

A Transformed Life

Built Different #5 - Pastor Jonathan Combs - July 5, 2026 - Colossians 3:1-11

INTRO: Good morning church! Today we are continuing our sermon series entitled “Built Different.” This fairly recent phrase is used to describe a person who stands above the rest, whose physical or mental prowess is uncommon. Indeed then, Christians should be “Built Different.”

Those in Christ are “Built Different” because their lives are built on Christ alone and not this world. Our series is based around six (6) concepts of a life built different in Jesus from Romans 12:

Series Theme: Romans 12:1-2 (ESV) ¹ I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ² Do not be conformed to this world, but **be transformed by the renewal of your mind**, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

NEED: Romans 12 tells us to “be transformed by the renewal of your mind.” But that naturally raises a question: How? How does someone actually live a transformed life?

Have you ever wondered why so many Christians struggle to experience real transformation? We believe the Gospel. We know Christ has saved us. We still worry like the world worries, chase what the world chases, lose our temper over the same frustrations, seek our identity in our careers or accomplishments, and return to the same sins we've battled for years. The problem isn't that Christ has failed to transform us. The problem is that we often continue living as though our old life is still our true life.

Have you ever been given a fresh start? Maybe you moved to a new area ... maybe you started a new job ... maybe you went off to school ... Do you remember that desire you had to be different? “This time I am going to be the man I want to be and not what I have always been!” I remember making this decision when I started college, I wanted a new reputation, a new approach. Friends, you have been given a fresh start in Jesus, how will you use it?

Trans: As we will see today, we can learn to live as the new people Christ has already made us.

BODY: In Colossians 3:1–11, the apostle Paul taught the Colossian believers that because they had died and been raised with Christ, they were to live out the transformed life that Christ had given them. Because Christ gave us his life, our lives can be transformed to be like his. How can we live out the transformed life which Christ has given us? The text gives three ways to live out the transformed life which Christ given us.

Read text: Colossians 3:1-11 (ESV) ¹ If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. ³ For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. ⁵ Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. ⁶ On account of these the wrath of God is coming. ⁷ In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. ⁸ But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. ⁹ Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices ¹⁰ and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. ¹¹ Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.

How to live out the transformed life:

1. Set Your Mind on things above.

EXP: (1-4) Paul begins this section with two astounding and mind-blowing statements. We can easily zoom past them like billboards on a highway, but we are going to slow down a bit and read the fine print. Paul makes two statements that don't seem to square with our reality:

The first is this: “if you have been raised with Christ” (1) (συνεγείρω, sunegeirō - to raise up together from mortal death to a new and blessed life dedicated to God.)

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But, Paul...I haven't been raised with Christ, I'm still here on earth...

He has laid out these two locations: on earth, and above ("set your minds on things above, not on things that are on earth.") There is the earth, where we live, and there is "above," another way of saying the heavens, where Christ is. We're here on earth, Christ is up there. Why is Paul suggesting that we aren't here on earth?

But previously Paul has said that you have been raised with Christ. (see Colossians 2:12-13 - he "raised you together with Christ" and "made you alive together with Christ"). So Paul is saying that because of your faith in Christ, your trust in Christ, you have been raised with Christ into the heavens, at the right hand of God.

*The second is this: "For you have died" (3) (ἀποθνῆσκω, *apothnēskō* - to die; of the natural death of man; eternal death)*

But, Paul...I'm still here. Reminds me of the scene from Monty Python and the Holy Grail - they are collecting all the dead bodies from the plague, but the one guy says, "But I'm not dead yet! I'm feeling much better. I think I'll go for a walk!"

Paul, why are you assuming I've already been raised with Christ into the heavens and that I'm dead?! Neither of those two things have happened yet! But Paul is saying, yes, that's exactly what has happened. Do you see it? Do you perceive it? There is a spiritual reality that cannot be perceived by our physical faculties alone. We cannot touch, taste, hear, see, or smell this reality, but that doesn't mean it isn't real.

