



Colossians 3:8–10 (ESV)

<sup>8</sup>But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. <sup>9</sup>Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices <sup>10</sup>and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.

## Paul Urged Believers to Reflect God's Image

Paul changed forever when Jesus appeared to him on the Road to Damascus. Paul saw Jesus in His glorious majesty. He saw something different in Jesus from what the disciples had seen as they walked through the countryside with Him. They had known Jesus before He died on the cross and rose again. Their experience with the risen Jesus was profound, but they had spent a great deal of time with Jesus before His death and resurrection.

Paul had a different perspective. He never knew Jesus as a man who dripped with sweat in the heat, grew hungry after a long journey, or asked for a drink of water. Paul only knew Jesus as the exalted, risen Lord, who sits at the right hand of God in Heaven (Romans 8:34, Colossians 3:1).

Because of Paul's unique perspective of Jesus, he emphasized that Jesus is the "last Adam" more than any other New Testament writer. Paul emphasized Jesus' ability to make believers reflect the glory and righteousness of Jesus. Jesus is the perfect image of God. Therefore, those who reflect Jesus' image are also reflecting the image of God.

In this study we will look at how Paul taught believers to:

- Put off the corrupted "image of God"
- Put on the perfect "image of God"
- Let Jesus shine in you

### Put Off the Corrupted "Image of God"

Those who believe in Jesus have removed the old, corrupted, sinful nature with its damaged image of God. Take a look at Colossians 3:8&9:

<sup>8</sup>But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. <sup>9</sup>Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices

Paul describes the identity of a sinful human being as “the old self” with its sinful behavior (Colossians 3:8&9). Like taking off a coat, a believer must “put ... away” and “put off” their old sinful “practices”. Think of a filthy, tattered coat that gives off a terrible smell. The only way to be free of its smell is to take it off and get rid of it.

How can a person who believes in Jesus put away or put off old, sinful actions? Jesus Christ, who had authority over all creation can use His power and authority create believers as new creatures. When Jesus “saves” believers He creates a new image of God in them so that they can reflect Jesus, who is the perfect image of God.

## Put on the Perfect “Image of God”

When Jesus died and rose again, He saved sinners by making them new again. Their corrupted image of God was made new. Because Jesus was the creator of the physical world, in which we live, He had the ability to begin a new creation, where those who receive His salvation, believing in Him, will be able to reflect the glory and righteousness of Jesus, the perfect image of God.

We now return to Paul’s metaphor about taking off an old, smelly coat. The believer’s next step must be to put on Jesus like a new coat. Take a look at Colossians 3:10:

<sup>10</sup>and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.

Paul says believers are to take off the old sinful self, and “put on the new self.” That new self is “being renewed in knowledge”. Fill yourself with the knowledge of who Jesus is! Believers must study the Bible, the word of God, and absorb the truth of who Jesus is. The Holy Spirit guides believers in their study of the scripture, but believers must first make the effort to read the Bible, including memorizing key verses that help them to overcome sin.

This “knowledge” isn’t merely head knowledge. Believers aren’t supposed to gain all this understanding so that they can win more arguments. The primary reason for believers to gain more knowledge of Jesus, is to be “renewed” in “the image of” their “creator,” Jesus the Son of God.

Just as God created Adam in His image, Jesus creates believers in His image. Jesus is the perfect, complete, full image of God – because He is the Son of God, who is God. That is how believers are able to come to reflect God’s glory, they become the image of Jesus, who is the perfect image of God.

Next, we will see how Paul describes this disciplined process of becoming more and more like Jesus in all we say and do.

## Let Jesus Shine in You

Believers are actually able to reflect Jesus’ presence in their lives. Paul says that when a person believes in Christ that a “veil is removed” (2 Corinthians 3:16). Moses’ face would glow with the glory of God when he was in the presence of God. But after a period of time his face would stop glowing. He started wearing a veil so that the people wouldn’t know when his face stopped glowing (Exodus 34:33&35). As a result, they never knew if Moses’ face was glowing or not.

