

Colossians ALC Winter 2018-2019

Class Seven: January 27, 2019 //You Laid Aside Old and Put on New // Colossians 3:1-11

For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. (3:3)

¹Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ²Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. ³For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.

⁵Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. ⁶For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience, ⁷and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them.

⁸But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, abusive speech from your mouth. ⁹Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its practices, ¹⁰and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him— ¹¹in which there is no Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all. (Colossians 3:1-11, New American Standard)

- I. **Therefore if you have been raised (up) with Christ (3:1a)**
 - A. **Chapter 1 focused on the superiority of Christ** over all kinds of visions and supposed revelation (*image of the invisible God*, v. 15, *He is before all things and in Him all things hold together*, v. 16, *Father's pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him*, v. 19, etc.).
Chapter 2 focused on the sufficiency of Christ over all so-called wisdom (*all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding*, 2:2, *Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*, 2:2-3, *in Him you have been made complete*).
 - B. Together, the first two chapters have gently and firmly rebuked those who rely on “deeper knowledge” or “heavenly visitations,” instead saying, “Christ is all we need. He is enough to save us, and He has provided all that is necessary to live a godly life.”
 - C. “If you have been raised with Christ” (3:1) could be translated, “*Since then, you were raised with Christ,*” something that was established when he said, “*you were buried with him in baptism in which you were also raised up with Him through faith*” (2:13). It serves as the precondition for everything to follow in chapter 3.
 - D. Some of us have heard before that when we believed the gospel, we were ‘raised up’ with Christ and seated with Him in the heavenlies (Eph. 1:3; 1:20 and 2:5-6; Col. 2:12; 3:1). Some of us haven’t heard that - it’s a new idea. Some of us understand it and others of us have a hard time making any sense of it.
 - E. For now, suffice it to say that the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to reveal something we couldn’t figure out on our own. Paul will proceed to make all of the obedient actions he teaches in chapter 3 **DEPENDENT** on this fact that we have been raised with Christ. Somehow, having been raised with and seated with Christ, is more important for us becoming obedient than a bunch of “DO THIS” and “DON’T DO THAT” commands like we saw at the end of chapter 2, more important than people who think they are philosophically deep, and more important than visions or supposed angelic messengers.

- F. God's goal in Colossians was expressed in 1:10 – *that we walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in every respect*. It is like the practical part of Ephesians where Paul begins in 4:1, *"I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called."* Now here in Colossians 3, when Paul starts to get practical, he starts with the idea, *"Therefore, since you have been raised with Christ."* Something about being raised with Christ enables us to *"walk in a manner worthy, pleasing God."* *Hold onto that idea.*

II. Keep seeking things above where Christ is, not things on earth (3:1b-4)

- A. This is the first command in chapter 3, and it is a participle of continuing action: *Keep seeking*. For the Christian who would please God, they can't do it by visions, deep insights or supposed wisdom or by disallowing themselves certain behaviors and requiring others. They can only do it by *"continually seeking things above."*
- B. Since he gives us this as a command, it is something we can do, but don't automatically. We must be told to do it. **Keep seeking things above.** What does that look like?
1. *Your spouse loses a job.*
 2. *Your grown son goes into the hospital with significant health concerns.*
 3. *An investment which had done pretty well for you bottoms out.*
 4. *A leading government official gets away with malfeasance.*
 5. *A new neighbor is loud, inconsiderate and unkind.*
 6. *An extended family member blames you unfairly and tells others about it.*
- C. **Where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God (3:1c)**
1. Ongoing seeking of what Christ wants in every instance
 2. His position is one of power and authority – right hand of God – So as we seek whatever it is we seek in the heavenlies, we do so fully aware that nothing is too difficult for Jesus, nothing is out of his reach. That should give us peace and hope and confidence and joy and gratitude.
- D. **Set your mind on things above, not on the things on earth. (3:2)**
1. He has already told us to seek things above. Now he says the way to seek things above is by, *"Setting your minds,"* driving home the ongoing effort necessary.
 2. He gives us not only positive commands (*keep seeking, set your minds*) but he gives us negative ones, *"not things on earth."* This is the first of a whole series of dyads – couplets which teach something first in one direction (*what to do*), and then in another direction (*what not to do*).
 3. Somehow, since we are raised with Christ, we are able to *"seek things above and set our minds on things above"* and *"not set our minds on things on earth."*
- E. **For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. (3:3)**
1. The reason you should set your mind on things above where Christ is and NOT on earth is that you have already died. In fact, your life is hidden with Christ in God.
 2. Again the Holy Spirit inspires the apostle to say something to us we could not know apart from divine revelation. Similar to the language of Romans 6, Paul tells us that the reason we can set our focus on things above is that when we believed on Christ, we died to an old life and were resurrected to a new life. (more on this later)

