



First Baptist Church Selmer

TRANSFORMED: FROM DEATH TO LIFE TO ABUNDANT LIFE • SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE •
COLOSSIANS 3:1-17 • 7/14/2024

MAIN POINT

The transformation in the life of a believer is evident based on the difference Jesus has made in their daily life.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Have you recently looked back at old photos of yourself? What did you notice had changed the most?

What changes are you thankful for? Are there some things you wished wouldn't have changed?

What would you say are some "typical" changes of following Jesus Christ? How does this compare with our lives before we started following Christ?

Paul began his letter to the Colossians by proclaiming the truth about Jesus Christ and warning believers against the false teachings. In the final chapters, he instructed believers how to live out the new life in Christ. He explained the difference Christ should make in our lives and exhorted his readers to display that change in their lives.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ COLOSSIANS 3:1-4.

1 *"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."* (ESV)

What does it mean to seek what is above? How do we do that?

How should our future hope change our day-to-day focus?

Paul's statement, *"You have died"* (v. 2) seems contrary to fact—we're still living and breathing. He was referring to believers' participation in the death and resurrection of Jesus (Col. 2:12-13; Rom. 6:1-11). In his letter to the Galatians, Paul explained, *"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me"* (Gal. 2:19-20). We have died to sins, so we might live for righteousness (1 Pet. 2:24).

What are the benefits of seeking what is above? What are the pitfalls of keeping our minds set on the things of the earth?

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ COLOSSIANS 3:5-10.

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."* (ESV)

What do the sins listed in verse 5 have in common? What do they reveal about our hearts?

We are to put to death what belongs to our worldly nature (v. 5). In the Greek, this command is literally to put to death *"the earthly members."* We are to do away with the ungodly characteristics and affections that were formerly a significant part of who we are.

What do the negative attributes in the second list (in verse 8) have in common? What do they reveal about our hearts?

How do these verses show the tension between the change in who we are and who we used to be?

What is the connection between renewing our minds and transforming our behaviors?

As we look to Christ, our minds are renewed in knowledge. This frees us to put off the old practices that were concerned with satisfying our worldly appetites and criticizing others for our own benefit. We are instead to become more and more like Christ.

What is our part in this transformation? Can we accomplish this by our own human effort alone? Explain.

From verse 10, what is God's part in our renewal? What does this verse reveal about the goal of our renewal?

We are dead to sin and alive to God in Christ, but we operate in two dimensions: in Christ (spiritually) and in the world (physically). Only when we get to heaven will we be free from the propensity toward sin that remains with us daily.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ COLOSSIANS 3:11-17.

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 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." (ESV)

What virtues does Paul name in verses 12-14? How would it transform our church if we all worked to emphasize these qualities in our relationships with one another?

How might our groups look different if we all lived out these commands in verses 15-17? What sometimes seems to be missing in our Christian lives?

When the word of Christ takes root in individual believers and in the community of faith, there will be teaching (positive instruction), admonishing one another (negative correction), and thankful worship, evidenced by songs and expressions of gratitude.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Do your words build up or tear down others? What would make your words and thoughts more pleasing to the Lord?

Which attitudes and behaviors from verses 12-14 do you need to cultivate to more fully display Christlike character?

How well do we make the story of Jesus Christ the center of our teaching and worship at our church?

PRAYER

Ask the Lord to help all to live the new life of purity, unity, and thankfulness for all He has done for us.

COMMENTARY

| COLOSSIANS 3:1-17

3:1-2. The phrase *“if you have been raised”* connects what follows with *“if you died with the Messiah”* in Colossians 2:20. The word *if* has the force of *“because.”* Believers had died to sin’s rule and had been raised with Christ to new life. Thus they were to seek (go on striving for) what is above—the lofty qualities of character that Christ revealed. He is seated at God’s right hand, the position of honor, majesty, and power. Believers consistently were to make the victorious, reigning Christ their priority—to center their lives in Him. Believers were to set their minds on what is above.

3:3. Believers had died spiritually to their old, sinful way of life. Because of that complete break, their lives were hidden with Christ in God. Three interpretations of Paul’s statement are possible. (1) He may have had in mind their spiritual safety and security. (2) The words could have pointed to Christ as the Source (whom the world could not see) of

believers' new quality of life. (3) Paul may have meant that in the present they could not grasp the fullness of their life in Christ. In light of verse 4, a combination of (2) and (3) seems likely.

3:4. Believers' lives were to demonstrate love for and faithfulness to Christ. His being revealed referred to His return when all people will acknowledge His lordship (see Phil. 2:9-11). Also, Christians will realize the fullness of their new life in Christ. The term glory indicates God's character revealed as redemptive. All people will see Christ for who He is and will recognize believers as reflecting His character. We live in accordance with new life in Christ when we consider Him and base our actions on what He has done and will do for us.

3:5. Because believers' lives centered on Christ, they were to put to death (completely break with) worldly elements in their lives. They had to remove every facet—every expression—of the old, sin-dominated life. Worldly values, goals, attitudes, and actions were incompatible with their new life in Christ. Paul addressed sexual immorality and listed five vices believers were to eliminate from their lives. In his day, sexual promiscuity among pagans was rampant. Believers were to make a complete break with an immoral lifestyle. The Greek word translated sexual immorality was an umbrella term for all sinful sexual activity, whether by married or unmarried people. The word translated "*greed*" has the idea of a feverish desire for something someone else has or for something not yet obtained. Here, the term probably refers to unrestrained pursuit of sexual pleasure. Such greed is idolatry. Self becomes the center of life, and life's energies are focused on self-gratification.

