

Colossians 3:1-17

To encourage his readers to turn away from their false teachers, Paul reminded them of their union with Christ.

What is the Christian's position (v. 1a)? God raised us with Christ, and we are already as good as seated with Him in heaven. We have said goodbye to the former way of life, and have entered upon a completely new type of life, that is, the life of the risen Lord Jesus Christ. Knowing this should be our prime motivator to follow the urging of vv. 1-2.

Since we have been raised with Christ, what is Paul's practical encouragement (vv. 1b-2)? We should "keep seeking" heavenly things; keep looking up (Hebrews 12:1-2). This posture needs to be continual and intentional – focusing our hearts and minds on the "*things above*" (of heaven, i.e. our spiritual blessings, our hope, our Savior's desires, etc.), rather than on the things that are only physical and of this earth. The "things above" should occupy a large place in our thought lives. We are still on earth, but we should be cultivating heavenly ways while we are here.

What is Paul's reminder (v. 3)? We died with Christ to the past. We have now embarked on a new life.....a life that is "hidden" with Christ. To have one's life hidden with Christ implies that it is not seen by others. This explains why those outside of Christ fail to understand what's going on with the child of God. They often think we are strange or fanatical or foolish (1 Corinthians 2:14) because we do not live like they do.

When Christ appears, at the Rapture, what will happen to us (v. 4)? We will also appear..... *we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is* (1 John 3:2). The Rapture will be a glorious revelation of Christ to us, but it will also reveal us in our new glorified bodies. Now our eternal life is hidden (v. 3), but then it will be revealed.

What does Paul tell the Colossians to do with those things that belong to our earthly nature (v. 5). On the basis of their new position in Christ, Paul urged his readers to separate from the practices of their former way of life. Put them to death. To put something to death is not the same as being strong and practicing self-denial. Christian self-control says that I can subdue the flesh only by relying on the Holy Spirit to empower me to deny its desires.

What observations do you have about the list of sins (v. 5)? It starts by identifying and condemning various forms of sexual sin which are then traced back to the covetous, idolatrous heart of man. Most every sin is basically selfishness; the worship of self instead of the worship of God; the substitution of self for Christ in one's affections.

What is the end result of these sins (v. 6)? The wrath of God is coming. God is relentlessly opposed to sin and will always ensure that it is justly punished. Our God is a "just" God. Men think that they can commit these outrageous sins and escape punishment. The heavens seem to be silent, as man increases in his deviant behavior. But God is not mocked. The wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23).

What does he remind the Colossians of (v. 7)? This is the way you used to live. They once had indulged in these sins before their conversion. That was a chapter in their life which was now covered by the blood of Christ. They now had a new life which empowered them to live for God.¹

What does Paul call his readers to do (vv. 8-10a)? Since they had been redeemed at such a tremendous cost, they should now get rid of all the following types of wicked hatred. Repulsive vices—anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language—do not fit or suit Christians. They are unbecoming to believers (Ephesians 4:17, 31).² At the moment of salvation they discarded their old self (the former sinful way of living) (2:11) with its practices and have put on the new self.....their new position as children of God.

How is the new self being renewed (v. 10b)? In knowledge (1:9; 2:2). This takes place as a believer comes to a personal, deep knowledge of and fellowship with Christ. And the renewal is in the image of its Creator (Romans 12:2). God's purpose is that this new man should always be growing more and more like the Lord Jesus Christ (Ephesians' 4:24).

What does Christ transcend (v. 11)? All barriers. There is no national, religious, cultural, social or racial "distinction" that makes a person more (or less) acceptable to God. He indwells every believer and permeates all the relationships of life.

What motivation and guidance does Paul give to the Christian community (vv. 12-14)? Because of who you are.....not only have you been chosen by God, but you are holy and dearly loved! Holy means sanctified, or set apart to God, from the world. And because of your standing before God, a certain level of behavior is expected of you; you must put forth every effort to live the godly life (Philippians 2:12).

Paul describes the Christian attributes and attitudes which we are to put on as a garment: **Which are what (v. 12)?** Compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Note the overlap with the Fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). We could entitle this verse as: "What the Well-Dressed Christian Will Wear This Year."

Note: All these features deal with the believer's interpersonal relationships which should help to define our focus.

Paul addresses the Colossians as "*God's chosen people*." This refers to the fact that they had been chosen for salvation by God in Christ before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4). God's electing grace is one of the mysteries of divine revelation. We believe the Scriptures clearly teach that God, in His sovereignty, has chosen men to belong to Christ. We do not believe that God has ever chosen anyone to be damned. Such a teaching is directly contrary to Scripture. Just as we believe in God's electing grace, we also believe in man's responsibility. God does not save men against their will. The same Bible that says "*chosen according to the foreknowledge of God*" also says "*everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved*."

Furthermore, believers are to do what (v. 13)? Bear with each other (i.e. put up with each other) -- with the attitudes just mentioned in v. 12. Be patient with the failings and odd ways of our fellow believers. Also, believers are to forgive one another. **How?** By forgiving just as the Lord forgave them -- graciously and freely (Ephesians 4:32). Grudges have no place in a Christian's life because they can lead to the sins described in vv. 8-9.

There are few disputes among the people of God which could not be solved quickly if these instructions were followed by both the offender and the offended. But pride often gets in the way.

How is love described (v. 14)? It is spoken of as the outer garment. Over all these virtues Christians are to put on love. "*The greatest of these is love*" (1 Corinthians 13:13). In one's catalog of virtues, love should be the cover; it is of supreme importance because it binds and holds all the other virtues together in perfect unity.

What virtues does Paul emphasize (v. 15)? The peace of God..... both as individuals and also in the church. This peace, which Christ has called us to, should rule in our hearts (Philippians 4:6).

This verse is especially helpful when seeking guidance from the Lord. If the Lord really wants you to embark upon a certain course of action, He will most assuredly give you peace about it. If you do not have that peace, then you should not proceed. As has been said: "Darkness about going is light about staying."³

Be thankful.....note that thankfulness is a grace to be cultivated (1 Thessalonians 5:18). We are responsible to be thankful. An attitude of gratitude is linked closely to an enjoyment of peace.

How does Paul urge us to embrace the teachings of Christ (v. 16)? His word should saturate our hearts and minds which in turn should overflow in our teaching and admonishing one another. Teaching has to do with doctrine, whereas admonishing has to do with duty. We owe it to our brothers and sisters in Christ to share our knowledge of the Scripture with them. And our worship should flow from a heart of gratitude to God.

What should be our end game in doing good (v. 17)? "*Whatever you do*" whether the words we speak or the deeds we do, there is no sacred-secular split in God's eyes; we are called to be the same people of God whether at home, at work or at leisure. Paul's repetitive emphasis to be thankful is a continuous duty for those saved by grace and destined for heaven. "What would Jesus do?" is an all-inclusive rule by which to judge our conduct as Christians.

¹ MacDonald, W. (1995). *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*. (A. Farstad, Ed.) (p. 2009). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

² Geisler, N. L. Colossians, in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*: J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 681.

³ MacDonald, W. (1995). *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*. (A. Farstad, Ed.) (p. 2011). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.