

Resolution to (Re)formation

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Date: 07 January 2018

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[0 : 01] Thank you, Jesus, for this morning. Thank you, Lord, for coming to meet us in our worship, whether we're harried, whether we're in a contemplative place, because you are God.

It doesn't depend on us. It depends on you, Lord God. We ask that you would be present with us, be present in the word that I'm about to speak. May it be your word, Lord, and not my own.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. I mentioned this morning, earlier, I have a thorn that's been put in my side to harass me this week. I actually lost my voice earlier on this week with a cold, so I have my water up here every now and then.

I'm going to probably have to clear my throat. I'm going to talk about resolution to reformation this morning. I want to talk and focus on Colossians 3, which is a passage that is very much close to my own heart.

I'm a recent person who has moved from the Anglican Church of Canada to Anik. I did so November the 1st, which was All Saints Day.

[1 : 05] It also happened to be my birthday. And so the bishop thought that was, and I thought Archdeacon Tim was a great opportunity to make that move. And when I first made the move to Anik and started talking about the transition, I actually attended St. Luke's up in Pembroke with Archdeacon Tim Perron, and there were a few things that really stood out to me as the Lord speaking.

And George and I have spoken about a few of these, but one of them that's very interestingly that stood out to me was the name of the seminary. And when Archdeacon Tim said to me, oh, we have a seminary, Ryle Seminary in Ottawa, it was like light came down from heaven and surround him. I thought, Ryle Seminary? Why am I not already in this denomination? Bishop J.C. Ryle, I think he's one of my heroes. J.C. Ryle is a hero to, I think, a lot of Anglican evangelicals.

So he's a shining example of choosing Jesus, even though the pressures of the church around you, the pressures of the life around you are really pressuring you to accept anything else as the center of your spirituality, the center of your religious life, if we can call that.

He was a shining example of that. In the 1800s, when Bishop Ryle became bishop, the church in England was a very dry church.

[2 : 36] The church in England was very much a stuffy religious institution and was very much focused on the externals. It was very much focused on, you know, were you sitting at the right time during the service?

Were you standing? Did you cross yourself? Did you face the right way? Everything was about the externals in the church at that time. And you followed that worship life.

And you followed along with what the church was teaching, if you were a priest, a pastor, or a bishop. And if you didn't, it was actually very scandalous at that time to have not followed along. And into this situation, God provided in the 1800s a handful of Bible-believing, biblically-minded leaders who kind of stood against that trend, who stood against that flow.

And Bishop Ryle was really at the forefront of that. And it was a battle, and he was at the forefront. He wasn't made a bishop. You can see him here with his big white beard, one of the famous pictures of him.

[3 : 41] He wasn't made a bishop until his 60s. He was in his mid-60s. He was actually made a bishop partly by the prime minister as a political move. So he kind of went in there. It was a bit of a blast at the incoming government at the time.

The prime minister was on his way out. So he said, well, I know what I'm going to do to you guys. I'm going to make that Ryle guy bishop. And so they made Bishop Ryle bishop. And so he had nothing to lose. And he really kind of became the gangster bishop of the 1800s.

And it's kind of funny the way we see it. He quickly became known for his distaste for empty religion.

He quickly became known for his desire to renew the English church to biblically-minded, dynamic faith. We have this term called live orthodoxy.

That's what he wanted, affectionate relationship with God and to move away from the dry spirituality at the time. One of my favorite stories of Bishop Ryle, during worship, he was a bishop at Liverpool.

[4 : 44] This is the cathedral at Liverpool. And during worship, like I said, you stood, you sat down, you crossed yourself at the right time, and you faced the front. Like during the creed and during other parts of the service, you would face the front.

And everybody did this. It was the rules. You did this. Except for Bishop Ryle. Now to us, it seems kind of simple, but it was scandalous back then.

And now if you were at the back corner, just in case you couldn't see him because he was hidden away up there, just in case you couldn't see him, Packer said he actually was known for leaning forward.

