

# Putting on Christ

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You must despair of purging the flesh or natural man of its sinful lusts and inclinations, and of practicing holiness by willing and resolving to do the best you can in *your own power*, and by trusting in the grace of God and Christ to help you in such resolutions and endeavors. Rather, resolve to trust in Christ “to work in you to will and to do by *His own power*, according to His own good pleasure.” (Phi. 2:13) Those who are convinced of their own sin and misery, commonly think *first* to tame the flesh, and to subdue and root out its lusts — to make their *corrupt* nature into a *better* nature, and more inclined to holiness, by their struggling and wrestling with it. And if they can but bring their hearts to a full purpose and resolution to do the best they can, they hope that by such a resolution, they will be able to achieve great enterprises in the conquest of their lusts, and performing the most difficult duties. It is the great work of some zealous divines, in their preaching and writings, to stir people up to this resolution, in which they place the most important point on turning from sin to godliness. They think this isn’t contrary to the life of faith, because they trust in the grace of God, through Christ, to help them in all such resolutions and endeavors. Thus they endeavor to reform their old state, and to be made perfect *in the flesh*, instead of putting it off, and walking according to *the new state in Christ*. They trust in low carnal things for holiness, and on acts of their own will, on their own purposes, resolutions, and endeavors, instead of Christ. And so, they trust in Christ to help them in this carnal way.

Whereas, true faith would teach them that they are nothing, and that they labor in vain. They may as well wash the Ethiopian white, as to purge the flesh or natural man from its evil lusts, and make it pure and holy. It is desperately wicked, past all cure. It will unavoidably lust against the Spirit of God, even in the best saints on earth (Gal. 5:17). Its mind is enmity to the law of God; it neither is, nor can be subject to it (Rom. 8:7). Those who would cure it and make it holy by their own resolutions and endeavors, act quite contrary to the design of Christ’s death. For He died, not that the flesh, or old natural man, might be made holy, but that it might be *crucified*, and *destroyed* out of us (Rom. 6:6). He died that we might live to God — not to ourselves, nor by any natural power of our own resolutions and endeavors, but by Christ living in us, and by His Spirit bringing forth the fruits of righteousness in us (Gal. 2:20; 5:24-25). Therefore, we must be content to leave the natural man vile and wicked, just as we found it, until it is utterly abolished by death. Yet, we must not *allow* its wickedness, but rather groan to be delivered from this body of death, thanking God that there is a deliverance through Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom. 7:24-25).

Our way to mortify sinful affections and lusts must not be by purging them out of the flesh, but by putting off the flesh itself, and getting above *into Christ*, by faith; and by walking in that new nature that is by Him. Thus “the way of life is above to the wise, that he may depart from hell beneath” (Prov. 15:24). Our willing, resolving, and endeavoring must be to do the best, *not* that lies in ourselves or in our own power, but that Christ and the power of His Spirit are pleased to work in us. “For in us (that is, in our flesh) there dwells no good thing” (Rom.

7:18). We have great ground to trust in God and Christ for help in such resolutions and endeavors after holiness, as things that are agreeable to the design of Christ in our redemption, and to the way of *acting* and *living* by faith. It is likely that Peter sincerely resolved to die with Christ, rather than deny Him, and to do all that he could by his own power for that end — but Christ made him quickly see the weakness and vanity of such resolutions. And we see by experience, what many resolutions made in sickness and other dangers mostly come to. It is not enough for us to trust in Christ to help us to act and endeavor only so far as creatures; for so the *worst* of men are helped. He is the JEHOVAH in whom they live, move, and have their being (Acts 17:28). And it is as likely that the Pharisee would trust in God to help him in his duty, as he would thank God for the performance of his duty (Luk. 18:11). And this is all the faith that many make use of for a holy practice.

But we must trust in Christ to enable us *above* the strength of our own natural power, by virtue of the new nature which we have in Christ, and by His Spirit dwelling and working in us. Or else our best endeavors will be altogether sinful, and mere hypocrisy, notwithstanding all the help for which we trust upon Him. We must also take heed of depending for holiness upon any resolution to walk in Christ, or any written covenants, or any holiness that we have already received. For we must know that the virtue of these things continues no longer than we continue walking in Christ, and Christ in us. They must be kept up by the continual presence of Christ in us, just as light is maintained by the presence of the sun, and cannot subsist without it.