



CALL TO SUBMIT AND SERVE CHRIST IN NEWNESS OF LIFE -- CHAPTER 3

INTRODUCTION

Paul has patiently presented the truth of the gospel message and the greatness of Jesus Christ. He has carefully countered the false teachings which threatened to lead the Colossian Christians astray. He has proclaimed Christ and taught with all wisdom (Colossians 1:28) so that his readers might have a thorough understanding of their position in Him and be filled with the knowledge of God's will for them (Colossians 1:9). Now he is ready to turn to practical matters and admonish his readers to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord (Colossians 1:10).

Chapter 2 explained the very real change which takes place in a life when one becomes a Christian. The emptiness within is made full (Colossians 2:10); the natural tendency toward sin is eliminated because one's heart has been changed (Colossians 2:11). We are raised out of the deadness of disobedience and seated with Christ in the heavenly places (Colossians 2:12 and Ephesians 2:6). Our sins are forgiven and we are made truly alive (Colossians 2:13). It is only natural for such a drastically changed person to exhibit a drastically changed life because he or she desires to experience that new life in all its fullness. In chapter 3, Paul explains how one leads such a life, walking in a manner worthy of the Lord. Paul calls his readers to focus their thoughts and endeavors on things above rather than on the earth, to display Christian virtues in their lives, and to please the Lord in all they do. As you read and study this chapter, will you examine your own Christian walk and ask God to give you wisdom and the will to apply these exhortations to yourself.

OUTLINE OF COLOSSIANS 3

- I. Aim for Heaven - Colossians 3:1-11
- II. Reflect the Character of Christ - Colossians 3:12-16
- III. Always Live to Please the Lord - Colossians 3:17 —25 & 4:1

I. Aim for Heaven - Colossians 3:1-11

In his letter to the Romans, Paul wrote, Do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life (Romans 6:3-4). In Colossians, Paul has again stressed the truth

that believers are buried with Christ in His baptism and raised up with Him through the power of God (Colossians 2:12). In Colossians 3:1, he expresses the logic of the practical side of that miraculous work. If you have been raised up with Christ, you should also walk in newness of life, desiring to be all that God wants you to be. The only way to do so is to keep your mind and actions centered on your goal. Just as a runner keeps his eye on the finish line and strives for that finish line, never slowing or giving into distraction until safely on the other side, so Christians are to *run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith* (Hebrews 12:1-2).

A. Seek the Things Above - Colossians 3:1

The Greek word for seek expresses a "striving after." Christians are called to continually strive after those things which are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God (Psalm 110:1; Luke 22:69; Acts 2:33; Acts 5:31; Romans 8:34; Ephesians 1:20; Hebrews 1:3 and 8:1; 1 Peter 3:22).

B. Set Your Mind on Things Above - Colossians 3:2-4

As a Christian, your mind is not to dwell upon and long for earthly things but rather for heavenly things.

1. Christ is your life - 3:2-4a

You have been raised up with Christ, your proper place is with Him, and your life is with Him (Colossians 3:3). In fact, He is your life (3:4). Jesus said, I am the resurrection and the life (John 11:25). The apostle John said, *He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life* (1 John 5:12). Life comes only through Jesus Christ, so you are to live as though He were the center of your universe — because He is. Is your heart's desire so set on Him that He is constantly the center of your thoughts and the reason for your actions? What difference does this make in how you make decisions? How does it show in practical ways in your life?

2. Christ is your hope - 3:4b

When He comes again, those whose lives are hidden with Christ in God (Colossians 3:3) will appear with Him in glory. This is the great hope of all believers — to be together with Christ forever.

C. Put On the New Man - Colossians 3:5-11

When a person believes and turns from sin to trust Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, he or she becomes a new person. *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new* (2 Corinthians 5:17). Although we still live in the same old world, our lives are *hidden with Christ in God* (Colossians 3:3). We belong to Christ and His kingdom and we are to live lives which express our new existence. Paul says believers have, *put off the old man with his deeds* (Colossians 3:9), and have *put on the new man* (3:10). Paul wants us to consider our lives as they were before Christ and lay those old lives aside in favor of the new which is longing to be actualized in us by the power of the Holy Spirit.

1. Consider your earthly self to be dead - 3:5

All the old attitudes and actions do not belong to the new man. To indulge in them is idolatry. Those who practice such things as Paul lists: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire and covetousness do not belong to the kingdom of God (Ephesians 5:5).

2. Consider the result of idolatry - 3:6

Indulgence in idolatry brings the wrath of God. *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness* (Romans 1:18).

3. Consider your past life - 3:7-9

These things were a part of your past life before you came to Christ. Then, you walked the way of the world but now you are to put aside the old and walk in newness of life (Romans 6:4). You are to *cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light* (Romans 13:12); *Lay aside every weight and the sin which so easily ensnares and run the race with endurance* (Hebrews 12:1); *Lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness* (James 1:21).