Just so the people at the back could see, I'm not facing the front. And, you know, it was scandalous. Sounds funny to us, but at that time, you know, church was front page news.

These kind of things were front page news. The papers actually cared about it. Very much an example for our time of what Paul is talking about in Colossians 3.

[5 : 42] Very much an example for us for choosing a dynamic relationship with Jesus over religion. So I'm super stoked with the fact that our seminary is named Ryle. I think it's a great example for our students who are coming through.

And yeah, it was one of those light moments that helped bring me in. Bringing to death the ways that we have clung to religious approach to our faith. In changing a dynamic spirituality.

So this epiphany, while we're looking at Colossians, we want to look for our own epiphany in Jesus, to see Jesus raised on high. And so here's the big idea. One of my teachers, the people that I turn to with Haddon Robinson, passed away recently.

He always said, have a big idea when you preach. If you don't leave here with anything else, this is the big idea for the sermon. The basic truth of what God has done for us. The basic truth about what God has done for you in Christ is the point from which everything in the Christian spiritual life flows.

This is really important because there are all kinds of things in the church. There are all kinds of things in the world that are competing to be that one thing from which our spirituality will flow.

[6 : 54] Paul talks about that. He says, no, your identity in Christ, since you've been raised with him, that is the point from which everything else in our spirituality flows. I want to unpack that a little bit.

So if you want to look at... I open your... 3, 1 to 11. I'm fiddling with this thing. Sorry, brother. That's my fault. Should I use...

All right. Oh, I can't move around. It'll look odd if I'm walking around with this. All right. All right.

We're going to open our Bibles to Colossians 3, 1 to 11. And Paul says some serious stuff. You know, verse 8 there, he says some serious stuff. If you look there, but you must put away all anger, wrath, malice, slander, obscene talk.

Don't lie with one another. Lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices. You know, one of the temptations that we have when it comes to the Bible is, you know, often when the Bible says something that we don't like or says something that's something that the people in the church don't like.

[8 : 01] One of the things that I often hear, well, you know, Padre, I know that says that, but you really have to look at that in context. Right? That's what we hear all the time. As if looking at the Bible in context has become kind of the trump card.

Right? When it's a hard passage. Well, if we just look at it in context, we can explain that away. One of the problems is, if you start unpacking the context of the Bible, oftentimes, most times, it will say more rather than less.

And oftentimes, the Bible is harder rather than easier because God is calling us, in Jesus, to give over our entire life to him. So, just looking at the Bible in context isn't the get-out-of-jail-free card that sometimes we often think that it is.

It's so important for us to learn how to unpack God's word. And that's why I'm glad that we're here in this church. We choose what's called this big word like marmalade, expository preaching. And that's when we unpack an entire book of the Bible. Really allows George and the other preachers to dig down to what the Bible is saying to us. Because when we start to look in context, that's when the Bible becomes alive and really starts to speak to us.

[9 : 16] So, let's look at where we are this morning. We're visiting with Colossae. It's a small town on the south bank of the Lycus River in what's now Turkey.

At one point, Colossae was a major center, but it had been bypassed by a highway. Anybody that's seen that happens knows what happens when a small town or a city is bypassed by the highway. And it actually was about 100 miles from Ephesus.

And the two cities that were closer to it, Laodicea being one of them, were actually more important than Colossae was. So, it's kind of like, the book of Colossians is kind of like Paul writing to Carleton Place.

It's an okay place. Amy and I looked at Carleton Place at houses when we moved here to Ottawa. But it's not the major center. It's kind of set off a little bit. And so, it's a small church that he's writing to.

It's a fledgling church full of new Christians. And apparently, they had lost a bit of their confidence. Colossae itself, this is one of my favorite contrasts that I like here.

[10 : 20] I want to take us to our next slide there, brother. If you were to visit Laodicea, right now, the ruins of Laodicea, that's them on the left.

Kind of look like what you'd expect from Roman ruins. You know, columns everywhere. You can actually go see kind of what things are. If you were to go to the ruins of Colossae, that's them on the right.

