

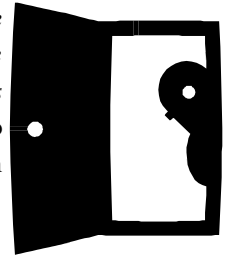


## OPEN DOORS

PETER BELLINGHAM

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(Colossians 3 NASB) *Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup>Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. <sup>3</sup>For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.* It's important to focus on things above. That is to say, to see things from God's perspective, through the eyes of faith and not just through the eyes of circumstance.



*<sup>4</sup>When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory. <sup>5</sup>Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. <sup>6</sup>For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience...* It says we have to consider the members of our earthly body as dead to sin. If you are born again, your old self, the sinful nature has already died in Christ. The power of sin in your life has been broken. You're no longer a slave to sin. You no longer have to practice sin in your life. But, the sinful nature always seeks to come into your life like a thief, and you have to choose not to allow it. Nearly every day we have opportunity to allow that thief into our life to make us sin. But these are also opportunities to decide to honor and obey God.

In Verse 5 we find a list of sinful attitudes and actions to which we need to consider ourselves dead. We mustn't permit these attitudes and actions to continue expressing themselves in our lives, or even tolerate them. What's on the list? Immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry.

"Passion" is included. Passion is not sin in and of itself. God made us to be emotional beings. Thank God that we can feel. Otherwise we'd be just like robots. Thank God for passion. The problem comes when our passions are out of order. In its right context, passion is a gift from God. But if our passions are out of order, it's sin, and for these things the wrath of God will come on the sons of disobedience.

On who will the wrath of God come? On the sons of disobedience. Is that us? No. If we have Christ, we are born again sons of God. We're not sons of disobedience. So the wrath of God isn't coming on us. But the discipline of God does come on us. He loves us. If we walk in sin, He disciplines us and allows us to suffer some consequences.

*<sup>7</sup>and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them.* You **once** lived and walked in sins like these. Past tense. Before you were born again. Now you shouldn't walk in these sins, because you're new.

Verse 8 gives another list of sinful behaviors. *But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth.* Aha. I wonder if we've fallen into one of these sins this week. It's possible. But what does God say? We have to put these things aside. "Anger, wrath." We could say, disorderly anger, because at times it's not wrong to be angry. It depends on the context. Jesus got angry with those who were selling things in the temple. He calmly made a whip, His whole being under control. And then He entered the temple and threw the sellers out. He got angry for His Father's honor. Not for selfish reasons. Anger can be righteous. But here, Paul is talking about disorderly anger, which we all know is wrong.

**IN WHOSE  
IMAGE HAVE  
WE BEEN  
REMADE?**

“Malice.” The dictionary defines malice as “a strong inclination to think or do harm. Desire to cause others to suffer.” Malice is sin.

“Slander, and abusive speech from your mouth.” The original Greek includes the meaning of blasphemy, that is, to speak ill of God. God gets angry and His wrath is coming on the sons of disobedience who practice this. As His sons, we should not speak ill of Him.

*<sup>9</sup>Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices, <sup>10</sup>and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him...* Don't lie to one another. When was the last time a dishonest word came out of your mouth? Be honest about this. Lying is sin. There are no excuses for dishonesty. If you want to be dishonest, God will discipline you.

So we have this list of sinful attitudes and behaviors. Why shouldn't we do these things? Because we've laid aside the old self, the sinful nature. And we've put on the new self. We are new people in Christ, and our new nature is one that does not practice these sins. Our character is no longer that way. These sins are like thieves. They are not part of who we are now.

Imagine I'm wearing a new shirt, clean and pressed. This shirt is like the new man. When I accepted Christ, he clothed me with this new being. I'm a new person. Here there is no dishonesty, no impurity, no malice, nothing like that. That's who I am now. When I get up in the morning, I don't even have to put the shirt of the new man on, because I'm already and always a new creation. But, from time to time, the old me, the thief, wants to express himself. He's like an old, ragged, stained shirt. And if I allow that thief in, it's like putting that old shirt on top of my new shirt. Beneath the old shirt, I'm still wearing the new one. I'm still a new creation, but for a time I'm allowing the old to express itself.