3. Paul is teaching us/reminding us that we are not who we were before we came to faith in Jesus. **That person died.** We became someone new (Abram-->Abraham, Sarai --> Sarah, Saul --> Paul) and were raised a new life. It is why Jesus uses the term “born again” and why Paul says in 2 Cor. 5:17 that we are “**a new creature.**” It is why we are not to “hold onto our lives” to protect ourselves. The old self is already dead and doesn’t need protection. The new self is already raised with Christ and can’t die. (This is why Jesus tells Martha in John 11, “*Whoever believes in Me will live even though he dies, and whoever believes in Me will never die.*”)

F. **When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, you will also be revealed in glory. (3:4)**

Here Paul draws from something he wrote in Galatians 2:20, “It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.” He is saying, “If you are trying to live a life pleasing to Christ, it will not happen if you seek some deep wisdom or new revelation outside Christ. It will only happen if you realize that you have died. You have been raised to a new life. But you are not only raised here on earth to “walk” a new life; you are actually in a spiritual sense, raised up to the very presence of Christ, with whom you are seated. As a result, the key to an obedient life is not trying hard to obey rules that appear to be godly (2:20-23) or to be persuaded by someone’s argument or philosophical deception (2:4, 8). The route to successfully living a life that pleases Jesus, **so far**, is to realize that

1. You trusted in Christ (1:4) and were rescued from darkness into His kingdom (1:13);
2. He is superior to everything (1:17) and is sufficient to produce godliness in us (1:28);
3. Walk the Christian life the same way you were saved (by faith) (2:6);
4. You are complete in Him (2:10);
5. You died with Him and have been raised with Him (2:12, 3:1);
6. You are completely forgiven (2:14);
7. Continually seek things above where Christ is (3:1-2);
8. Do not seek the things that occupy people’s concerns on earth (3:2b).

- G. His promise is that “you who are hidden in Christ will be revealed in glory” with Christ when He is manifested. This is something we really don’t understand much. (“*I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glories that will be revealed in us,*” Romans 8:18).

III. **Therefore consider the members of your earthly body dead (3:5-7)**

- A. “*Consider as dead the members of your body*” is language borrowed from Romans 6, “Do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness,” (6:13). The word “consider” is an accounting term – like “reckon” in Romans 6:11. It means to regard or to settle a thing. For example, if someone you love has died, you occasionally still think about telling them something or wanting to show them something. But when you have really considered them as dead, that happens less and less... you know there is no “there” there. If you formerly spent money you didn’t have because you had a credit card, but decide you are going to live on a cash basis, the furniture you admire but do not have resources for is dead to you.
- B. When saying “consider as dead to sin,” we are saying, “your eyes, your feet, your thoughts, your hands, etc.” (all the members of your body) are no longer available for the thing by which you formerly sinned.

TRUE STORY

When an otherwise godly man I counseled said that he had two frequent responses to his teenaged son's rebellion, rudeness and ingratitude, I asked what they were.

"Anger, resentment and harshness is my dominant response," he said.

"The other?" I asked.

"When I am convicted of my anger, harshness and impatience, I sometimes avoid him, and leave his mother to deal with him."

"Do you think either response is acceptable in the sight of the Lord?" I asked.

"No. I think they are both understandable. I mean, humanly, he deserves both. But they are not acceptable to God."

"Why not?" I asked aloud.

"In the case of the more frequent, angry response, I am angry, but I sin. I let the sun go down on my anger. I don't speak words fitting according to the need. I do not bear with him patiently, and I certainly am not speaking the truth I speak in love."

I nodded. "What about the other one?" I asked. "Why is that not ok?"