But, it's more like a sheep's field. I mean, I can drive an hour from here to see a field like that. I don't need to go over the ocean. And the reason that that is, is that in about 61-62 AD, an earthquake leveled Colossae and was never rebuilt.

And so, we know that this letter was written previous to that. A lot of people think actually quite previous to that. So, it's a very early letter from the New Testament.

And it gives you a sense of biblical scholarship. So, if you're new to the Bible, and if you're new to unpacking the Bible that we've had handed out at the front here, you know, there's so much more to biblical scholarship than that broken telephone.

[11 : 24] You know the broken telephone they talk about where, oh, the Bible's just a translation of a translation of a translation and you really don't. That couldn't be further from what the truth is. But the truth is that there's so much that goes in.

That section of history is one of the most researched sections of history that we have. And so, we know so much about the Bible. And so, that just kind of gives you a sense of what we're talking about when we talk about digging into the Bible.

And so, we have this letter. We have this letter that's written to this small, it's an early letter of Paul, written to this small community kind of out of the way. And we're really only getting one side of the conversation.

I work in cubicle land as many of you do. I'm not going to make you put up your hand, but Ottawa has a few cubicle farms from what I understand. And it's a new experience for me. I'm an army guy. My feet have been in the dust, as we say, for 10 years now. And it's a whole new thing to me to be in this office setting. And what I find really interesting is to be able to sit there and hear all the conversations.

[12 : 26] You can hear everybody's conversations on the phone. But it's always just one side of the conversation. And it's quite entertaining in the army. We're not about subtlety in the army. Okay, so the conversations aren't subtle back and forth.

And to hear one half, you're just dying to know, okay, what is the other guy saying if he's saying this? It's quite entertaining. It makes the days go by fast anyways. But you never completely know what the conversation is unless you hear from the other side or unless you're really paying attention.

And we run into that with all the letters. And we run into that with the letter from the Colossians. Here we have Paul's writing. We don't know what the Colossians have said to him.

We don't know what he's heard or what letters they've sent back to him. But there are a few things we can find out which means we have to pay closer attention. And so for us to pay to know what's going on in chapter 3, we have to go back.

If you go back with me to chapter 2. What we know about what Paul's dealing with is there is some sort of philosophy. If you look at 2.8 there, see to it that no one gets you captive by a philosophy and by empty deeds.

[13 : 35] It's really key to understand that Paul is addressing some sort of a philosophy that is creeping in to the Colossian church here. And if we look deeper, we see throughout, if you look from 16 to 23, this is very much a religious philosophy that's creeping in and trying to grab hold of the Colossian church.

Probably is rooted in kind of the old religious purity laws. Okay, so Paul is addressing this and the key is that Paul is reiterating to the Colossians that they are complete in Christ.

That they don't need to be performing any sort of deed before God to make themselves righteous. He's trying to get it through to them again to say, you are raised with Christ.

You don't need these things. And then chapter 3 where we are, is where he flushes out what that means spiritually. So he said what it isn't and now he's talking about what spiritual formation, reformation is.

See, Paul is concerned throughout the letter of Colossians that the moorings of the church have shifted in Colossae. Now, a mooring, this is a picture of the Halifax shipyard.

[14 : 49] I was down there for a conference just earlier on in November. And a mooring is anywhere where a ship is anchored to. It was very interesting or is tied to. It's very interesting to be, this Halifax shipyard, that's just been built.

Up over the top there is where the Halifax base is. That's where our retreat was or our conference was. The shipyard has just recently been built. And that's where the new coastal ships that the government has purchased are being built within that.

And it's very interesting, though, along while those ships are being built, the whole, this whole coastline there, right up, you can kind of see right up at the top, right up at the top there, a bit of construction that's happening where it's kind of cordoned off.

That whole pier is being completely rebuilt to suit these new ships that have been built. And it's taking as long to redo the moorings, to redo the shipyard, as it is to actually build the ships themselves.

And to great expense. Because if the moorings shift, if where you tie your boat to shifts, we're talking about billions of dollars of new procurement for the government.