Paul also refers to another veil that is mentioned in the Old Testament. In the Temple and in the Tabernacle, priests were separated from God’s presence by a veil. Paul is saying that for those who believe in Jesus there is no veil that separates them from God. However, Paul says, for the Jewish people who hear the words of Moses read in synagogues and in the Temple in Jerusalem, there is a veil that separates them. They have God’s word, but their lack of knowledge of Jesus prevents them from understanding God’s word. On the other hand, those who believe in Jesus Christ are transformed by their knowledge of Jesus (Colossians 3:10), and they dwell in the presence of God at all times. For those who believe in Jesus, there is no veil.

This leads to what Paul has to say in 1 Corinthians 4:1-6:

<sup>4</sup>Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. <sup>2</sup>But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God. <sup>3</sup>And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. <sup>4</sup>In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them

from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.<sup>5</sup> For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. <sup>6</sup> For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Paul does "not lose heart" because he knows that because of his ministry believers will be transformed and reflect the image of Christ. "We have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways". They will no longer "tamper with God's word." What they will do is "commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God." Believers know God is watching. They pray that God will awaken people to their sinfulness. If people do not already believe, they are told to seek the forgiveness of Christ, and receive His gift of salvation. If people do believe, they are told to confess their sin, and change their ways.

Paul recognizes that not everyone will accept his message. He says, that "even if our gospel is veiled" it is hidden only to those who don't believe. This is because "it is veiled to those who are perishing". If God has not called a person to come to Jesus the message of the Gospel will not make any sense. They won't understand it. Paul says that "the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God". Satan blinded them. Their idolatry of pleasing sinful desires, makes them unable to see the "light of the gospel." Paul says that the gospel is "the glory of Christ". The word glory refers to light shining. The "glory" and "light" of the Gospel is the "light" and "glory" of Christ. That's because the Gospel is how a person comes to have Jesus Christ's presence dwelling within them. It is proof that the image of God is working as it should. Jesus reflects the glory of God. Believers reflect the glory of Christ. That is only possible because the image of God in Jesus and in believers is functioning correctly.

We live in a world darkened by sin. But the light of Christ shines within us. His light "has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ". This is almost a repeat of what Paul said in Colossians 3:10. Believers know Jesus for who He is. By believing that Jesus is who He claims to be, the believers' knowledge of Christ and faith in Christ becomes the switch that turns on the light of Christ at work in their lives. Like Moses, who came before God without a veil, those who believe in Jesus, come to Him and see that His face is glowing. In turn the believer glows with the glory of Jesus.

When people say that they believe in Jesus Christ it should show. There should be an indication that the glory of Jesus is at work in their lives. They should talk in a way that reflects their relationship to Jesus. They should act in a way that reflects their relationship with Jesus. That doesn't mean they will never sin, but when they do sin, they will confess that sin and move on to obedience to God. What will be most evident in that person's life is the presence of Jesus Christ in what they say and do.

## Conclusion

Paul makes many statements about Jesus being the last Adam in the New Testament. He wants his readers to know that Jesus is the perfect image of God. The first Adam failed to reflect the image of God. In addition to being the perfect image of God, Jesus is also the Creator. Jesus existed before creation and created the heavens and the earth (Colossians 1:16&17). He has the power and authority to give believers the ability to reflect His image. Before believing in Jesus, believers were unable to reflect God's image. After believing in Jesus, they are able to reflect His image, the perfect, full image of God.

At the beginning of his letter to the church in Colossae Paul writes that Jesus is "the image of the invisible God" (Colossians 1:15). He goes on to say that in Jesus "all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell" (Colossians 1:19). Even though Adam and Eve had been created in the image of God, there never was any sense that the "fullness of God dwelled in" them. Not only did the fullness of God dwell in Jesus it was "pleased to dwell" in Him. Paul urges believers to take an active part in reflecting the reality of Jesus in their lives.