3:6-7. The vices listed bring God's wrath on people who habitually practice them. God's wrath is His settled opposition to sin, not the emotion of anger. If people choose to disobey God and insist on their sinful course, He will give them over to their choice. Evil, however, has within it the seeds of its own destruction and will work its way out to its inevitable result: death. Disobedient people make themselves God's enemies. Before the Colossian believers became Christians, they practiced the vices Paul listed. The word "*walked*" means "lived."

3:8. The words but now contrasted believers' old lifestyles to their new life in Christ. Paul listed five elements believers were to put away. Three sins pertain to attitudes and two concern speech. Thus Paul emphasized that sinful attitudes and words are as serious as sinful acts. The Greek term translated "*anger*" is the same word Paul used in 3:6 for God's wrath. When it refers to a human attitude, it has the sense of a continuing, seething

resentment toward others. The term rendered "*malice*" conveys the idea of ill will that awaits an opportunity to inflict intentional harm. These attitudes have no place in believers' lives. Paul urged believers to get rid of two kinds of speech. The Greek term translated "*slander*" means "speaking critically of another person with the intent to hurt." The Greek term rendered "*filthy language*" has the sense of obscene and abusive speech.

3:9-10. Paul stressed that truthfulness was to be a mark of believers' lifestyle. The phrase "*do not lie*" can have the force of "stop lying." The Colossian believers' relationships with one another and their witness to unbelievers required truth and honesty. Lying, dishonesty, and deceit had characterized their pagan lifestyles; but because they had put off the old self (nature), they were to shed these practices (habitual actions). At conversion, believers had put on (as new, clean clothing) the new self (nature). In Greek, the tense of the verbs translated "*put off*" (3:9) and "*put on*" (3:10) convey once-for-all action. When believers placed their faith in Christ, He gave them a new nature governed by His grace. The new self is (continually) being renewed (transformed in quality) in knowledge. Christ works in believers to facilitate a process of renewal—of their continuing to gain new insights into and understanding of God's will.

3:11-12. The phrase "*in Christ*" refers to God's new people. The phrase "*there is not*" has the force of "there cannot be." It expresses the impossibility of humanly devised barriers among God's new people. Christ is all and in all. He is the sphere in which all believers live, and He is all that ultimately matters. Also, He lives in each Christian, who represents Him to all other believers. Thus faith and love remove earthly categories in God's new people. The result is His people's oneness. New people in Christ were to put on certain virtues as they would don new clothes. Paul addressed them with three descriptive terms. They were God's chosen ones. Through faith in Christ, they had taken their place among God's people. Believers were holy—set aside for God's service and for moral purity. They also were loved; they lived in God's love. Paul listed five attributes of believers as new people in Christ. The phrase "*heartfelt compassion*" conveys the idea of feeling so deeply with others who are hurting that a person shares their pain. The Greek word translated "*kindness*" has the idea of goodness, of considering others' good to be as important as a person's own. Humility is a healthy view of oneself in which a person thinks neither too highly nor too negatively of self. It also involves willingness to forgo rights and privileges to help others. Gentleness has the sense of strength that is controlled and channeled constructively. Patience literally is "*longsuffering*."

3:13-15. Paul added two character qualities to his list. The Greek term rendered "*accepting*" means "putting up with." Believers were to endure offenses patiently. Forgiving has the

sense of pardoning others as a gift of grace. If a believer had a complaint (grievance) against another Christian, the offended person was to take the initiative to forgive the offender as (in the same manner) the Lord graciously had forgiven the one offended. Christians were to take the initiative to forgive others because of their personal experience of Christ's forgiveness. Such persistent goodwill is the perfect bond of unity. Christ had called believers to His peace—spiritual wholeness under His lordship. The phrase in one body implies believers' oneness under Christ's rule as the Head of His body, the church. They were to allow Christ's gift of spiritual health to exercise control at the center of their lives (in their hearts). Gratitude was to be a continuing characteristic of their life together. The exhortation to be thankful applied especially to corporate worship.

3:16. Christ's word—the genuine message as opposed to the false teachers' empty substitute—was to continue to have priority in the church. Paul pointed to three ongoing activities that should issue from Christ's indwelling word or message. Teaching referred to instruction in Christian living. Admonishing involved warning against false teachings and encouraging one another. Mutual instruction and encouragement were to be offered in all wisdom—carefully, tactfully, and with the right motive. Singing joyfully expresses worship and praise.

3:17. Paul urged believers to do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus. "*Name*" is a synonym for person. Thus the phrase is the same as "*in Christ*"—in close relationship with Him. The words "*in the name*" of can mean "in the authority or power of." Jesus supplies power for Christian living. Paul again emphasized believers' expressing gratitude to God the Father. God was believers' Father in the sense that they were members of His family through faith in Christ. Their joyful gratitude was channeled through Christ, who made possible their relationship with the Father. We live in accordance with new life in Christ when our behavior reflects our relationship with God. He provides us with daily power to live for Him.