

## Paul's Letter to the Colossians

### Chapter 3

*3 Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. 3 For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.*

In verses 1 and 2, Paul tells the Colossian Christians something very similar to what Jesus said in Matthew 6:19-21. Don't make things on Earth important but focus on things of Heaven. Paul says "Heaven is where Jesus is sitting at the right hand of God."

"The believer is to 'seek the things... above.' The word 'seek' marks aspiration, desire, and passion... In order to seek these things the mind must be set on them." (Morgan)

"Love heavenly things; study them; let your hearts be entirely engrossed by them. Now, that you are converted to God, act in reference to heavenly things as ye did formerly in reference to those of earth." (Clarke)

In verse 3, Paul says that as believers we have died. This is the same thing he said in verse 20 of the last chapter, "*If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as though you still belonged to the world, do you submit to its rules*". In Galatians 2:20, Paul wrote, "*I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*"

He continues in verse 3 that when we accepted Jesus as our Savior (died in Christ), then we "*will be hidden with Christ in God.*" What? In Philippians 1:21, Paul says "*For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.*" And in Galatians 2:20, he writes "*I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.*" Remember your old self is gone, our goal as Christians is for others to see Christ when they look at us. Pastor Mickey used the illustration of being seen through "Christ-colored glasses" whether by others or by God.

Anders says that when we are in Christ then we have security. The kind that Jesus talks about in John 10:28-29. "*28 I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. 29 My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand.*" How much more secure can you be than in the hand of God?

Verse 4 says that when Christ appears in His second coming, we will be with Him. Revelation 19 tells us that as believers, we will be with Jesus and we will be riding white horses. 1 John 3:2-3 tells us. "*2 Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. 3 All who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.*"

Anders says, “The term ‘hidden’ (kekruptai) can also mean “concealed, unseen.” This means that the believer's life is unknown or not understood by the watching world (compare 1 John 3:1–2). The unseen realities will be revealed.”

*5 Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. 6 Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. 7 You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. 8 But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. 9 Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices 10 and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. 11 Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.*

The first 4 verses of this chapter have been concerned with putting off the old self. The old self was sinful and in verse 5 Paul lists some of those sins. “*sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.*” In Galatians 5:19-21 many of these same sins make up the “acts of the flesh” list. “*sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; 20 idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions 21 and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like.*”

In Galatians 5, Paul says that these acts of the flesh will prevent you from inheriting “*the kingdom of God.*” In verses 6 and 7 of Colossians 3, Paul says “You don’t want to face the wrath of God.” This is the same cup that Jesus did not want to face when He prayed in the Garden. It is the same wrath that Pastor Brian has been preaching about in Revelation.

In verse 7, Paul says “Since you are a new person or creation (2 Corinthians 5:17) in Christ, you should not be behaving like you used to.” This makes me think of a Southern Gospel classic sung by the Cathedrals, “Thanks to Calvary. I don’t come here anymore.”

In verse 8, Paul lists the behaviors from the old life that cause you problems in the new life. He says, “*get rid of anger, rage, malicious behavior, slander, and dirty language. 9 Don’t lie to each other, for you have stripped off your old sinful nature and all its wicked deeds.*” Now Paul recognizes that we are only human. He struggles with letting his humanness or his sin nature come out. Read Romans 7:15-20.

Paul realizes that you have a battle going on inside you. He wrote in Galatians 5:17 “*For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want.*” Bring out the WWJD bracelet to remind you to filter what you want to do, so you can do what Jesus would do.

Since Paul is a new man then he is renewed. Guzik says that since we are a new person/man, “Because the new man is renewed in knowledge, he is hungry to know what *God* says in His Word.” We will want to be like Jesus. We also want that personal relationship with Him.

In verse 11, Paul says the same thing that he did to the Galatian church in Galatians 3:26-29. “26 *So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, 27 for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.*” These verses mean that all people are equal in the eyes of God and have the same right to salvation. Verse 11 ends with “*Christ is all that matters, and he lives in all of us.*” (NLT)

*<sup>12</sup> Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. <sup>13</sup> Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. <sup>14</sup> And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.*

Paul reminds them that since they are God’s chosen people then they are to behave like Jesus. If you are like me then you think, “God’s chosen people? I thought that I chose to follow Him.” In the Old Testament, we learned that the Jews were God’s chosen people but when Jesus came to Earth then all who believe on Jesus and everything that He did (Christians/believers) are now God’s chosen people.