For example, over the years I have been tempted to disorderly anger, because before coming to Christ I was very prone to anger. Now I'm new, and anger doesn't have me as its slave, but from time to time something happens, and I want to get angry and react in a disorderly way. In those moments I decide, “No, that's not me anymore.” In fact this week I was driving and trying to get into a line of traffic, and a taxi driver didn't want to let me in, even though there was space for me to get in. I got angry with him in my heart. It wasn't wrong to feel the injustice of what he did. However, I felt like allowing that anger to get out of control, to follow him really closely, to get up beside him and shout something at him, as a form of revenge. I began to think like the old me. The temptation came and tried to trap me. But no! In that moment I remembered, “Lord, I'm a new person. Now I'm not controlled by anger. I'll let him go.” Thank God. That was a victory. I decided not to let that thief in; and if I had let him in, who knows what would have happened. At the least God would have disciplined me strongly.

But imagine that I did let that thief enter. I'm a new creation, but it would have been like clothing myself with the old for a moment. Ugly, right? Beneath that I would still be a new creation. We are still new creations, even while we are sinning. But when we sin, we allow the thief, the old man, to enter and we end up acting in a way that isn't according to who we are. When we sin, or perhaps afterwards, God shows us our failure. Thank God that we're new creations and we can easily repent because beneath our sin we are still new.

Verse 10 says that we are clothed with the new self, *who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him...* In whose image have we been remade? Christ's image. In the garden of Eden man was made in the image of God, but then fell into sin. The Bible calls Jesus “the last Adam” (1 Corinthians 15:45.) Born again people have been recreated in the image of the last Adam. We're made in the image of Christ, but it says here that we are being renewed to a true knowledge. We have to renew our minds so that we think increasingly as God wants us to think. Thus we will act more in accordance with who we are in Christ.

In Christ, this is <sup>11</sup>*a renewal in which there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all.* In Christ there is no distinction of persons. God doesn't focus on how much money people have, what nationality they are, where they were educated; He doesn't focus on any of that. He only focuses on this: whether or not a person is in Christ. In Him we're all the same. Our characters are different, thank God, but we have the same importance.

<sup>12</sup>*So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience...* It says, "holy and beloved." You are holy if you're in Christ. You're already a saint. And loved. Holy and beloved. **In spite of all your problems and struggles, you are holy and beloved.** It's important to believe that. And here we have a list of good characteristics. We've read the bad ones, now we have the good ones. "Compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience."

<sup>13</sup>*bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.* <sup>14</sup>*Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.* <sup>15</sup>*Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful.* Here Paul speaks of compassion, kindness, peace, love. These are excellent characteristics, but how can we possibly live in them? **They are already ours.**

Take note, in Christ, you are already compassionate. You are already patient. You already have a forgiving character. You are already loving in Christ. Because you are a new creation made in His image, and He is all those things. Amen? As you walk with Jesus, these fruits will come forth in your life. Given the right conditions, an apple tree will bear apples. We have to make sure our life has the right conditions. Relationship and fellowship with Jesus. Obedience to Him. And these fruits, which are already ours, will show up in our lives.

Are you patient? Please be honest. I'm not patient, in my old man. There is no patience in my old nature. But my old nature died, didn't it? Now I'm a new creature. I'm in Christ. He's patient! Christ is patient, and He lives in me! So in Him I am also patient. I've been recreated in His image. But perhaps I didn't show patience in a given situation. Why? Because I allowed the thief to come in. But I repented for having let him in. I'm a new creation, and in Christ I am patient.

When you read in the New Testament about patience, love, perseverance, and all those good characteristics, understand that **in Christ these characteristics are already yours.** They are part of who you are. From now on, when you read the New Testament and it speaks of good characteristics, read it with this attitude, "Jesus, thanks to You, I am already all these things." And when you read lists of sins, read them like this, "Thank you Lord that in my old man I was all these things, but no longer. Now I am new." And when, from time to time, you allow that thief to enter, remember that he is not part of who you are. He is the old nature, which died in Christ on the cross. It's easy to repent when you accept that you are always a new creation.