Paul lays out these 2 startling facts and then gives us the implication if they are true:

"Seek the things above" (1) (ζητέω, *zēteō*) (PAM) - to seek after, seek for, aim at, strive after; to crave

"Where Christ is seated" (1) (κάθημαι, *kathēmai*) -

"Set your minds on things that are above" (2) (φρονέω, *phroneō*) (PAM) - to have understanding, be wise; to feel, to think (comes from G5424 *phrēn* which literally means "diaphragm" (your abdomen), so this is not necessarily "think" which comes from the brain organ, but closer to "heart" in the Hebrew sense, not "feeling" in the modern sense.

"Your life is hidden" (3) (κρύπτω, *kryptō*) - to hide, conceal, to be hid; kept secret

"When Christ ... appears" (4) (φανερώνω, *phanerōō*) - to make manifest or visible or known what has been hidden or unknown, to manifest, whether by words, or deeds, or in any other way

If your real life is hidden with Christ in the heavens, why are you so preoccupied with the things that are on earth?

Here, when he says "seek" and "set your mind" he is telling us to aim and direct our passions and interests and motivations towards the heavenly realm and not the earthly realm.

If we want to be transformed and not conformed to the world, we must seek something other than the things the world can give us.

ARG: Jesus said something very similar in the Sermon on the Mount.

Matthew 6:31-33 (NLT) So don't worry about these things, saying, 'What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?' These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs. Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.

There are earthly things (you need food, clothing and shelter), but you don't need to allow those things to dominate your thoughts. Instead, seek the Kingdom of God.

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Where does your mind drift when you have a free moment and you don't have any external stimulation? Let me pause a moment and say, you should have times during your day when your mind can drift with no external stimulation. This is not a given anymore in our modern life...

Matthew 16:21-23 (ESV) From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you." But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not **setting your mind on the things of God**, but on the things of man."

In this scene, Jesus is predicting that he is going to suffer and die. That's why he came. But Peter can't wrap his head around it yet, so he opens his big mouth and says, "Oh no, Lord, I won't let that happen to you! Don't worry, you are in good hands. You have nothing to worry about." Then Jesus says that chilling statement to Peter, "get behind me Satan." Why? Because you are not "setting your mind on the things of God." This is the exact same phrasing that Paul uses in 3:2. What does it look like to set your mind on the things of God? The things that are above? It means to get on God's wavelength, get with God's program and not with the programs and purposes of man, of the world.

"Indeed, if we consider the unblushing promises of reward and the staggering nature of the rewards promised in the Gospels, it would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased." C.S. Lewis, The Weight of Glory

ILL: Radio waves - they are coming at us, but we can't hear them because we don't have a tuner, our ears cannot perceive them, but that doesn't mean they aren't there. When Christ gives us life, he opens a new capability - we can now perceive the heavenly frequencies.

But we must tune our hearts to his frequencies. Every morning we wake up, and all throughout the day we can either choose to tune to the frequencies of the world, the things we can hear with our physical senses, or tune to the frequencies of heaven.

APP: Do you want to be transformed? Do you want to change? The first step is to set your minds, passions, interests, motivations onto the reality that there is more to life than just the things happening on earth.

The sad fact is that many Christians live life as though the spiritual reality of the things of God does not exist. They are practical atheists. You might believe God exists, but nothing about your life has changed to reflect that fact. We are fooling around with our own programs, our own goals in life and the best we can hope for is to come to church and say some prayers in the hopes that God will help us accomplish our goals and dreams and ambitions.

No, the transformed life, the good, acceptable, perfect will of God for us is to be a living sacrifice, recognizing that we have, in fact, died to the things of this world. But this will not come by osmosis. It doesn't happen accidentally. We must set our minds and passions on the things of God. Let me give you some practical ways to yield to God in this:

- Every morning, wake up, and spend some time in silence before God and pray something like, "God, I'm tuning in to your radio station right now. You've got a program going that is based on your name, your kingdom, your will. I want to join your work and partner with you in your work on this earth."
- Every morning, spend time reading his word, asking him to shape your perspective of your day.
- In your prayer life, spend more time on the first part of the Lord's prayer, about his name, his kingdom, his will before you get to my daily bread, my sins, where God is leading you.

