

A STUDY OF COLOSSIANS*Part Eight***Introduction**

“Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them. But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all. Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him. Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them. Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged. Bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God. And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ. But he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done, and there is no partiality. Masters, give your bondservants what is just and fair, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven. Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving; meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains, that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak. Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time. Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one” (**Colossians 3:5-4:6**).

Introduction

1. In the previous lesson we saw how Paul exhorted the Colossians to continue in Christ (2:6-7), remain steadfast in the faith (2:8-15), and not to submit to vain philosophy (2:16-3:4). The Gnostic were teaching that simply being a Christian was not good enough and that they were still lacking. But Paul flatly denies this foolishness and emphatically states: “For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and **YOU ARE COMPLETE IN HIM**, who is the head of all principality and power” (**Colossians 2:9-10**).
2. Paul says, “For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory” (**Colossians 3:3-4**). In view of the fact that we are dead to sin, and will appear with Christ in glory, every Christian must “put to death your members”, i.e., subdue every carnal and evil propensity.
3. The new life we have in Christ is far superior to the life of those who wander aimlessly through the labyrinth of religious mysticism and those in bondage to the man-made rules of asceticism¹. This doesn’t mean that Christians live a life without rules and regulations. Indeed, the fact that Paul has already reminded the brethren of their death with Christ shows that there must be a denial of evil things (**Colossians 3:5-11**), and it also includes the pursuit of godly things (**Colossians 3:12-17**).

¹ Severe self-discipline and avoiding of all forms of indulgence, typically for religious reasons.

Living The Christian Life – 3:5-4:6

XIII. THE OLD MAN VERSES THE NEW MAN



“Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them. But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all. Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him” (Colossians 3:5-17).

1. Things we must put to death (3:5-7).

- a. The “members” to be put to death are not the literal parts of the body. This is an extension of the ordinary sense of the word. All of us used our bodily members as instruments of sin before our conversion (**Romans 6:19**), and so they are viewed here as comprehending the various kinds of sins which were practiced through them. What he has in mind are the practices and attitudes to which one’s bodily activity and strength was devoted in the former life. As Christians, we must stop using our bodily members to engage in sinful practices.

b. Five sins are mentioned in particular, which describe **the sinner as he is in himself**.

- 1) Fornication. This is from the Greek word *porneia*. Just as the word “drink” is an umbrella term that includes every kind of drink (tea, coffee, water, milk, etc), so the word “fornication” is an umbrella term that includes every kind of unlawful sexual activity. Sexual intimacy is to be between a husband and wife only, and any sexual activity that takes place outside of marriage is fornication (**Acts 15:29; 1 Corinthians 5:1; 6:15, 18; 7:2**).
- 2) Uncleanness. This is from the Greek word *akatharsian*. This refers to the moral uncleanness from which fornication springs. BNTC says, “It is not necessary, however, to limit uncleanness to that which is filthy in thoughts. The intents of the heart are undoubtedly also included (cf. Hebrews 4:12)”.
- 3) Passion. This is from the Greek word *pathos*. In this context he must be talking about inordinate passions. The WEBA translates it “depraved passion”. The CWSD says, “These are lusts that dishonor those who indulge in them.”
- 4) Evil desire. This is from the Greek word *epithumia*. It means a longing; especially for what is forbidden.
- 5) Covetousness. This is from the Greek word *pleonexia*. It means “primarily the having more, and then in a secondary and more usual sense, the desire after having more” (Trench). In this place it is likely used to mean a desire for and seeking after, material things. “Idolatry is anything that monopolizes our attention away from God. It could be television, fishing, golf, family, our jobs, the Internet, and any other thing that would interfere with our relationship with God; anything can be an idol” (Kevin Cauley). See full article: www.kingscrosscoc.org.uk/Articles/Articles.htm

Fornication and uncleanness are outward acts.

Passion and evil desire are the source from which fornication and uncleanness spring.