He said, "Because I am abdicating my responsibility to teach, to discipline, to lead. And I am still not loving; I am just avoiding the more egregious sin of yelling and scorning."

We were sitting in a room with doors on both sides. One door went into another room; the other door went into a hallway.

I said to him, "You have to decide before the Lord whether you really want to honor and please Him or not. What you are doing right now is understandable and normal. But it is sinful and destructive, and inconsistent with what I know of you as a follower of Christ."

He nodded. "I do," he said. "But I haven't got a clue how to do it."

I asked him to think of the hallway as the "room of avoidance and abdication." I told him the door is closed to that option for him because God tells him not to. But I said, "You can break through that door pretty easily if you want. I can't keep you out. It is just something that you have to either say, "I am going there even if I am not allowed," or you'll have to say, "That is off limits to me. I'm dead to that hallway.""

I then asked him to do the same with the other door and room. "That room is the room of raised voices, hostility, harsh rebuke, impatience, derision, scorn – more like open hatred. The door is closed to you now because God said that is not for you as a believer, but you could break through if you chose." You are theologically dead to that room – it is off limits. But you have to decide whether you will accept that assignment."

*That is what it means to be "dead to sin." That is "regarding the members of your body as dead to sin." It is not that you **can't sin**; it is that because you are a Christian, you are to regard it as no longer available to someone who died to sin.*

- C. Now, what are you and I to consider our body as dead to? **(3:5)**
1. Immorality
 2. Impurity
 3. Passion
 4. Evil Desire
 5. Greed = Idolatry

- D. Why? **(3:6)**

It is because of these very things that God will exercise His wrath upon sons of disobedience. That is, God hates these fleshly attitudes and actions and He will deal with them. He is not mocked.

1. Remember Galatians 6:7-8? *Do not be deceived. God is not mocked. Whatsoever you sow, you will reap. The one who sows to his flesh will reap corruption. The one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.*
2. This dad's "orge" (wrathful anger from *passion*) against his son is one of the things that will bring God's wrath. God will not be mocked for it; the man will answer.
3. As we read in 2 Corinthians 5:10-11, *"Each one will be recompensed for his deeds done in the body... whether good or bad."*
4. Or in Hebrews 10:29-30, *"How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled underfoot the Son of God and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, 'Vengeance is mine. I will repay,' sayeth the Lord. And again, 'The Lord will judge His people.'"*

- E. **You walked in these (acted this way) when you lived in them (were a sinner). (3:7)**

1. Just as Paul did back in chapter 1-2, he acknowledges again here that they used to live this way. But *"He rescued us from the domain of darkness"* (1:15). You *"were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds"* (1:21). You were *"dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh"* (2:13).
2. Paul knows that the ways we sometimes behave are things we used to do all the time, and we might think since we are doing better than we once did, maybe that is good enough. But here he is saying, "we must consider our bodies dead to these old familiar friends." And the ones listed in verse 5 are not the only such things.

IV. **But now lay aside these also (3:8-11)**

- A. What else are we to put aside (as we do when we consider our body is dead to the previous examples of sin)? **(3:8)**

1. Anger
2. Wrath
3. Malice
4. Slander
5. Abusive Speech
6. Lying

- B. Why are we to lay aside these things (and therefore, consider ourselves dead to them)?

1. We laid aside the old self and its practices when we became a Christian. **(3:9)**
2. We also put on the new self who is being renewed according to a true knowledge corresponding to the image of the One who created us **(3:10)**
3. The new self that is being renewed is like Christ – not like separate groups **(3:11)**

V. Discussion and Homework

A. Discussion

1. What significance is it to you, if any, that you have died to sin?
2. What significance is it to you, if any, that you have been raised with Christ?
3. In what area of your life are you currently setting your mind on things above?
4. How can a person “put aside” an attitude or behavior that they used to walk in?

B. Homework

1. Memorize Colossians 3:3
2. Write out for yourself a separate paragraph answering each situation described in II. B. – That is, what would it look like to seek things above in each of these? If you can think of a scripture or two to “justify” why you say that would be seeking things above, please write it.
3. Over a meal or with a friend, try to discuss however many of the discussion questions under V. A. that you can.