

Bible Passage**Colossians 3:1-17**

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. ³ For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

⁵ Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. ⁶ On account of these the wrath of God is coming. ⁷ In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. ⁸ But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. ⁹ Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices ¹⁰ and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. ¹¹ Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.

¹² Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, ¹³ bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. ¹⁴ And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. ¹⁵ And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. ¹⁶ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. ¹⁷ And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Outline

1. Set Your Minds on Things Above

- a. Emphasis on the importance of focusing on spiritual and eternal values over temporal concerns, as inspired by Colossians chapter three.
- b. The role of this focus in leading a Christ-centered life, supported by Paul's encouragement in Philippians 4:8 to dwell on what is noble, right, and pure.
- c. The impact of a heavenly perspective on navigating life's challenges with peace and steadfast faith.

2. Put to Death What is Earthly

- a. Discussion on the metaphorical death to fleshly desires, guiding towards a life aligned with God's will, as Paul outlines in his letters.
- b. The daily challenge of overcoming egoistic inclinations in favor of a life lived by the Spirit.
- c. The necessity of continuous self-denial and prioritization of God's plans over personal desires.

3. Put on the Character of Christ

- a. The call to embody Christ's virtues of humility, service, and love, engaging with the world in a manner that reflects our transformed nature.
- b. The journey of discipleship as a path of dying to oneself daily, allowing Christ to live through us.
- c. Emphasizing the uniqueness of each believer's journey in reflecting God's image through their distinct gifts and talents.

Notes

During my trip to Texas last week, I was rejuvenated by reuniting with old friends, sharing in the developments of our lives since college. These reunions, especially the moments spent discussing our faith and the workings of the Lord in our lives, stand out as profoundly meaningful. Our conversations, though lighthearted at times, delved into the depth of our spiritual growth and the realizations that come with maturing in faith. One insight that we talked about was the association of spiritual maturity with an increasing sense of peace. This peace isn't about external successes or the volume of our worship but a deep-seated trust in God's sovereignty, whether in times of joy or in the throes of adversity.

This realization ties closely to the teachings of Colossians chapter three, emphasizing the Christian journey doesn't end with justification—being made right with God through faith in Christ—but begins there, leading us into sanctification. Sanctification involves a deliberate focus on heavenly things, setting our minds on what is above, rather than getting entangled in the temporary concerns of this world. This perspective isn't about inactivity or complacency but about a proactive, continuous realignment of our focus towards God, embodying the essence of what it means to live a Christ-centered life.

Paul's words in Philippians 4:8 further illuminate this path by encouraging us to dwell on whatever is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, and admirable. It's a call to embrace a mindset that transcends the immediate and often chaotic nature of earthly life, anchoring ourselves in the eternal and the holy.

I see a vivid picture of the Christian life as one of dynamic engagement with the world, underpinned by a peaceful and steadfast faith. Whether in abundance or in need, joy or sorrow, the Christian's gaze remains fixed on God, finding in Him the source of peace and the strength to navigate life's varied seasons. This, to me, is the essence of growing in faith: a journey marked not by the accumulation of worldly achievements but by the deepening of our relationship with God, characterized by peace, trust, and a heavenly focus.

Embracing our place in God's family calls for a fundamental shift in focus, where trust in His sovereignty becomes the cornerstone of our existence. This trust isn't passive; it's an active realignment of our priorities and desires, steering away from self-centeredness toward a God-centered perspective. Paul, particularly in his letters to the Colossians, Romans, and Galatians, serve as a guide for this transformation. He speaks of a metaphorical death to the flesh—our innate, selfish desires that distance us from God's will. This concept isn't

about physical asceticism but about overcoming the egoistic inclinations that lead us away from a life aligned with God's purpose.

Paul's exhortation to live by the Spirit and put to death the deeds of the body is an illustration of this spiritual journey. It's a daily battle against the temptation to revert to our old, self-centered ways, even after embracing Christ as our Savior. The Christian life, as described by Paul, isn't one of ease and self-indulgence but of continuous self-denial, where our personal desires and ambitions are secondary to God's plans for us. This journey involves a conscious effort to focus our minds on heavenly things rather than earthly concerns, recognizing the futility of the latter.

This shift in focus is not merely about avoiding worldly distractions but about embodying the virtues and values that reflect God's kingdom. It's a call to embody Christ's example of humility, service, and love, challenging as it may be in a world that often values the opposite. The essence of setting our minds on things above is not about disengagement from the world but about engaging with it in a manner that reflects our transformed nature—living out the righteousness and holiness created in us through Christ.

The struggle against the flesh and the continuous call to live a life worthy of our calling in Christ is a profound reminder of the cost of discipleship. It's a cost measured not in terms of worldly loss but in the richness of a life lived in close communion with God, marked by peace, purpose, and a deep-seated joy that transcends earthly circumstances. In essence, the Christian life is about dying to ourselves daily, allowing Christ to live through us, and manifesting His love and grace in every aspect of our lives.

Embracing a life in Christ compels us to transcend earthly pursuits, guiding us towards a deeper, more meaningful existence. This isn't about losing our individuality but discovering our true selves, untainted by the selfish desires that once defined us. The misconception that following Jesus strips away our uniqueness is far from the truth. In fact, it's in dying to our former selves that we uncover the essence of who we were meant to be. This process isn't about becoming identical clones of one another but about reflecting the image of God in our unique ways. The journey of faith isn't a path to bland uniformity but a discovery of our distinct gifts, talents, and purposes, all designed by God.

The idea of immortality, granted through faith in Jesus, challenges our worldly understanding of existence. It's a profound shift from a temporary to an eternal perspective, emphasizing that our true life is bound up in Christ's promise of eternal life, not in the fleeting pleasures or achievements of this world. This

eternal perspective doesn't make us less of who we are; it elevates our identity to its fullest potential, free from the corruption of sin.

Being Christ-like, therefore, isn't about erasing our personalities but about refining them. Jesus exemplified a life of love, humility, and service, showing us that to put on Christ means to adopt these attributes while still maintaining our individuality. Our calling to emulate Jesus is about showcasing God's love through our actions and interactions, not about losing ourselves but finding our true purpose in Him.

Forgiveness stands as a cornerstone of living like Jesus. It's a challenging yet essential aspect of Christian life, reflecting God's ultimate forgiveness through Christ. This act of love, though difficult, is a powerful testimony of our transformation in Christ—moving from self-centeredness to a life marked by grace and mercy.

Living in the name of the Lord encompasses every aspect of our lives, from our professions to our relationships. It's about aligning our daily actions with God's will, striving to reflect His character in everything we do. This commitment to living "in His name" doesn't imply perfection on our part but a continuous effort to embody the values Jesus taught.

The Christian life is a journey of transformation, where we're called to set aside our earthly desires and focus on the eternal. It's a process of becoming more like Jesus, not by diminishing our unique selves, but by living out the fullness of who we were created to be, guided by love, forgiveness, and a commitment to God's will. This journey isn't a loss of identity but a discovery of our true identity in Christ, marked by an eternal perspective that influences every aspect of our lives.

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