1 Peter 2:9-10 says, “9 *But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. 10 Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.*” Our faith in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the Living God, who has joined us as a people, God’s chosen people, Christians. Calvinists would say that each individual was selected before they were born. I believe that God knew their future but He didn’t predetermine that I was going to be a Christian. All Christians as a “people” are God’s chosen people. If you choose to be a Christian then you are part of God’s chosen people.

As Christians then Paul says we should have the following characteristics or virtues: “*holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.*” Where do these characteristics come from? From Jesus.

In verse 13, Paul says when it comes to forgiveness then we are to “forgive as Jesus forgave.” What did Jesus say when He was hanging on the cross? “*Father forgive them for they do not know what they are doing.*” (Luke 23:34) How many times are we to forgive them according to Jesus? “*I tell you, not seven times, but seventy times seven times.*” (Matthew 18:22)

Paul says to “make allowances for each other’s faults”. Somewhere in my life, I heard a saying that as a married couple, you are not to go to sleep angry with your spouse. Paul is saying the same thing for other Christians. Reconcile or just forgive them because they are human, whatever it takes. John 13:35 says, “*By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.*” Read the Love Chapter – 1 Corinthians 13. “*Love keeps no record of wrongs.*” If you don’t forgive then you are keeping “*record of wrongs*”.

Remember what Jesus said in the Lord’s prayer. “*Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.*” That can be a scary proposition, “*as we forgive*”. How well are you forgiving others, especially other Christians or fellow church members?

Verse 14 says, love “*binds them (the church) all together in perfect unity*”. I have been asked, “Are we suppose to love and forgive everybody or just other Christians?” My answer is: “Start with Christians and in time, make it everybody.” Our goal is to be like Christ who forgave everyone, even those that hung Him on that cross.

*15 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. 16 Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. 17 And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*

“The Colossians were told earlier not to allow false teachers to “act as umpire against” them (2:18). However, when disputes arise, the believer is to let the peace of Christ make the call. Whatever will lead to peace must be the deciding factor so that peace will be preserved.”  
(Anders)

People outside the church are always willing to judge the people in the church or what goes on in the church without firsthand knowledge. Paul is saying don’t listen to them. Let WWJD control what you do in all situations. When a previous pastor was called by another church, someone outside the church said, “They ran off another pastor.” Don’t listen to that kind of talk.

I have seen issues pop up in our church and if forgiveness were the rule, the issues would have disappeared. When we interact with other believers, we must remember that we are all volunteers and very human. Paul says, “*Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts.*” After all, you are all part of ONE body.

The Message “translates” verse 16 as “*Let the Word of Christ have the run of the house. Give it plenty of room in your lives. Instruct and direct one another using good common sense.*” Again,

spend time in God's Word so that you know what it says, don't live by what is right to the world, WWJD.

Paul will reiterate verse 17 again in verse 23. Whatever you do in "*word or deed*" make sure it glorifies Jesus. Do or say it with the thought that Jesus is present. Then give thanks for His presence and the opportunity to glorify Him in the word or deed. Paul wrote in 1 Thessalonians 5:16 "*Rejoice always, 17 pray continually, 18 give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.*" We can never thank Him enough.

*18 Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.*

*19 Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them.*

*20 Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.*

*21 Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged.*

Throughout this chapter, Paul has been telling us and them how to prevent and stop troubles in the church. Some of these ideas apply to maintaining order in a family. Love is key. The Love chapter (1 Corinthians 13) was meant for all interpersonal relationships but we read it at weddings because it is easily applied to a family.

In verse 18, Paul starts a discussion of marriage or family relationships. Paul starts with "Wives, submit to your husbands." I would have said to my sons, "We are going to tear off the BandAid right away."

"Submit is a call to recognize and respond to the God-ordained authority of the husband. Submission does not diminish the equality or destroy the dignity of the wife. Christ himself is the model for equality with God and submission to the one with whom he is equal (1 Cor. 11:3; 15:28; Phil. 2). To function properly, any institution must have clear lines of authority and submission. The family is no different." (Anders)

One of Terry's favorite sayings regarding being a supervisor, "Somebody has to be the boss, it may as well be me. I'm good at it." Guzik says, "The idea of submission doesn't have anything to do with someone being smarter or better or more talented. It has to do with a God appointed order." Wiersbe said, "Anyone who has served in the armed forces knows that 'rank' has to do with order and authority, not with value or ability."