[16 : 03] They want to make sure that those moorings are going to hold. Because if your moorings don't hold, you are in a heap of trouble. And if we return to our passage, Paul is concerned about a shift in the moorings of the church.

This is a church, again, that was in a very small town. It's a small church. Lots of new believers. And it was very, the church at that time was very outside the mainstream.

There was a lot of pressure both outside of the church, apparently with this new philosophy. Inside the church, religious criticism is just coming at all sides of this new baby church that Paul is writing to.

And this philosophy is seeking to get them simply to become more religious so that they can be as proud as everybody else around them. You can be as proud as your pagan neighbor, as proud as your traditional religious neighbor.

You need to get more religious like they are. And that's what the philosophy is trying to get them to take pride in themselves and who they are as religious people and to earn their spiritual growth, to earn their adoption from God through effort.

[17 : 10] But the Christian life, we know nothing stalls the Christian life and our walk with God more than pride does. Nothing stalls the Christian life more than pride does.

And so after framing this issue, Paul sets off with his correction, which we've read this morning in chapter 3. And he starts with, I actually have a key written in my book.

I'm one of those weird people who actually writes in his Bible. I have a key written beside this verse because to me this is a key verse for Colossians. Everything else hinges on if then you've been raised with Christ. If then you have been raised with Christ.

Other translations say since. And I would say that could just be all being capitalized. Since you have been raised with Christ. It all starts there. Everything in the Christian life starts with that since or that if then.

Being raised with Christ. And everything else flows from that. 3.2 flows from that. Then because you've been raised with Christ, you set your minds and your hearts.

[18:10] You're able to set your mind and heart on God and on Christ. Because you're able to do that from 3.6 to 11 we see the process of stripping off the old rags of our old self.

The old rags of sin and putting on the new heavenly clothes because we've been saved and raised with Christ. It all flows from 3.1. Christian growth flows from looking at Jesus.

Period. End. Full stop. The Christian life flows and grows from looking at Jesus. Hebrews 12.1-2 Let us also lay aside every weight and sin which clings so closely and let us run with endurance the race that's set before us looking to Jesus the founder and perfecter of our faith.

We look to Jesus and that vision of God's glory is found in Jesus that is what changes us. That's Christian spiritual formation. That's Christian spiritual reformation.

The basic truth of what God has done for us is the point from which everything else in our spiritual life flows. Now this matters for a couple of big reasons.

[19:24] This lesson that Paul is teaching to this in this letter to kind of a small little church about 2,000 years ago it matters to us for two reasons.

First we're very much similar I think to the Colossian church. We fall into uncertainty. The church now is out of the mainstream.

The Christian church is very much out of the mainstream. I happen to think in some ways that's a very good thing but it holds its challenges. There's a lot of pressures from the outside to just go along and to get along.

We're surrounded by constant criticism. I mean we are not unlike the Colossian church that Paul's writing to. So it causes two problems.

That pressure is the root of two problems. First when we stay infants in our spiritual life we can be pulled to water down or to fashion our faith to the age.

[20:24] If you haven't accepted the Lord or if you find yourself now watering down and just accepting the spirit of the age. The question I have for you this morning is are you tired of just floating along with this culture?

Are you getting tired of just floating along? I'm convinced that we live very much in a fear based society.

There is a lot of fear and a lot of pressure based on fear out there to just go along and get along. You know some people one tweet one wrong tweet that's the end of their career. We live very much in a society that has a lot of pressure for us just to float along but also it's a very confused society. And we're told to talk a certain way to dress a certain way to eat a certain way certain foods are about to be outlawed apparently. And God offers here a new start for us and to be rooted in Christ and not just to be going along a confidence to no longer just go along with whatever fear today is telling me to do but instead the confidence of following God and following Christ.

So that's the first reason it matters. The second I think is more for those of us who are within the church now as followers of Jesus we can get pulled into this same religious mindset.

[21:48] We can get pulled into the same religious mindset towards the faith. The area of study that I follow is called spiritual formation. It's on the side. I'm doing some studies in that. And there's actually a great example of this pressure to go along with a religious mindset is within the spiritual formation world there is a model which has become very popular and it's called the traditional triple way of classical mysticism.