Paul stresses the sins of the tongue which manifest themselves in anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language, and lying. These evil practices have been laid aside. They have been put off as one throws off a article of dirty clothing. The old sinful lifestyle has no place in the new life in Christ. It has been done away with because it is a part of the *old man*. *Our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin* (Romans 6:6).

4. You are being renewed - 3:10-11

The *new man* has been put on and is complete, but

not yet fully actualized because the new man dwells in the flesh of the human body. "The flesh will continually dangle the garments of the old self in front of the new man and urge him to put them on. The battle against the flesh will go on throughout this life." (The MacArthur New Testament Commentary, "Colossians and Philemon," John MacArthur) The new man must be in the process of continuous renewal.

a. Renewed to a true knowledge - 3:10

The renewal takes place as the believer comes into a true and personal knowledge of Jesus Christ. The expression *true knowledge* refers to knowledge in Christ (Colossians 2:2-3). It stands in contrast to the false knowledge of those who taught *philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ* (Colossians 2:8).

b. Renewed according to the image of the Creator - 3:10

The goal of the renewal is to make the believer like his Creator. Genesis 1:26 states that God created man in His image. However, this image was defiled by Adam's sin. All human beings, as descendants of Adam, inherit the defiled image of their earthly father. One must be *born again* (John 3:3) to be renewed to the image of God.

c. Renewed to unity - 3:11

For those who are in Christ, all distinctions are removed. Those who were formerly separated by nationality, religion, culture, or social position are now one in Christ. He shows no partiality (Galatians 2:6). The believer with a high reputation and social standing is on the same ground as the believing Scythian who was the lowest of the low and said to be more barbarous than the barbarians.

All are one in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:28). He is all that matters because He is all and He is in all.

II. Reflect the Character of Christ - Colossians 3:12-16

Those who have been buried and raised with Christ, made alive with Him through the forgiveness of all their sins (Colossians 2:13 and 3:1), and have put on the new man (3:10) are to reflect the character of the One who lives in them (3:11: Christ is all and in all). Those are the ones who have been chosen of God (the elect) and are holy (set apart or separated to God) and beloved by Him. *Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love* (Ephesians 1:4). Do you have confidence that you are one of the chosen,

beloved by God, and seen as holy in His eyes? If you are not sure, would you ask your discussion leader for a Disciplers "Confidence Letter" which explains how you can know for sure that you are included in the ones Paul addresses in Colossians 3:12. The chosen of God are to reflect Christ's character by displaying Christian virtues in their lives.

A. Put on a Heart of Compassion (NASB) -
Colossians 3:12

God is a God of compassion, as recorded in Deuteronomy 4:31; Nehemiah 9:17; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2 and James 5:11. The Gospels record Jesus' compassion for people in Matthew 9:36; 14:14 and 15:32-38. Do you have compassion toward those who are suffering around you? How do you reach out in kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience to help meet the needs of those who are hurting and are like sheep without a shepherd (Matthew 9:36)?

B. Bear With One Another - Colossians 3:13

Put up with each other. Endure. In Ephesians 4:2, Paul calls believers to act toward one another, *with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*. This means forgiving others just as Christ forgave you. Christ is our example of forgiveness. He gave His life that our sins might be forgiven (Ephesians 1:7). He also taught the necessity of forgiving others. See Matthew 18:21-35. How patient, gentle and forgiving are you with others?

C. Put on love - Colossians 3:14

In 1 Corinthians 13:13, Paul wrote *the greatest of these is love*. Love is the highest of the virtues. It is the wellspring of all other virtues. It is the glue which binds all other virtues together.

D. Let the Peace of God Rule in your Hearts -
Colossians 3:15

Christians are one body, the church (Colossians 1:18), with Christ as the head. Therefore, we are called to peace with Christ and with one another. Christ's peace is to rule in all areas of our personal and corporate life.

E. Be Thankful - Colossians 3:15

Paul has filled his letter with reasons for Christians to be grateful to God. We should give thanks to God for our share in the great inheritance which is ours (Colossians 1:12). We should be overflowing with gratitude for all we have in Christ (Colossians 2:7). We are to *be anxious for nothing* (Philippians 4:6) *but in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Jesus Christ for*

you (1 Thessalonians 5:18). The fleeting troubles and annoyances of this world are very small in comparison to the overwhelming eternal blessings we have in Jesus Christ. Even the people and circumstances in our lives which seem the most difficult are being used by God to renew us and conform us to the image of His Son. We know that *all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose* (Romans 8:28). Will you therefore give *thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ* (Ephesians 5:20)?

F. Let the Word of Christ Dwell in You -
Colossians 3:16

The words of Christ are recorded in the gospels. They are words of life to the soul and should be treasured by those who love and follow Him. The Colossians needed to be reminded to immerse themselves in the word of Christ, which had been taught them, rather than follow after the words of false teachers.

