

## THE EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS

### INTRODUCTION

- A. An outline of the Epistle to the Colossians
1. Introduction (1:1-14)
  2. Doctrinal Instruction (1:15-29)
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          - 3] Be a part of the community where Christ is supreme (10-11)
      - b) Nurture the new life in Christ (12-17)
- B. Notes on Colossians 3:1-4
1. This section is a bridge between the doctrinal sections of chapter 1-2 and the practical sections of chapters 3-4.
  2. M. Anders, *The exhortations are based in a past reality, a present truth, and a future expectation.*
  3. Doctrine must be the foundation for application.

### COLOSSIANS 3:1-11, LIVE WHAT YOU BELIEVE - PART 1

- A. The Christian life is tied to the glorified Christ (1-4)
1. The old lives of Christians died when they were resurrected to new life in Christ (1-2), ***If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.***
    - a. *If* introduces a 1<sup>st</sup> Class Conditional Clause which is based on reality, so it may be translated *since*.
    - b. Since Colossian Christians were raised with Christ, they should do the following:
      - 1) *seek the things that are above*
        - a) *seek* means to *desire, to want to*.
        - b) The location of things we desire should be in heaven with Christ not on earth.
          - 1] Jesus Christ is seated at the right hand of God
          - 2] That is the position of supreme privilege and divine authority.
          - 3] Romans 8:34, *Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.*
      - c) Christians should be seeking heavenly things which is the future home of every believer.
    - 2) *set your minds on things that are above*
      - a) *set your mind* means to *dwell on, to fix one's attention on*.
      - b) Christians should focus on the spiritual not just that which is physical and temporal.
        - 1] Matthew 16:23, *But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man."*
        - 2] Philippians 3:19-20, *Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,*
      - c) Comments on being heavenly minded.
        - 1] W. Barclay, *He will no longer live as if this world was all that mattered; he will see this world against the background of the large world of eternity.*
        - 2] N. Geisler, *...believers' lives should be dominated by the pattern of heaven, bringing heavenly direction to their earthly duties.*

- 3) Right actions (*seek*) start with right motives (set your mind).
  - a) Lightfoot, *You must not only seek heaven; you must also think heaven.*
  - b) M. Anders, *The believer is to see everything, including earthly things, against the backdrop of eternity. With a new (resurrection) perspective on life, the eternal is to impact the temporal.*
  
2. The present lives of Christians are secure with Christ (3), ***For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.***
  - a. A Christian died with Christ in the past.
    - 1) Therefore, the old life should not be a factor in how a Christian lives his life in Christ.
    - 2) Colossians 2:20, *If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations-*
    - 3) M. Anders, *The old order of things (slavery to sin and evil forces) is gone.*
  
  - b. A Christian lives with Christ in the present.
    - 1) *hidden* means *kept safe*; also, it can mean *hide for safekeeping*.
      - a) Psalm 27:5, *For he will hide me in his shelter in the day of trouble; he will conceal me under the cover of his tent; he will lift me high upon a rock.*
      - b) John 10:28-29, *I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.*
  
    - 2) *hidden* may also mean *concealed, unseen*.
      - a) The believer's new life is not seen or understood by the world.
      - b) 1 John 3:1-2, *See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.*
      - c) Bengel, *The world knows neither Christ nor Christians, and Christians do not even know themselves.*
  
3. The future lives of Christians will be glorious in Christ (4), ***When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.***
  - a. Paul reminded the Colossian believers that life is in Christ.
    - 1) Galatians 2:20, *I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*
    - 2) Jesus is supreme so there is no need to look for something more.
    - 3) G. Osborne, *Note that Jesus does not merely give us life; he "is our life." Life is defined by and identified with him... Apart from Christ there is no life, merely existence. He alone gives life meaning and substance,*
  
  - b. Paul proclaimed that Christians would appear in glory with Christ in the future.
    - 1) *appear* means *to be manifested, to be revealed in one's true character.*
    - 2) M. Anders, *The believer's identification with Christ brings not only a past break with sin and a present security, it also means a glorious future.*
    - 3) Paul is looking to the Rapture when those in Christ will appear with Him in glory.
      - a) 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, *For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.*
      - b) 1 John 3:2, *Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.*
  
    - 4) Scroggs, *Glory belongs first and foremost to God. God manifests His divine nature and power through this glory. Yet it was intended by God for man in creation and will be restored to him in the world to come. ... It belongs essentially also to Christ, and what awaits man is precisely this very glory which Christ possesses.*