- c. These sins - fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness – are improper for a Christian for two reasons: (i) Those that practice such will experience the wrath of God; it is coming! Some sins have within them their own punishment, but here he is speaking of the coming day of judgment, (ii) Such sins once characterized their lifestyle, but now they have been put to death.

2. Things we must put off (3:8-11).

- a. Paul now reminds the brethren of what they are at present in Christ. They are to “walk worthy of the Lord fully pleasing Him” (1:10), and such a walk necessitates they “put to death” all that is worldly (3:5). The sins listed here are those relating to attitude and speech. The difference between the former and present list of sins is this: the former lists those sins that describe the sinner as he is in himself, while the present list **characterizes him in his relation to the neighbor**.

Notes: (1) Thumos, “wrath” (not translated “anger”), is to be distinguished from orge, in this respect, that thumos indicates a more agitated condition of the feelings, an outburst of wrath from inward indignation, while orge suggests a more settled or abiding condition of mind, frequently with a view to taking revenge. Orge is less sudden in its rise than thumos, but more lasting in its nature. Thumos expresses more the inward feeling, orge the more active emotion. Thumos may issue in revenge, though it does not necessarily include it. It is characteristic that it quickly blazes up and quickly subsides, though that is not necessarily implied in each case.

- 1) Anger (orge) is the kind of anger that arises and abides in a person for some indeterminate amount of time; it is a condition of mind. This is an angry person that is looking to get revenge or perhaps waiting for some tragedy to befall the one that angered them. It is definitely not a Christian attitude; you will be lost unless you repent of such an attitude.
 - 2) Wrath (thumos) is the kind of anger that smolders unseen for a while and then suddenly lashes out – verbally or physically. As quickly as it arises, so it subsides, but the damage is already done. This is listed as one of the works of the flesh (Galatians 5:20). A Christian subject to such outbursts of wrath is still fleshly or worldly.
 - 3) Malice (kakian) is a “badness in quality” (Vine) and describes a general vicious character. The CWSD says, “... the endeavor to do evil to others, emanates from being inherently evil”. The word is general enough to include anger and wrath, but then it clearly brings out the evil intentions of one who is angry – he has an evil heart of malice that seeks to bring about injury to the person who has made them angry; he will most certainly rejoice if some tragedy befalls them. Malice is a vicious disposition of mind that is satanic.
 - 4) Blasphemy (blasphēmía) means *to speak against*. One may blaspheme against God or man. In this context it is speaking against a brother or sister in the Lord. Such “speaking against” includes slander, accusations, gossip... anything that is injurious.
 - 5) Filthy language (aischrología) is the lowest and vilest form of speech. It refers to all the kind of lewd and vile language that spews from the mouths of the ungodly.
- b. Lying (pseudomai) is any form of deception (cp. Ephesians 4:25). This sin seems to be given special attention; first, lying is separated from the other two lists, and, second, a different tense is used... instead of telling them to put lying to death or put it away, he uses the present tense with the negative, “Do not lie to one another”. There are two reasons why Christians must stop lying to each other:
- 1) “Since you have put off the old man with his deeds”. The old man with his deeds was put to death, and so we must constantly resist the evil works of the old man. One cannot claim to have put on the new man while he is still exhibiting the characteristics of the old man.
 - 2) “And put on the new man...”. Lying is out of character for the new man, and this new man is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of Christ (cp. 2 Corinthians 3:18). This knowledge is not merely knowing about Christ, but a full comprehensive, personal knowledge (see Philipians 3:10). The new man has been created in Christ Jesus where there is equality. Since we are all one, then how can we lie to one another? For we are all members of one another.

3. Things we must put on (3:12-17).

a. The following personal attributes are meant to produce harmony.

Several areas of our behavior as the new people of God.

