

Put On A New Nature In Christ

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Date: 25 February 1990

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[0 : 00] Our God and Father, we ask that as we turn now to look at your Word, and we know that it is your purpose to speak to us through your Word, that as our eyes and minds focus on the written Word, we may ourselves encounter the living Word, even Jesus Christ our Lord, in whose name we pray. Amen.

It's very important. I've prepared really to speak to these people in the front row, so remember that this is for your benefit primarily, so I'd say the rest are going to listen while I talk to you. But I'm sure that they may have something they can identify with in the process of it all.

And in order to follow what's happening, I'd like you to turn to Colossians chapter 3, which was read as the scripture lesson this morning by Donna Belmont. And it's on page 189.

And it begins with verse 9, at the bottom there of the first column on page 189. And it says, do not lie to one another, which seems a good thing to say, really.

And the reason I think it's important to say is because, well, it's this way. It really would be better if we didn't lie to one another, wouldn't it?

[1 : 41] I'm sure scouts in the course of their training are told not to lie. But I would like to tell you what my experience of this was, because I was once a Boy Scout.

And what do you think is going to happen to this match when I scratch it on here? Ah, it's on fire. Now, for me, when I was a Scout, I must tell you this. That telling me not to lie was like telling a match not to burn.

That was the way it was. I can't apologize for it, and I can't hide it. It's just what happened.

Now, a lot of people think when you read in the Bible, do not lie, what you're being told to do is something which is entirely contrary to who you are.

[2 : 42] It's sort of like that's what they think the Bible's all about. It's telling you to do what you can't do, to be what you can't be. And I must tell you that Scouts were a great help to me because they helped me make that great discovery.

Because I thought it was very important not to lie. It was just that I couldn't do it. And to help incriminate the rest of you, I would like to suggest that we live in a society where we all learn fairly early in life the expedience of lying.

You very often avoid punishment at home if you're successful at lying. You very often can sell products if you're successful at lying. You can often gain time for yourself to get away if you're successful at lying.

It really is a very important thing to learn how to do in order to survive in our society. So that when somebody comes along and says, do not lie, you're in trouble.

And the trouble is compounded, made worse that is, by the fact that you agree somewhere deep down inside you that you probably shouldn't lie.

[4 : 03] It's just that you've learned how, you find that it works, and so you do. If any of you are having trouble with this, I mean, if I called it prevaricating or, you know, just coming a little short of the truth, it would probably be easier.

But the fact is, it's lying. And I want to deal with it that way. And the reason scouts were a great help to me was because they filled me with all the sorts of things that I knew that I should do.

And what's more, they gave me a wonderful uniform. It was the great moment of my life when you got a wonderful pair of serge blue shorts with button-down pockets, and you got a military-style shirt with epaulets on the shoulder, and you got a kerchief that goes around your neck, and a turk's head that held it in place, and socks that were blue and green and came up to your knees and were held with a very fancy form of garter which flared out at the side, and then a magnificent hat to crown it all off.

And so I really felt very proud of myself when I got my uniform. The trouble is I was second in the family, so it was used slightly.

But I... It was... It gave a... It made me feel that now I really am somebody because I have these clothes on.

[5 : 44] And my career in the scouts was disastrous because that's where I learned to smoke. That wasn't during the meetings, actually, but that was after they were over.

And I was able to develop some profanity, which I didn't know about before in life, and use it quite eloquently.

And I did all sorts of things which helped me to see the kind of basic contradiction of my own personal life, you know, that what I believed to be true and good and would stand there and salute and promise to do was not, in fact, the way I behaved in my own heart and in my private life.

There was something missing. There was something between the fact that I knew what was right, but I didn't do it, you know.

I... I... And that, I think, is... I must tell you this. I read that famous Vancouver Journal this week, at least I looked at the headline in one article, and it said, kids aren't born hating each other, they learn.

[7 : 01] And it's organized religion that teaches them. A bit humbling, that, I thought. And I hoped they weren't right, but that's a fairly popular opinion nowadays, that kids are all born as nice as can be, and they get corrupted by people like me.

And they... And probably the scout movement's partly guilty for that, too. But, you see, that's quite the opposite to what the Bible tells us.

The Bible tells us that you can know what's right to do, but you won't do it. And that's... I mean, we all experience that.

You know it's right to take off 20 pounds, but you don't do it. You know it's right to quit smoking, but you don't do it. You know all sorts of things are right, but you never get around to doing them. And that's the contradiction that is there.

And so, a lot of people could say, as it says in the Bible today, do not lie. And you know, yes, that's right, we mustn't. But, of course, we have to, and we do all the time.

[8 : 13] So, it's best if we looked at that verse again and see if it goes any further than that, because I think we need help if it stops there. And if you look at it carefully, you'll see that it says, do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old nature and its practices.

