Christian a sad tragedy.

One of the real assets provided by a local church is that it provides a "hands on" environment in which to "*learn to maintain good works*." In fact, it is really very difficult to truly learn this critical lesson outside the fellowship of a local assembly. (The home is another place to learn this critical lesson.)

While recently meditating on the "*work of the ministry*," I was struck by the fact that in the concordance the word order is: word, work, worker, world. A moment's meditation reminded me that the word-God's Word--is for the whole *world*; but between the two, and indispensable to both, are *work* and *worker*.

Too often this sequence is reversed: Christians feel the need of the world, look for a work to do and then turn to the Word. How much better to follow the divine order and have the Word of God be the source and energizer of the worker for the work.

God's way is to work through His Word. Paul declares that it is "*the Word of God which effectually worketh also in you that believe*" (I Thess. 2:13). The Holy Spirit works through the Word of God resident in the soul of the believer to energize the believer "unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10).

Thus Paul prays for the saints at Colosse:

"...that ye might be FILLED WITH THE KNOWLEDGE OF [GOD'S] WILL IN ALL WISDOM AND SPIRITUAL UNDERSTANDING;

THAT YE MIGHT WALK WORTHY OF THE LORD unto all pleasing, BEING FRUITFUL IN EVERYGOOD WORK, AND INCREASING IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD;

"STRENGTHENED WITH ALL MIGHT, according to his glorious power, UNTO ALL PATIENCE AND LONGSUFFERING WITH JOYFULNESS" (Col.1:9-11).

Being "filled"--gripped, controlled by -" the knowledge of [God's] will"-an understanding of what God is doing today gained by the mystery revealed through Paul--directly *results* in the believer "walking worthy of the Lord"-having a fruitful, growing, strong, rejoicing Christian life.

Only as we are saturated with the rightly divided Word, as we are "*knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding*" (Col.2:2), can we have lives "filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God" (Phil. 1:11).

This is the true source of Christian life. This is how we "learn to maintain good works."

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