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- During your day, spend more time with no external distractions and stimulation - stop letting electronic devices take your mind where they want it to go and start taking back your own attention. Spend time in silence in the car. Let your mind drift where God wants it to drift.

2. Put the Old Self to Death.

EXP: (5-9) Because believers have died with Christ, Paul now commands them to make war against everything that belongs to their former way of life. The Christian life is not merely about adding new habits; it also requires putting sinful habits to death. Since our old self has died with Christ, we must refuse to let the old way of living continue to rule us.

“Put to death” (5) (νεκρώω, *nekroō*) (AAM) - to make dead, to put to death, slay; to deprive of power, destroy the strength of. (μέλος, *melos*) - members, limbs. This command is forceful. Paul isn't calling us to manage sin, tolerate sin, or negotiate with sin; he is calling us to execute it. Just as our old self died with Christ, we are to treat the sinful desires that belong to that old life as condemned enemies rather than welcomed guests. Jesus taught the same radical approach in Matthew 5:29:

Matthew 5:29 (ESV) If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell.

“Be killing sin or it will be killing you.” John Owen, The Mortification of Sin

“Sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, covetousness” (5) - Paul identifies the sins that belong to the old life. The first list focuses primarily on sinful passions and desires. These are not harmless temptations; they are the very behaviors that provoke the righteous wrath of God. Sin begins with desires before behaviors. Jesus taught that sin begins in the heart before it is ever committed with the body:

Matthew 15:19 (ESV) For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander.

“On account of these ... wrath of God is coming” (6) (ὀργή, *orgē*) - anger, wrath, indignation; anger exhibited in punishment, hence used for punishment itself.

“In these you too once walked” (7) (περιπατέω, *peripateō*) - to make one's way, progress; to make due use of opportunities; Hebrew for, to live, to regulate one's life, to conduct one's self

“You must put them all away” (8) (ἀποτίθημι, *apotithēmi*) (AMM) - to put off or aside or away.

“Anger, wrath, malice, slander, obscene talk” (8) - The second list shifts to what seem to be relational sins. It seems that the first list are sins of disordered desires: what happens in the heart that often manifests privately. And then the second list are sins of disordered relationships: what happens when sinful hearts interact with other people. Both have died and been transformed by new life in Jesus.

“Do not lie” (9) (ψεύδομαι, *pseudomai*) (PMM) - to lie, to speak deliberate falsehoods; to deceive one by a lie, to lie to. Lying deserves special attention because Paul gives it its own command. Why? Because the Gospel itself is truth, Christ is truth, the Spirit is truth, and God cannot lie. Therefore God's people should be people of truth.

“Put off ... old self” (9) (παλαιός, *palaios*) - no longer new, worn by use, the worse for wear, literally the old man. Allow me to pause here and say that Paul doesn't tell us to put to death the old man so that Christ will love us. He tells us this because Christ already does love us. We don't fight sin to become children of God. We fight sin because we are children of God.

ARG: You have been set free from sin because you have died to it with Christ:

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Romans 6:6-7 (ESV) We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. 7 For one who has died has been set free from sin.

Romans 6:12 (ESV) Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions.

ILL: **Jesus raises Lazarus:** When Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead in John 11, the first thing Jesus says to the man He has just raised is, "Unbind him, and let him go." Take those grave clothes off of him.

APP: Mortifying sin requires more than good intentions, it requires concrete action. If your phone feeds temptation, change how you use it. If certain friendships pull you away from Christ, establish healthy boundaries. If bitterness has taken root, choose today to forgive. Don't simply identify sin; take the next faithful step to remove its influence from your life.