Neither do you have to try to be more patient. Why? Well, in Christ you are already patient. What you do have to do is **believe** that in Him you are already patient, and so **allow** that characteristic to express itself in your life. When we think about God's desire for holiness in our lives, we think of it like the summit of an enormous mountain in front of us that we have to climb. "Man, that mountain that I have to try to climb! I always fail and fall down!." But **that's not how things are.** In reality we are already on the summit of the mountain, because we are in Christ and He fulfilled the law of God. God's holiness has been fulfilled in Him; He lives in us and us in Him. In Him, we are on the summit of the mountain. We are already saints in Him. Our part is to allow His holiness to express itself in our daily life. For example, allowing His patience to express itself. In Christ I already had the ability to handle correctly the situation with the taxi driver. I just had to say "no" to the thief and allow Christ to express Himself through me.

**ARE THERE  
SOME OPEN  
DOORS IN  
YOUR LIFE?**

God wants to manifest His Son in your life. Not tomorrow, but right now. Thinking in terms of the mountain, you might say, “Well, I suppose in the future I’ll make it to the summit and then I’ll be who God wants me to be...” No, no, no. You can’t avoid responsibility like that. **Right this moment, you are on the summit and you need to allow the Son of God to express Himself in your attitudes, actions and life.**

Finally, we’ve spoken about the thief, the old nature, and how it comes in because we’ve left a door open. **At times sin enters our life at times because we’ve left a door open.** What do I mean when I talk about open doors? What kinds of doors might we be leaving open?

Even though Christ has set us free and we’re no longer slaves to sin, there are some areas of our lives that still exercise some kind of dominion over us. Some of us have bad habits. For example, perhaps you’re in the habit of speaking unkindly to others. That’s a habit. It doesn’t mean that you are still the old you. It means that for years you’ve allowed yourself to speak unkindly to others, so it’s become a habit. Or perhaps you’re in the habit of reacting out of frustration rather than acting out of faith. These habits can be open doors in your life for the thief to come in.

We have to lay aside these habits. How? Through our daily decisions. I used to be in the habit of getting angry a lot and saying bad things to people. Christ broke the power of that in my life, but the memory of that way of living stayed with me. So I had to renew my mind in that area, and at times I still have to decide not to let the thief enter; to keep the door shut.

Our way of thinking can also be an open door. For example, in some cultures, lying is very common. And if someone is raised in a culture like that, he may just lie without even thinking about it. It’s a habit based on a certain way of thinking, but it’s still sin and part of the old nature. So what should we do about that kind of thing? Renew our minds. Come to understand that in God’s perspective, lying is completely unacceptable. Allow the honesty of God to begin to express itself in our lives instead of lying. That’s how we shut the door. Amen?

Are there some open doors in your life? Very possibly. I’m not saying you should search around in your life trying to find them. But, allow God to show you if there are areas in which you have open doors. Some of them may have been open for a long time. If you open your heart to Him, He’ll show you them so you can shut them and not allow the thief to go on stealing from you; because the thief comes with one purpose: to steal, kill and destroy.

At times we need help to identify and close our open doors. At times I’ve needed help like that. I haven’t known how to find or shut the door on my own. So ask God for help, and don’t be afraid to ask us also.

You and I are new creations, holy and beloved. In Christ we are already patient, loving, and strong in what is right. These characteristics are ours in Christ. Sin comes from the old nature; we have to consider ourselves dead to it. We are already dead to it, but we have to choose not to allow the thief to come in, and instead allow our new nature to express itself.

You’re already on the summit of the mountain, and God wants to express Himself daily through who you are. Shut those doors, and rejoice in your communion with Christ inside your new house!

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MINISTERIO LA FUENTE

Email: [info@ministeriolafuente.org](mailto:info@ministeriolafuente.org)

Website: [www.ministeriolafuente.org](http://www.ministeriolafuente.org)

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“IF ANYONE THIRST, LET THEM COME TO ME AND DRINK”- JESUS  
(JOHN 7:37)