- 1) Tender mercies. This is heart-felt compassion for the plight of another.
- 2) Kindness. Where heart-felt tender mercies exist, it always results in acts of kindness. Robertson describes this as “that goodness of heart that makes us act rightly in dealings with each other”. It is a spirit that reaches out to meet the needs (whether spiritual, physical, or emotional) of one’s brethren.
- 3) Humility. The world does not look upon humility as a virtue, but the scriptures set forth humility as being indispensable if harmonious relationships are to be maintained. Humility is the opposite of pride. A humble person never stands on a pedestal, never boasts, and always considers others better than himself (**Philippians 2:3**).
- 4) Meekness. Humility is a prerequisite to meekness, which is the opposite of a haughty and self-assertive spirit. Meekness directed toward God describes a “temper of spirit in which we accept his dealings with us as good, and therefore without disputing or resisting” (Trench). The temper of spirit we have toward God produces the same attitude towards one’s brethren – he will be willing to suffer wrong without a desire to retaliate.
- 5) Longsuffering. A person that is longsuffering is one that is able to suffer and endure all kinds of verbal abuse, rudeness, and mistreatment from others without giving in to any temptation to seek vengeance. He patiently endures and leaves the matter in the hands of God.
- 6) Bearing with one another, and forgiving one another. Gill comments, “Overlooking the infirmities of one another, forgiving injuries done, sympathizing with, and assisting each other in distressed circumstances, the spring of all which should be love; by that saints should be moved, influenced, and engaged to such a conduct, and which should be so far attended to, as is consistent with love; for so to forbear one another, as to suffer sin to be on each other, without proper, gentle, and faithful rebukes for it, is not to act in love.”
- 7) Love. Above all other virtues love must be put on. This is not referring to a feeling of affection but to action. We love our enemies and we love our brethren, i.e., we seek their highest good. It is this love that has the ability to bind Christians together into the kind of perfection that God desires among His people. “This appears to be Paul’s meaning. He is concerned with unity among the members of the body of Christ as they live and work together in the local church” (Walton Weaver).

b. The following three things have to do with Christ: His peace, His word, and His name.

- 1) His peace (cp. **Philippians 4:7**; **Ephesians 2:14-18**). This likely refers to the peace we have with God through Christ and the peace we experience as brethren in the body of Christ.
- 2) His word. A sincere Christian will “let the word of Christ dwell in you richly” (cp. **Psalms 119:11**). This doesn’t mean merely that one is to memorize the word of Christ, it is “to allow oneself to be brought completely under its influence. The Christian must allow the truth of the gospel to supply his leading motivations, inspire his important decisions, and determine all of his actions” (Walton Weaver). Being so filled with the Spirit (**Ephesians 5:18-19**) we are in all wisdom to teach and admonish (warn) one another through song.
- 3) His name. This final instruction is an all-inclusive injunction that covers every aspect of our lives: word and deed. Whatever we do in word or deed must be done because Jesus is Lord. Christ’s “name” stands for who He is in Himself. “To do all ‘in His name’ is to do all that we do in full recognition of who He is in His person and in complete submission to His will, or His authority, in all things” (Walton Weaver).

XIV. HOUSEHOLD RESPONSIBILITIES

“Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them. Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged. Bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God. And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ. But he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done, and there is no partiality. Masters, give your bondservants what is just and fair, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven” (Colossians 3:18-4:1).

1. Wives and husbands.

- a. Wives are to submit to their husbands. A reason for her submission is not given here, but it is likely the Colossians were acquainted with the reasons. All that is said here is that it is **“fitting in the Lord”**. Her new relation to Christ provides the highest motive for fit or proper things in all her relationships. Paul words this slightly differently in Ephesians when he says, **“Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord”** (Ephesians 5:22). Such submission to her husband is an act of obedience to Christ who is her Lord.
- b. Husbands are to love their wives. The love spoken of here is not affection but that love that seeks the highest good of its object, his wife. And to what degree must a husband love his wife? **“... just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her...”** (Ephesians 5:25).