Some of us have made peace with sins that Christ died to defeat. We've excused our anger as personality, our gossip as concern, our lust as weakness, or our greed as ambition. But Paul says those things belong to the old self. Church, don't coddle what Christ has condemned. Don't nurse back to health something Christ died for. Put it to death, and live in the freedom He purchased for you.

3. Put on the New Self.

EXP: (10-11) Having commanded believers to put off the old self, Paul now calls them to put on the new self. Christianity is not merely the removal of sinful habits but the renewal of the whole person. God doesn't simply empty our lives of sin, He fills them with Christlikeness. Because we have died and been raised with Christ, we are to daily clothe ourselves with the new life He has graciously given us.

"Put on the new self" (10) (ἐνδύω, *enduō*) - to sink into (clothing), put on, clothe one's self. Just as we intentionally choose what to wear each morning, believers are to consciously embrace the character and conduct that belong to their new identity in Christ.

"Being renewed" (10) (ἀνακαινώνω, *anakainōō*) - to cause to grow up, new, to make new; to be changed into a new kind of life as opposed to the former corrupt state. emphasizing an ongoing work of God. While our justification is complete, our sanctification is continual. Day by day, the Holy Spirit is transforming us into the people God intends us to be.

"Knowledge" (10) (ἐπίγνωσις, *epignōsis*) - precise and correct knowledge; used in the NT of the knowledge of things ethical and divine. Not merely acquiring more information, but a growing, personal knowledge of God that transforms the believer from the inside out.

"Image of its creator" (10) (εἰκών, *eikōn*) - an image, figure, likeness; the image of the Son of God (*imago dei*), into which true Christians are transformed. Humanity was originally created in God's image but that image was marred by sin. Through Christ, God is restoring His image in His people. The goal of the Christian life is not self-improvement but Christlikeness.

"Here there is not" (11) (ὅπου, *hopou*) - where, in that place. Inside the *imago dei* there is no more distinction based on race, wealth, culture, etc... Our deepest identity is no longer found in our ethnicity, social status, education, nationality, or background, but in our union with Christ.

"Christ is all, and in all" (11) - Notice Paul doesn't say, "Christ helps us." He says, "Christ is all." He is our life (v.4). Our identity. Our righteousness. Our hope. Our unity. Our future.

ARG: **We are being transformed into the same image...**

2 Corinthians 3:18 (NIV) And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

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Romans 8:29 (NLT) For God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to become like his Son, so that his Son would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.

ILL: **Military Service:** When I first pulled in to Ft. Jackson for Officer Basic Training, I had the orders, I had the uniform, I even had the haircut, but I had no idea how to be a Soldier. In every way, I already was a Soldier in the US Army, but I had to learn how to live like it. Friends, if you are saved by faith in Jesus, you already are made holy, but now we must learn to live like it.

APP: Some of you are frustrated because you're not yet where you want to be spiritually. Take heart, Paul says the new self "is being renewed." That's present tense. God is still working. Keep pursuing Christ, keep trusting His grace, and keep walking in obedience. The One who **transformed** you is still **transforming** you.

CONCLUSION: If you are in Christ, you have died and your old life no longer defines you. You have been raised with Christ, your life is hidden with Him now. Will you live as someone whose true life is with Christ? Today God's Word has called us to three responses:

- **Set your mind on things above.** Tune your heart to the voice of Christ.
- **Put the old self to death.** Don't negotiate with sin. Don't excuse it. Put it to death.
- **Put on the new self.** Walk in the new identity Christ has given you.

Friends, the Gospel isn't simply that Jesus forgives sinners. The Gospel is that Jesus makes sinners into new creations. Paul wrote, "When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory." The life that is hidden today will one day be revealed for everyone to see. Every battle against sin, every act of obedience, every quiet moment spent seeking Christ is preparing you for that glorious day.

You have been transformed by the blood of Jesus, now live out that new life. Let's Pray!