1. Let it dwell richly - Colossians 3:16

All believers are called to read, study, and meditate upon the Word of Christ and the entire Word of God so that it dwells richly within (*abides in us*) (1 John 2:14). The Word should be so much within us that we are rich with it. Just as a millionaire is rich with money, a Christian is to be rich with the word.

2. In all wisdom - 3:16

A Christian who is rich with the word overflows with the wisdom from above and desires to share the word with others, teaching, warning, and reminding them of their responsibilities as believers. Christians who are filled with the word overflow from the heart with praise and thanksgiving to God. They love to sing songs which please and glorify Him — psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.

3. Application

How much time do you spend reading, studying, memorizing, and meditating on God's word? Does the word dwell in you so abundantly that you overflow with thankfulness in your heart to God? Do you share the wisdom from God's word with others? Will you share what you are learning with someone this week?

**III. Always Live to Please the Lord -
Colossians 3:17-25 and 4:1**

Every word spoken and every deed done is to be in the name of the Lord Jesus. Whatever work God has given you to do, do it with thankfulness in Jesus' name. Whether you are a corporate executive or a carpenter,

a movie star or a single mom; whatever you do, thank God in Jesus' name for the work He has given you to do. Then work to please the Lord.

A. Live to Please the Lord in the Home -
Colossians 3:18-21

Paul first deals with relationships in families.

1. Wives, submit to your own husbands -
Colossians 3:18

The husband is head of the wife, just as Christ is head of the church. Therefore, wives are to be subject to their husbands as the church is subject to Christ (Ephesians 5:22-24). Wives are to behave as is fitting in the Lord, meaning that a wife's duty is to demonstrate the kind of behavior that is suitable and proper in God's sight.

2. Husbands, love your wives - Colossians
3:19

Husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it. They are to love their wives as they love their own bodies and so nourish and cherish them (Ephesians 5:25, 28,29). A husband who loves his wife in this way will not be able to harbor bitterness in his heart toward her.

3. Children, obey your parents - Colossians
3:20

Perhaps this should be one of the first Scripture verses that children memorize. Children should know from an early age that it is God's will for them to obey their parents. Obedience to parents is pleasing to the Lord and disobedience to parents is rebellion against Him. Just as submission of the wife and loving authority of the husband are part of God's plan for order in the family, the children's obedience is necessary to that order. The fifth commandment is, *Honor your father and mother* (Exodus 20:12), and it is the first commandment with a promise: *that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth* (Ephesians 6:3).

4. Fathers, do not provoke your children -
Colossians 3:21

Only fathers are mentioned here because fathers are the head of the home, but the same principle would apply to mothers as well. See Proverbs 1:8 and 6:20. Parents are not to tease or irritate their children so as to stir up evil emotions within them. This only discourages their love for the Lord. Rather, parents are to bring their children up in the *training and admonition of the Lord* (Ephesians 6:4). Are you faithful to teach your children God's word and to set an example for them in all you do and say? How do your words and actions

encourage your children (and grandchildren) to seek and love the Lord?

B. Live to Please the Lord in the World -
Colossians 3:22-25 & 4:1

The next six verses deal with work ethic and relationships in the workplace. Paul addresses servants and masters, but his words could just as well apply to employees and employers today.

1. Servants (employees), obey in all things -
Colossians 3:22-25

Employees are to do the job that is expected of them at all times, not just when the boss is watching. God is always watching. We are to work for Him (Colossians 3:17), sincerely, reverently, and heartily. Paychecks may come from employers, but those who serve Christ have their true reward from the Lord. The Christian's reward is the inheritance which Paul has already mentioned in Colossians 1:12, *the inheritance of the saints in the light*. It is an inheritance which is *Incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved for you in heaven* (1 Peter 1:4).

The negative side is that those who do wrong will also be repaid. God shows no favoritism. Each one will receive full justice. Whatever you sow, you will surely reap (2 Corinthians 9:6 and Galatians 6:7). What kind of employee are you? Are you one who clocks in late and leaves early if no one is watching? Do you take long lunches if the boss is out? Do you spend your employer's time and money on personal phone calls at work? Are you lazy or sloppy in your work? Or do you work your hardest and do your best? Do you work to please the Lord in all you do?

2. Masters (employers), give your servants
what is just and fair - Colossians 4:1

Slaves and masters (employees and employers) are equal in the eyes of God (Colossians 3:11). He is the master of both. Employers are to treat those under them just as their Master in heaven treats them, with justice and fairness.

Applications

1. How has your life changed since you became a Christian? What changes still need to take place in your life as far as seeking, setting your mind on, and serving the Lord?
2. How do your family and work relationships need to change to make them pleasing unto the Lord?
3. Do you put your whole heart into your work and do it for the Lord rather than for other people? How is this evident?