And if I was to chart it out it would chart like this. Take us to the next. This is classical mysticism. And I'm not getting down on Catholicism here. This is true if you were to look in Eastern religions, if you were to look at Sufism, all kinds of the different mystical religions that are out there.

They pretty much follow the same threefold path to illumination, to union with the divine or the spark or whatever you want to call God within those contexts. It starts with cleansing.

You cleanse your life by becoming better. Just become a better person. From there it moves on to illumination. Of some kind, you gain some sort of special knowledge.

And then through that cleansing and through that special knowledge, you achieve union with God. You can be proud of yourself. You are at the pinnacle. You are a spiritual person.

[23 : 09] And everybody will clap for you. That is the triple way of classical mysticism. But the problem is that is the reverse of what the Bible says is spiritual formation.

The Bible starts with union with God through faith in Christ. Since you have been raised, everything else, everything else flows from there.

Since you've been raised, everything. The Bible starts with the vision of union with God in 3.1, then moves on to illumination by the Holy Spirit. We can see it there. Set your minds on things.

Holy Spirit will illumine us. Ephesians 4.23, renewed in the spirit of your mind. Then it moves on to illumination and then it finally lands on spiritual growth or sanctification, which is the big theological term we use for that.

I don't like the term cleansing. I'd rather use sanctification. Biblically, there's no hard process for spiritual growth. There's more of a framework. There's a theology of change that we keep our minds on and we keep in mind while we follow Jesus.

[24 : 20] The problem is the tendency we have and how very easy it is to try to cut the corners and slip back down into the classical model. It happens all the time.

I see it all the time where I'm trying to earn God's favor. We start relating then in the bottom part here as wage earners from God rather than people who have received a great gift.

It's by a realization that we've received a great gift that we learn humility in the spiritual life. We start with the free gift of God in Christ, moves on to illumination, and then we're sanctified.

Living out of our created purpose, both now and to eternity. That's what God's looking for and that's what Paul's talking about. It's more than what we're talking about here than a spiritual renovation.

Paul is definitely not talking about just, you know, renovating your life by yourself. It's not like home improvements for your life. Amy and I, we moved to Pembroke.

[25 : 25] Take us to the next slide there, brother. In the military, when you move, you get what's called a house hunting trip. They give you two weeks to go to your new destination and find a house and buy that house.

We had a pretty good house hunting trip here to Ottawa. Amy and I found a house in Richmond, lost that house but found a better house in Stittsville. Very happy with that. Our trip to Pembroke, to Petawawa, what, nine years ago, was not so good.

And what had happened was people came back from Afghanistan and when you go to Afghanistan, when we went to Afghanistan, the government actually gave us a nice bag of money to go to Afghanistan.

There's a pot of money that's called hardship, a pot of money that's called danger pay. You maxed out on that and you didn't pay taxes. So these guys that were coming back from Afghanistan came back with a big bag of money, or guys and girls, and gals, and when they came back they went on the economy and they bought themselves houses.

They didn't want to live in the military shacks anymore. We literally call them the shacks. They wanted to buy their own house. So they went and bought up on the economy. Amy and I received our posting message late in the year.

[26 : 31] So we were there after pretty much everybody else who was getting posted in. They picked over everything that was left. So when Amy and I went for our house hunting trip in Petawawa, we went on a one week tour across the bottom of the barrel of what was left over on the housing market and we saw some doozies.

There are some interesting homes an hour and a half for sale, an hour and a half north of here if you're interested. We saw most of them. One of the ones that we found, Amy talks about it all the time, and this was just kind of an image of our whole time.

Amy went into this one room, and she couldn't tell what was wrong with this house, but something was wrong until I came in and stepped on, I came in on the other side of the room, came through the door, and when I stepped into the room, the floor tilted and she raised up in the air, and I went down.

Now, we were looking for a fixer-upper, but we weren't exactly looking for that. I can put some veneer down, maybe some window dressings, paint, but that needed, I mean, that was a knock it down and start all over again.