- B. The Christian life is a work in progress (5-17)
1. Do away with the remnants of the old life (5-11)
    - a. Put to death immoral passions (5-7)
      - 1) A Christian must separate from practices tied to his life before Christ (5a), *Put to death therefore what is earthly in you:*
        - a) *Therefore*
          - 1] This looks back to verse 2:6, *Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him,*
          - 2] It looks back, as well, to 3:1-4, to set one's mind on spiritual things not just earthly things.
          - 3] We should do what we are or to live what we believe.
        - b) *put to death*
          - 1] It means to *cease completely from activity.*
          - 2] A Christian needs to stop earthly activities that contradict one's new life in Christ.
            - a] 2 Corinthians 5:17, *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.*
            - b] Galatians 5:24, *And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.*
            - c] Romans 8:13, *For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.*
        - c) *what is earthly*
          - 1] Literally, *what is on the earth.*
          - 2] Christians are to put away the evil tendencies from their old natures.
          - 3] Johnson, *This practice of reckoning dead finds an excellent illustration in the gardener's practice of grafting. Once the graft has been made on the old stock the gardener is careful to snip off any shoot from the old stock that may appear. So, in the believer's life, since he has now been grafted into the Last Adam and His new life, he must by the Spirit put to death any products of the old life that may appear.*
        - d) Paul is encouraging believers to take part in the process of sanctification.
          - 1] It is a time for making proper choices.
          - 2] It is participating with the Spirit of God in becoming who we are in practice as well as position.
          - 3] The following lists are aids to remind us how we live as believers in Christ. Some things need to be put off and others need to be put on.
    - 2) Put to death past immoral practices (5b-6), *sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming.*
      - a) Paul's list of practices to eliminate.
        - 1] *sexual immorality*
          - a] It is illicit sexual intercourse, including prostitution and incest.
          - b] Ephesians 5:3, *But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints.*
          - c] God created sex for enjoyment by one man and one woman in the marriage commitment.
        - 2] *impurity*
          - a] The focus is on moral impurity.
          - b] It included homosexuality as noted in Romans 1:24, *Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves,*
          - c] M. Anders, *This reminds us that immorality is "unclean" or dirty and incompatible with the purity of our Savior.*
        - 3] *passion*
          - a] It is uncontrolled illegitimate desire that leads to the actions.
          - b] Romans 1:26, *For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature;*
          - c] J. McGee, *It's like the little boy whose mama called to him one night when she heard him in the kitchen, "Where are you?" He said, "I'm in the pantry." He had the cookie jar open. She called, "Whet are you doing?" He answered, "I'm fighting temptation!" My friend, that is the wrong place to fight temptation. Don't fight it there at the cookie jar, if you're not to have the cookies. The same thing applies to inordinate affection (passion).*

- 4] *evil desire*
  - a] It is craving in a more general sense than passion.
  - b] It is a strong desire to have what belongs to someone else and/or to engage in an activity that is morally wrong; a longing for what is forbidden.
  
- 5] *covetousness, which is idolatry*
  - a] It is greed, the desire to have more.
  - b] It is idolatry according to N. Geisler, *...because it seeks satisfaction in things below and not above.*
  - c] G. Caird, *...the arrogant and ruthless assumption that all other persons and things exist for one's own benefit.*
  
- b) God's judgment is coming because of such evil deeds.
  - 1] Paul's writings include similar lists of sins, Romans 1:29-31; 1 Corinthians 5:11, 6:9; Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 5:3-5, *But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.*
  - 2] Christians are to put aside such activities since they characterize the unsaved.
    - a] Romans 2:5, *But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.*
    - b] John 3:36, *Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.*
    - c] Ephesians 4:17, *Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds.*
  
- 3) Paul reminded them that they used to have such behavior (7), ***In these you too once walked, when you were living in them.***
  - a) Christians need to be reminded that everyone had an old nature. The righteousness we have comes from Christ, not from us.
  - b) We must always test our faith against our behavior, 2 Corinthians 13:5, *Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test!*
  - c) M. Anders, *Why are these behaviors and attitudes to be put to death? First, because they are the very things which will bring the wrath of God, which is his future judgment. Secondly, these behaviors and attitudes are to be eliminated because they reflect the way we once lived. A transformed lifestyle should be the trademark of our new life.*
  - d) J. McGee, *Oh, my friend, do we put Him first? Or are we engaged in the very things that the world is engaged in and for which God intends to judge them? Well, how then can we expect that we shall escape the judgment of God? If you are in Christ, seek those things which are above, and you will not find yourself involved in the things of the world.*
  
- b. Put off uncontrolled emotions (8-9), ***But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices***
  - 1) He emphasized that all inappropriate practices are to be *put away*.
    - a) It means *to get rid of, to cast off from oneself*; like casting off a dirty shirt not suitable to wear.
    - b) Romans 13:12, *The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.*
    - c) Ephesians 4:22, *to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires,*
  - 2) This second list deals with sins of emotion and speech.
    - a) *anger*
      - 1] It means *wrath, state of fury, an attitude of hostility.*
      - 2] James 1:19-20, *Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.*
      - 3] M. Anders, *Anger is a settled feeling, the slow, seething, smoldering emotion that boils below the surface.*