Oh. So, there's something different about it, you know. Lying was an appropriate expression of what Paul calls our old nature.

He says, that's what you do. In your old nature, your old self-centered nature lies. And when Paul comes along and says, do not lie, he's not trying to get you to persuade your old nature to behave differently than it was made to behave.

He's suggesting to you that there's a whole new dimension to life, which he describes in this passage as a new nature. That what you need is something to change you inside.

There's no use putting the most magnificent uniform on and thinking that that's going to change your heart. It's your heart that needs to be changed by being made new.

[9 : 37] And when you are made new, then you put the uniform on to give expression to the new person that you are. And that's a little bit of what Sarah was talking about this morning.

But if you look at the passage again, you'll see that it says, not only do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old nature and its practices, that lying belongs to the old nature, and you've put on the new nature, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.

That God is at work in your life having changed your heart to make you into a new person.

Do you see how it says, it's very interesting that it says that. You've put on the new nature, which is being renewed. It's both something that has been done and it's something that's being done.

You put on the new nature, which is being renewed, in knowledge after the image of its creator. In other words, the new nature is the basis on which God works in you to make you like him, like Jesus Christ.

[11 : 04] And then he goes on to a very surprising statement, a quite startling statement if you look at it. He says, listen to it, in verse 11, chapter 3, the top of page 189, here there cannot be, here there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free man, but Christ is all and in all.

Now, you think that the atomic bomb is powerful. It's not nearly as powerful as that verse in terms of changing the world.

Read it this way, if you will. Here there cannot be black and white, Jew and Gentile, French and English, Protestant and Catholic, poor and rich, union and management, hetero and homosexuals. No, there's a new nature, he says. Something brand new has happened. Now, Paul, I don't think, was unmindful of what a radical statement that was that he was making.

He was saying, the basis of your identity is now quite different. And even though people may want to classify you as Jew or Gentile, Protestant or Catholic, French or English, black or white, homo or hetero or whatever else, even though they want to do that to you, that's not who you are.

[12:55] Those are only secondary things to who you are. You are a new person having received a new nature in Christ.

That's what your identity is. Now, you know how much racial tension there is in our country. You know how difficult it is in South Africa.

You listen to the long struggle between blacks and whites. You watch the great struggle in our modern Western society between male and female.

And it goes on and on and on. One group taking off after another and seeking to identify itself, saying that we're not treated well by that group and they need to recognize who we are and they may be a majority but we are a minority and we have our rights and on and on it goes.

And there's always this tension. Paul says that the answer to that tension is that you are to be a new person and the only point of your identity is Jesus Christ.

[14:08] That's who you are. Everything else is incidental. Now, you know that that's pretty hard for us to live with and yet that's there.

It's there as plainly as anything and if you followed this series on Colossians, you'll see that that's consistent with what Paul is saying.

Look at the last part of verse 11. Christ is all and in all. That means that no matter what the accidents of your ethnic origin are, of your national origin are, of your sexual nature is, no matter what the origin of your tradition is, all those things are secondary to the new nature which is yours in Christ because in Christ, he says, Christ is all and in all.

That's who you are. Now, that's very hard for us, isn't it? It's becoming more essential for us as our society becomes more and more mixed, as we try to resolve the tensions that exist between various groups in our society.

We need to find a cure as radical as this. But we're not in our society prepared to look at this as seriously as Paul wants us to look at.

[15:41] So I want to, I just want to take you a little further to show you how this is going to work. He says you take all those people who are different, radically, basically, ethnically, linguistically, personally, different from one another, you take all of them and you give them a brand new identity.

Their identity is now not according to their birth, their identity is according to their new birth into Christ.

They find a new identity in the person of Christ. They are baptized into Christ. That's who you are. And if you go back to living by the old nature, then you're denying the reality of the new thing that is yours, having committed your life to Christ.

And having done that, Paul says in verse 12, then you put on your uniform. And this uniform is different.

Remember, all these clothes that you're to put on are clothes which make it possible for you to relate to people who ethnically and linguistically and all other ways are different from you.

[17:12] Let me tell you a little bit about them. this is what they are. The clothes that you put on are compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, and patience.

You never get a race riot going around those, will you? it wouldn't work. If people were dressed in those things, then a lot of the tension in our world would disappear.

One of the scholars has translated them perhaps a little more precisely by saying, you are to be characterized, your new nature, means that you are to be a person of ready sympathy, of generous spirit, of humble disposition, with a deep willingness to make concessions.

You are to be patient and bear with people. and then you are to forgive. And Christ tells you how you forgive because he shows you that by forgiving you.