It's not even worth it because something's going on there that you can't fix. And so Paul is talking about so much more than just adding the veneer of Christian values to us this morning.

[27 : 46] He's talking about more than just, when he says, you know, put on the new clothes, he's talking about so much more than just putting on new spiritual clothes over the old one. He's talking about being raised again by God, starting anew and then moving on from there.

It's a complete rebuilding project. It's not just adding some window dressings to the spirituality of our lives, to the religion of our lives. When it comes to spiritual growth as Christians, this realization is the mooring for us.

This was the mooring that he wanted the Colossians to hold on to. Helps anchor our spiritual life in humility, and that real humility is a response to what God has done for us.

Spiritual reformation is rooted in our identity as the risen children of God. You're risen and adopted. That's the starting point.

The basic truth of what God has done for us is the point from everything else in our spiritual life flows. And so this leaves us with something to do. Talk about what the Bible says, why it matters.

[28 : 55] Now I think we have something to do just like the Colossians had something to do. Pete Scazzaro, who we were actually talking about this morning, George and I, is a great author when it comes to spiritual formation.

And he points out that when Jesus describes becoming a Christian, he talks about new birth. If you look at John 3, chapter 3, 3 to 5, he's talking about new birth when Jesus talks about becoming a Christian.

Amy and I have an apple tree in our backyard. Now apparently this was a selling point for Amy when we bought the house. I had no idea it was an apple tree. I just thought it was a nice big tree in the backyard, going to give it some shade.

It comes out with flowers that look like that. I don't know if those are the right flowers. It kind of look like it. Is that the right kind of flower? I don't even know. Who knows? I'm not a tree person. But let's say however that the apple tree wasn't a selling point for us and we decided instead that we wanted to have peaches on our tree.

There's no way to get that apple tree to grow peaches. You can't trim it back and wire on peaches. You can't even graft a good old fashioned peach tree to an apple tree.

[30 : 10] I actually had to Google that to make sure I wasn't telling you a lie. You can't. You can't actually graft an old fashioned peach tree to an apple tree. No matter what you do, only apples are going to grow on that tree.

If you want peach tree, you've got to take it up, roots and all, and plant a peach tree. If we want new fruit, we have to dig up the roots. New roots equals new fruit.

If all we do is modify, and all we do is we kind of modify in the same way when all we're doing is making up resolutions. You know, I'm going to pray more. I'm going to go to church more. I'm going to stop being bad and be more Christian, and God's going to see how good I am.

I feel for some of the soldiers who come into my office, and they're like, I can't go to church, I'm not good enough. If you only knew. First of all, about me and the people who are there, no offense, but we're all just sinners in need of grace here.

Amen? Amen? Amen. And so, Christ announced that it's only by the direct intervention of God can you or I be changed. And that's the starting point.

[31 : 18] Colossians 2 told us how not to approach spiritual formation, much like that old classical model. Colossians 3 shows us how to approach spirituality.

Setting our eyes on the things above, the passage says. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.

We're raised with Christ, then we set our minds. That means to be taken up with. When you look at the passage and translate the passage, it could be taken up with the things of God.

It could be devoted to the things that are above. Allowing God, through a vision of his glory, to strip off the old and put on the new. I love Isaiah 6, 3, where it talks about the garment of praise.

We put on the garment of praise. I think that applies here. When God strips off the old clothes and he reclothes us, we in a sense do that as well along with him.

[32 : 17] We put on the garment of praise, all the means of grace. We have this term called biblical means of grace, which includes reading our Bibles, it includes the Lord's Supper, the wonderful worship we had this morning.

These are the ways that God allows us to interact with him, to set our minds. But these things have no power in themselves unless they're infused by the Holy Spirit.

And through the Holy Spirit, we get, they become ways to look to Jesus. And it's through looking to Jesus that we become saved.

I have to stop there with that point because I could preach a whole other sermon just on that. If Paul still uses active terms and those images are active on our mark, you take off then, put on then, he's always talking about active, but we have to keep that mooring in sight.