There are different ways to lead. There is lording over someone and forcing them to do what you want. My dad was head of our household and you better not question his authority. Mom was just one of the kids but she got control when she wanted it. This was their generation. They were married in the early 1920's and it wasn't much different than in Paul's day.

I have heard Matthew Henry's quote numerous times. It says, "The woman was made of a rib out of the side of Adam; not made out of his head to rule over him, nor out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be beloved."

Someone has to lead and God-ordained it to be man but he should do it with love and with his partner's input. How should a husband lead, just as Paul said back up in verses 12-13, "*holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. 13 Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.*" We need these attributes even more in a family.

Which takes us to verse 19, "*Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them.*" If we filter everything through a "love filter", it will change the way that we interact with our spouse. No one wants to be corrected out of anger. There are so many people in abusive relationships, it boggles my mind.

A marriage has to be treated as a team. The goals cannot be those of one person but the goals of the family unit. I have known couples where the wife gave up her goals and aspiration for the family. There has to be compromise in a marriage but both husband and wives futures have to be considered.

And then there were children. Verse 20 says, "*Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.*" The latest generation has gone too far the other way on this one. 1 Corinthians 13:11 says "*When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.*" A child is a child, decisions that impact the child's future should include input from child but the ultimate decision belongs to the parents. Today, some parents want to let children decide their gender, that is insanity.

Verse 21 says, "Fathers, don't make your children hate you or cause them to be frustrated." This one really shows up in sports. The father has plans for the child to play professional sports, the child just wants to have fun. Dad pushes and pushes and the relationship is strained. You can insert whatever you want for "sports". You can insert behavior, education or any other aspiration you as a parent want. We should be encouraging our children and celebrating every accomplishment with love.

*22 Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to curry their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. 23 Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, 24 since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. 25 Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for their wrongs, and there is no favoritism.*



And Colossians *4:1 Masters, provide your slaves with what is right and fair, because you know that you also have a Master in heaven.*

This section is extending the idea of love and peace or at least not causing problems that we covered with families to slaves or bond servants. During this time in history, every time one country took control of another, the people were sold into slavery. Slavery was everywhere. The Jews in this region came from being transplanted from Israel when the Assyrians invaded the northern kingdom.

Think about any job that you have had. I'm sure that you have encountered the disgruntled employee that was working there because they had to. I have to believe that being a slave, regardless of how good you have it, would hate being there. Owens Corning wanted their employees to be "engaged". Being engaged meant that you liked working there.

Verse 23 says, *"Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters"*. This verse is probably the most quoted scripture for Labor Day weekend. This verse extended to all work or all jobs.

I had this verse in the forefront of my mind at Owens Corning from 1986-2000. I went through one major downsizing and at least a dozen smaller downsizings. I thinned my office down twice. It was tough to go into work.

When things get tough at work, remember this verse. You are not working for upper management, you are working for Jesus. The next verse (24) says that we are to remember that our inheritance is in Heaven. Our time on Earth is short but our eternity is in Heaven.

Romans 8:18 says, *"I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us."* Paul also wrote, *"For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all."* No matter how bad things get, we are to remember that our time here on Earth is short and our riches in Heaven are greater. Consider Jesus' letters to the churches in Revelation 2 and 3. He told the church at Smyrna, *"I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you life as your victor's crown."* (Revelation 2:10) He told the church of Philadelphia, *"Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come on the whole world to test the inhabitants of the earth."* (Revelation 3:10)

Paul ends this chapter with *"Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for their wrongs, and there is no favoritism."* Peter wrote in 1 Peter 3:9, *"Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing."*

In verse 1, Paul finishes the circle. At the end of chapter 3, Paul tells slaves or bond-servants to work hard for their masters and don't do anything that would upset your master. Anyone working is to work as though they are working for Jesus. Verse 1 should have been in the previous chapter. He tells masters or bosses to do what is "*right and fair*" (NIV) to those under their charge.

A person responsible for employees or in this case a master that is over slaves must treat them with "justice and fairness" (NASB) because it is the right thing to do but Paul says, "It doesn't matter how much authority you think you have, you still will answer to God in Heaven." "Just and fair: This is even more powerful than a command for masters to be *kind* or *pleasant* to slaves. One can be kind or pleasant to animals or pets; but we are only just and fair to fellow human beings. Paul asked masters to make a recognition that would undermine the very foundations of slavery." (Guzik)