You'll never learn how to forgive other people until you've learned that from him. He forgives so that we can forgive one another. Now, I don't, you scouts won't know about this, so you don't need to pay attention to this particular part of the sermon, but there happens to be, you know, when a husband is taking his wife out to dinner or some very special occasion, that she gets dressed for the occasion.

[19 : 01] And generally there's a ring or a piece of jewelry or an ornate belt or a cape or something which brings the whole outfit.

It brings it all together so that it's lovely. And that's what Paul says.

The thing that brings all these qualities together in a person is love. That's why he says, above all, put on love.

And love, it says, binds everything together in perfect harmony. That's how it works. So, that's the thing that I want just to leave with you this morning, is it starts out at a very practical level in saying, do not lie.

It goes on to say that even though lying might be according to your nature, it's important that you recognize that by your baptism into Christ, your commitment to Christ, your new birth in Christ, you are a new creature with a new nature.

[20 : 28] And your identity is no longer definable in terms of barbarians, Scythians, bond, free, Jew, Gentile, any of those things.

That's not who you are. Who you are is a new person in Christ clothed with, a new person who is being renewed and who is being clothed with ready sympathy, a generous spirit, a humble disposition, a willingness to make concessions, patience and forbearance, forgiving and loving. that's the new person you're to be. And you see, when I say how grateful I am for having been a scout, a scout may not have taught me all I should have learned, but it taught me that I needed a new nature, that there was a work to be done in my heart, not just to be done.

I mean, I couldn't put on the scout uniform, which was a denial of what I was in my heart. putting on the scout uniform made me recognize how there was something wrong, and that led, in the course of the next few years, to my commitment to Jesus Christ.

And I think that when Paul says, do not lie, to a society that recognizes that lying is essential to survive, or likes to say that to us, when Paul says that, he's saying, I don't want you to try contradicting your present nature, I want you to find a new nature in Christ, and a new nature which is being renewed by Christ, so that you are a new person in Christ.

[22 : 33] Well, I leave you with it, and it's a wonderful passage, and I hope you'll spend some more time in it. we're going to sing, as we make our offering this morning, hymn number 459.

One two favorite anecdote taxes■■ taxes ■■■■■rans■i Spoiler■ sudah todavía Francisc ■■■■■ sex Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

[27 : 03] Amen. Let us sit or kneel to pray.

Amen. We begin by giving thanks to God for all his creation, for this world and all who live in it. We are especially thankful for the blessings of freedom which we as Canadians enjoy. We give thanks, Lord, for the movement toward freedom which is occurring in Eastern Europe and Africa, and pray that it might continue in a peaceful way.

We pray for wisdom on the part of all leaders, patience and restraint on the part of those anxious for freedom to come soon. Lord, we pray that all men and women would recognize the need to put their trust not in worldly things, but in you.

Lord, in your mercy. I hear all the prayer. Lord, we need to confess to you all the ways in which we have failed to do your will. We confess our wrongdoings knowing that you are a God of infinite love and goodness who is eager to grant us the forgiveness we seek.

[29 : 17] We pray that you might give us power over our wrongdoings in the form of your grace. We are inspired by the words of that lovely hymn. It was grace that taught my heart to fear and grace my fears relieved.

We thank the gracious Father for your unconditional, impartial, unwearying, patient, forgiving, victorious love which never changes, never coerces, never manipulates, never ceases.

Deliver us, Lord, from whatever it is within us that causes us to deprive ourselves of the matchless grace which you lavish upon us. We pray in the name of him whose cross is the measure of that love.

Amen. Amen. Amen. On this special day, Lord, when we honour the founder of the Scouting Movement, we pray for the movement throughout the world.

We pray that you would raise up good men and women to take on the roles of leaders to boys and girls, instilling in them the values which will make them good citizens of this world and yours.

[30 : 31] We pray especially for the 52nd here at St. John's. We uphold the leaders and ask that they might be renewed in their energy and their devotion to this task.

We pray for the boys that they might grow stronger in their friendships as they work, play, and learn together. We close with a prayer for all families, especially those of these Scouts and this congregation.

Father in heaven, your word is clear in its teaching that the family is the nucleus of society. History teaches that no culture can survive the disintegration of the home, and no unit of society, school, community, or church can replace parents or compensate for failure in family.

Help us all to give family a higher priority. Remind us that when we are too busy for our families, we are too busy. Gracious God, show us the way home.

In the name of thy Son, Jesus Christ, the ever-living One. Amen. You will see this morning that we're somewhat short-handed, and both our wardens are over at Parksville for the weekend.

[32 : 15] The newsletter is at the back, and we'd like you to be careful to take it home with you. Among the things that are contained in your bulletin are the information regarding the Learner's Exchange, which begins next Sunday.