We have been raised already. It's not about earning God's favor. It's about looking to God and allowing him to change us. These are ways that we relate to God as his children.

[33 : 25] They are not ways that we earn his favor or build our own spiritual growth. Spiritual reformation is rooted in our identity as risen and adopted children of God.

The basic truth about what Christ has done for us, that's the point from which everything else in the spiritual life flows. And that's important for us to remember because there's a lot of things out there that want us basically to say, no, you know, our money or our pride in ourselves, that's going to be the point from which my spirituality is going to flow.

No, it's what God has done for us in Christ. And so our to-do, if we don't know Jesus and you're tired of just floating along in this fear-based society, is to accept Jesus' promise of a new and risen life.

His forgiveness of your sins and rising us from the death that we live now. And to begin our journey. Or, if we're in the church and we think we're just humming along, the beginning of this year is a perfect time to examine ourselves and ask ourselves, in what way have we bought into that old model of spiritual formation?

The religious model that apparently this philosophy was trying to get the Colossians. In what ways at the beginning of this year am I buying into that mindset? And start again to offer our old rags of sin to him, commit to his means of grace, and to allow him to make us into who he wants us to be.

[34 : 50] Not the other way around. All right, it's time for the big finish. This is my favorite part of the sermon. I think it's everybody's favorite part. One of the great parts about joining the military is when you first get your uniform.

It's been a while for me, but, you know, you get this wonderful new uniform that you've been itching to put on. And, you know, in Petawawa, we always got the new chaplains to train.

I have a feeling now that that's because they could never convince any of the experienced chaplains to come there. So we always got the new chaplains to train. And clothing stores where in the military you actually get your uniform had this thing that they seemed to like to do with chaplains, and that is give them a uniform, smile, and send them on their way.

Everybody else gets shown how to wear the uniform. For some reason, maybe it's because we're officers or chaplains, they think, you know, the Lord's going to show us how to put this thing on. I don't know. But they, so I remember one fellow, great guy, fantastic chaplain, but when he showed up, they gave him his uniform.

He went on his way, and God bless him, he went home and he put on his uniform himself. And then, well, he put on his uniform himself. And then he showed up at our chaplain offices, and the office was locked, and Padre Lara, who I worked with for a number of years, she came around the door, and there were a couple of people there, and all they remember is Lara coming around and looking out the front door and going, oh my goodness, and seeing him there standing in his uniform all proud of himself.

[36 : 19] And she went, she opened the door, and she just like dragged him in, and her question was like, how many people saw you? He had a pizza box, his beret looked like a pizza box on his head, his legs were on blouse.

Like, to a civilian, he might look military, but if you're in the army, I mean, he was just embarrassing himself. And credibility is everything with the army guys. You don't want to, or army folks, you know, you don't want to embarrass yourself like that.

And really kind of embarrassing the chaplains as well. And he's so terribly put together. You know, even though the membership and the rank were his, he needed to grow into the uniform.

You learn to grow into the uniform, how to talk, how to be within the military. And he had that confidence now while growing. We actually just deployed him recently. We had the community that came around him to help, the chaplains, kind of showing him how to put on his beret, you know, what right boots to wear.

I'm surprised he had his boots on the right feet. This life after being raised is about growing in to our new identity. It's about letting God put on our new uniform for us, rooted in who we've been made to

be, empowered by the Holy Spirit to take off the old and to put on the new.

[37 : 35] And so my challenge this morning is for us to make a resolution, not just to change, but a resolution to spend my year looking to Jesus. Let him grow you into the new spiritual being that he raised you to be.

Let's pray. Loving God, what a wonderful gift. An unbelievable gift you've given to us in Christ. We give you thanks, Lord God, for our salvation.

We give you thanks, Lord God, for the new way you close us in the close of heaven now as a taste of what's to come. We pray for our community that we would be a place that would help each other along to grow into our new uniform.

We pray, Lord God, that this would be a year where we look to you and let you change us through that vision of your glory. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.