- 4] G. Osborne, *In verse 6, Paul addressed anger and rage in relation to God. There God's righteous wrath was in view; here it is people's sinful, self-centered anger directed at others, stemming from animosity and resulting in hatred.*
- b) *wrath*
- 1] It means *rage, verbal outburst of evil passion.*
  - 2] Luke 4:28, *When they heard these things, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath.*
  - 3] M. Anders, ... (rage) *is a quick, sudden outburst, the blaze of emotion which flares up and burns with intensity.*
- c) *malice*
- 1] It means *hateful feeling, hostility.*
  - 2] Ephesians 4:31, *Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.*
  - 3] N. Geisler, ...*the vice that lies below anger and rage as their root.*
- d) *slander*
- 1] It means *blasphemy, injurious speech, defamation of character.*
  - 2] Titus 3:2, *to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people.*
  - 3] M. Anders, *To slander someone is to injure their reputation.*
- e) *obscene talk*
- 1] It means *filthy, obscene, vulgar speech.*
  - 2] G. Osborne, *In Colossians 3:8 the term might combine these meanings and refer to the use of obscene, coarse language when abusing another person.*
- f) *lying*
- 1] It means *deceptive, distorting, untruthful speech.*
  - 2] Ephesians 4:25, *Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.*
  - 3] N. Geisler, *Neither should Christians lie for truthfulness is essential in followers of the One who is "the Truth" (John 14:6).*
- 3) The things just listed are characteristics from the old life.
- a) *practices*
- 1] The word means *deeds, habits of doing.*
  - 2] Romans 8:13, *For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.*
- b) Such practices are not to be carried into the new life in Christ.
- 1] Romans 6:6, *We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.*
  - 2] Ephesians 4:22, *to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires,*
  - 3] Paul encouraged the Colossians to see that old ways of living are not compatible with the new life in Christ.
- c. Be a part of the community where Christ is supreme (10-11), ***and have put on the new self which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.***
- 1) Christians are to put on their new self through the knowledge of God's will.
- a) Sanctification is the process whereby a Christian participates with the Holy Spirit in living what he believes, doing what he is.
- b) It is consciously *putting on the new self.*
- 1] Ephesians 4:24, *and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.*
  - 2] Romans 6:4, *We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.*

- c) A Christian is renewed in the new self by knowledge of Christ as opposed to heretical teaching.
  - 1] Romans 12:2, *Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*
  - 2] It is *full knowledge* sourced in Jesus Christ where all truth resides.
    - a] It is a knowledge that leads a Christian to conformity to Christ.
    - b] Romans 8:29, *For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.*
    - c] Ephesians 2:10, *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.*
  
- d) T. Constable, *Only by sanctification can people attain to the full image of God and Christ that God created them to bear.*
  
- 2) Christians are defined by relationship to Jesus Christ
  - a) The body of Christ has no racial, religious, cultural or social distinctions.
    - 1] It is not a national distinction, Greek or Jew, Romans 10:12, *For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him.*
    - 2] It is not a religious distinction, circumcised or uncircumcised, Galatians 5:6, *For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.*
    - 3] It is not a cultural distinction, barbarian or Scythian.
      - a] Barbarian referred to those uncivilized, didn't speak Greek.
      - b] Scythians were people in a region north of the Black Sea, and regarded as utterly pagan and uncivilized.
    - 4] It is not a social or economic distinction, slave or free. Social position does not determine one's relationship to Christ, Ephesians 2:14, *For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility*
    - 5] Paul adds that it is not a gender distinction in Galatians 3:28, *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*
  - b) It is where Christ is supreme in His person and His relationship.
    - 1] It is defined by the uniqueness of Christ, Who He is and what He did, 1 Corinthians 15:28, *When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all.*
    - 2] It is the personal indwelling by Christ of every Christian, Ephesians 1:23, *which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.*
  - c) Thoughts on this new relationship in Christ.
    - 1] N. Geisler, *All barriers are destroyed in Christ, and all believers are truly "created equal."* So it is to be expected that each believer—regardless of his nationality, former religion, culture, or economic standing—should do away with his former sinful practices and should live in accord with his "new self."
    - 2] M. Anders, *The reason human categories no longer matter is that Christ is all, which means Christ is central and supreme. Our relationship with him is really all that matters. Unity within the community is based on the fact that Christ is in all. He indwells all believers and permeates all our relationships.*
    - 3] G. Osborne, *Diversity continues, but instead of producing barriers these differences now unite us as God's people, because we are sharing our diversity and enriching one another's lives. In the new humanity in Christ, we cherish each other's diverse heritages and look forward to seeing them enhance our lives.*

<b>CONCLUSION</b>
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- A. Christians should live differently than the world because they are not of the world.
- B. Christians are called to live what they believe.
- C. Sanctification demands rejecting old ways of living and accepting new ways.