So, how are you doing with this? Are you showing by your words and actions that Jesus' light shines in your life? If His light is shining through you, then you are bearing the image of God well. People see Jesus in you. That glorifies God!

But if you realize that you aren't showing Jesus Christ at all, in anything that you do, then you need to come to Christ. You need to ask Him to forgive you for your sin. You need to ask Him to make you a new person so that you can reflect His presence in your life.

What if sometimes you reflect the presence of Jesus only some of the time? That means you are a work in progress. You know what you need to do because at least some of the time you are reflecting the reality of Jesus in your life. Confess your sins. Receive Jesus' gift of forgiveness. Let the next step you take be a step of obedience to God. Continue doing that. Jesus will be with you every step you take.



A artist's conception of Saul's vision of Jesus on the Road to Damascus, before his name was changed to Saul.

### **Colossians 3:8–10**

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(ESV)

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K	Y	N	L	R	S	R	L	P	S
U	K	N	O	W	L	E	D	G	E
G	H	N	K	M	A	H	U	N	C
U	T	I	C	W	N	T	B	I	I
E	U	S	N	R	D	O	W	E	T
I	O	B	S	C	E	N	E	E	C
I	M	O	Y	C	R	A	G	S	A
M	P	A	I	F	U	N	T	H	R
K	W	L	G	L	I	G	I	O	P
A	A	S	D	E	W	E	N	E	R
M	G	A	B	S	N	R	K	R	H

Paul explains that when a human being is born into this world the child that is born inherits “the image of the man of dust” (1 Corinthians 15:49). The man of dust, is Adam, whom “God formed the man of dust from the ground” (Genesis 2:7). Paul is pointing out that Adam was a sinner, and at birth we inherit his image, which is of a sinful human being. However, those who come to Christ “bear the image of the man of heaven” (1 Corinthians 15:49). Jesus fills the role that Adam filled, as the image bearer. Those who bear the image of Adam, will “die” (1 Corinthians 15:22). Those who bear the image of Christ, will “be made alive” (1 Corinthians 15:22). Through Adam “came death”, but through Christ “has come … the resurrection from the dead” (1 Corinthians 15:21).

As creatures who were created in God’s image, human beings have the potential to reflect the God’s glory. In the Old Testament, when Moses met with God on Mount Sinai, his face gave of light (Exodus 34:29, 30, 35; 2 Corinthians 3:7).

Christ now shines “in [the] hearts” of those who believe in Jesus. That gives believers “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Corinthians 4:6). Believers have the power of Jesus’ resurrection, a “treasure” in their frail bodies, which Paul calls “jars of clay” (2 Corinthians 4:7). Like Moses’ glowing face, believers glow with the presence of Christ, not by talking to God on a mountain, but by having Christ abiding within them.

Those who believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior carry with them, everywhere they go, the image of Jesus Christ. We become a “light of the world” when we carry the image of our Savior and God. We extend the boundaries of His Kingdom with us as we go into the world.

Paul experienced what it was like to show the glory of Jesus Christ in a sinful world. Speaking in terms of his everyday life of persecution for his faith, Paul says, “<sup>8</sup>We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; <sup>9</sup> persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; <sup>10</sup> always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. <sup>11</sup> For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus’ sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. <sup>12</sup> So death is at work in us, but life in you.” Or in other words, we are being created into a new person, having not only the potential to reflect God’s glory, but actually living out the experience of shining out with the glory of Christ within our hearts” (2 Corinthians 4:8-12, ESV).

Even when surrounded by opposition to God, believers have the power of the living Christ. By dying with Christ they experience the power of His resurrection delivering them from death to life. In everyday terms, they are knocked down “but not destroyed” (2 Corinthians 4:9).

We might like to think that life would be better if we did not have to suffer at all. But in this world, until Jesus returns, everyone will experience suffering. Those who believe in Jesus face this suffering with the knowledge that they are never alone, Christ has suffered before them. They also know that the day of Jesus’ return is coming, and then, suffering will end. In the meantime, they cling tightly to Jesus, who is their Savior.