

MICHAEL
HEATH
.ORG



SHIELD OF FAITH

"Take Up the Shield of Faith" – Paul

Tuesday October 1, 2019

Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; — Colossians 3:12

The Elect of God

<https://email.althahosting.com/campaigns/yw767c6sem188>

Christianity is a practical religion. I am reminded of that this morning after reading the third chapter of Paul's letter to the Christians living in Colossae.

The letter was written to help Christians living in the city cope with the religious syncretism that was developing in Asia Minor at the time. Christ is appealed to as the source for righteous living.

Paul writes, "So if you're serious about living this new resurrection life with Christ, act like it. Pursue the things over which Christ presides." Paul doesn't make a big deal in his letter about the local angel cult. According to one source, "This unorthodox cult venerated the archangel Michael who is said to have caused a curative spring to gush from a fissure in the Earth."

Instead, Paul focuses his comments on how the converts to Christ should act. He continues his letter, "Don't shuffle along, eyes to the ground, absorbed with the things right in front of you. Look up, and be alert to what is going on around Christ—that's where the action is. See things from his perspective."

If he were writing to us today he'd write, "Don't shuffle along, eyes on your phone, absorbed with the things in your social network feed." Paul urges us to be alert to what Christ cares about, not what the neighborhood is pushing. We live in a religiously syncretistic culture, probably not too different from Colossae. Choosing Christ could very well mean choosing to fail rather than succeed.

Paul puts it this way, "Your old life is dead. Your new life, which is your real life—even though invisible to spectators—is with Christ in God. He is your life." He then observes, "Meanwhile, be content with obscurity, like Christ." Your real life as a Christian will be "invisible to spectators." We must not expect our Christian conduct to earn us popularity or success in the world. It could very well make us invisible to the power brokers.

Paul expands his point with thoughts that are relevant to our lives today, "And that means killing off everything connected with that way of death: sexual promiscuity, impurity, lust, doing whatever you feel like whenever you feel like it, and grabbing whatever attracts your fancy." He describes the old life as, "shaped by things and feelings instead of by God."

Wow. There really is nothing new under the sun. Christians in Colossae confronted the same challenges we moderns confront. Christianity does have something practical to offer psychologically.

Continued on the back

Call me if I can help. 1-207-956-0819.

Helping Hands Ministries * 237 Byerly Street * Mt. Airy, NC * 27030

<https://michaelheath.org/donate>

I want a life that isn't shaped by things and feelings. I want a life shaped by God.

This is the appeal of religion and worship worldwide. Worship transports us into a cultural context that is beyond our worldly existence. Christianity makes God tactile — real — no matter our circumstances. Christianity is unique in that it posits a personal God. Jesus Christ is the God-Man. The separate, all-powerful and personal God of the universe, our creator, became the most humble among us. He lived as a suffering servant. He died for our ... for your, sins.

But He didn't remain there. He rose from the dead victorious. He sent the third person of the trinity to live inside of us. The Holy Spirit gives us heavenly power to overcome spiritual powers and principalities right now.

A man called me yesterday. He and his wife attended a church where the pastor did not preach from the Bible. The man confronted the pastor. When the man deployed the name of Jesus Christ in the conversation the pastor's voice changed to that of another person. The man then asked the pastor if he wanted to be free from the demon. The pastor declined the offer saying that he rather liked the possession. He was removed from the pulpit not long after.

This is the reality of demons in our day. They hide in plain sight because we are doing their work for them. We are doing a fine job of killing our souls without his help. Satan can deploy his demons elsewhere. Hollywood deceives us into thinking that demons aren't mundane and hidden. They are fantastic, scary and obvious. Nothing could be further from the truth. Satan loves to do his diabolical work in the background. He loves nothing more than destroying a people using acedia — spiritual or mental sloth; apathy.

Paul says that our carnality has an effect on God. He writes, "It's because of this kind of thing that God is about to explode in anger." The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. We know that to be true as Christians. But do we live like we know it is true? Do we fear God?

I say, No. We don't fear Him.

Our horror movies are designed to make us fear demons. Our politicians want us to fear the "existential threat of climate change." Our churches ignore the issue of God's anger. The Bible is not without drama and judgment. And the human soul seems sensitive to God's surprises. For a couple weeks after 9/11 America went to church.

What would an explosion of God's anger look like today? Might He allow the dollar to collapse? Did you know that there's never been a Government-backed fiat currency that didn't inflate itself out of existence? If God allowed that ... if He exploded in anger with America by allowing our currency to be destroyed ... would we be able to respond to that as His judgment? Would we repent and turn from our wicked ways?

God allowed many European nations to exist under the atheist boot of communism for most of the twentieth century. As I said in yesterday's column Russia is responding to that by building three new churches a day. Poland rejected so-called "same sex marriage" recently. Christianity was the muscle behind the rejection.

We don't know the future. Only God knows the future. In the meantime we'd be well served by putting into practice Paul's admonition to the Christians living in Colossae two thousand years ago.

"Don't lie to one another. You're done with that old life. It's like a filthy set of ill-fitting clothes you've stripped off and put in the fire. Now you're dressed in a new wardrobe. Every item of your new way of life is custom-made by the Creator, with his label on it ... So, chosen by God for this new life of love, dress in the wardrobe God picked out for you: compassion, kindness, humility, quiet strength, discipline. Be even-tempered, content with second place, quick to forgive an offense. Forgive as quickly and completely as the Master forgave you. And regardless of what else you put on, wear love. It's your basic, all-purpose garment. Never be without it."

Amen.

All the scripture verses in this column are from the Message Bible by Eugene Peterson.