A mean-spirited, demeaning, and abusive husband can destroy a marriage, and an unruly and unsubmitive wife can do the same.

2. Children and parents.

- a. Children. This command is addressed to children that are, obviously, old enough to understand instruction, and that are still living at home under the authority of their parents (though the obligation to honor one’s parents never ends – Matthew 15:3-6). The command to **“obey”** is in the active voice, and the sense is **“keep on obeying your parents”**. Paul then adds, **“in all things”**. Whatever your parents instruct you to do, do it immediately without grumbling. This ensures harmony in the home. Obeying your parents is the right thing to do (Ephesians 6:1), and it is **“well pleasing to the Lord”**. Submission to one’s parents is a sign of one’s submission to God. A child that refuses to obey his parents has no desire to obey the Lord.
- b. Fathers. The admonition not to **“provoke your children”** (Ephesians 6:4) would apply to both parents, but Paul is here addressing fathers because they are likely the ones who need it most. Fathers must be careful not to so discipline a child that they become **“discouraged”**. A child that is filled with bitterness (the result of being provoked) becomes despondent, lacks spirit, and has lost heart. Such discouragement is manifested in various ways.



3. Servants and masters. Whenever Paul addresses slaves and masters, he never argues whether or not slavery is right or wrong as an institution. The gospel brings every individual – whether slave or free – true freedom in Christ. But **“the gospel that brings this new freedom does not have as its purpose the overthrow through revolutionary means of the unjust institutions of a society in which one lives”** (Walton Weaver). Paul’s objective in these instructions is to show how the gospel is meant to regulate a Christian’s conduct in whatever relationships it finds him.

- a. Slaves. A slave is to obey his master **“in all things”** and to do so in all sincerity; serving their masters as though serving Christ Himself. This may be difficult – especially if one has a mean master – but he must keep in view his eternal inheritance to encourage himself. A failure to obey this instruction will result in the Lord’s displeasure.

“God appoints the lot of people and orders the circumstances of their condition, and it is the duty of each one to demonstrate the excellence of religion in the particular sphere in which he has been placed by divine providence” (David Collins, Advice For Daily Living).

- b. Masters. The instruction here may be specifically addressed to Christian slave owners. Paul doesn't instruct them to set all their slaves free, but to treat them justly and fairly; knowing that they too have a Master in heaven who is watching them. The implication is that the Lord will certainly repay them for any unjust and unfair treatment.

XIV. FINAL ADMONITIONS AND BASIC RELIGIOUS CONCERNS

“Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving; meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains, that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak. Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time. Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one” (Colossians 4:2-6).

1. Persistence in prayer.

- a. A relationship begins with and is maintained by conversation. God speaks to us through His word and we speak to God in prayer. Prayer is not something we do only on a Sunday, and saying a prayer before retiring doesn't align with Paul's instruction to “continue earnestly in prayer” and “pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17). How much time you spend in conversation with God reveals the status of your relationship.
- b. Paul often called on his brethren to pray for him and his fellow workers (Romans 15:30-32; Ephesians 6:19; Philippians 1:19; 1 Thessalonians 5:25; 2 Thessalonians 3:1-2). Paul is in prison for the word of God at this time and requests prayers, not for his release, but that God would open a door of opportunity for him to proclaim the gospel.

2. Conduct before unbelievers.

- a. To “walk in wisdom” is consistent for them as Christians, and, in a moral sense, to live in a manner worthy of the gospel (cp. Philippians 1:27). To claim to be a Christian and live a worldly life is not only inconsistent and hypocritical, it gives occasion for the enemies of God to blaspheme Him. To walk “in wisdom” means to be wise and tactful in one's relations with unbelievers so as not to give an unfavorable impression of the gospel. By “redeeming the time” he means that one should make the most of all opportunities; this life is the only opportunity we have; it is a brief window.
- b. It is particularly vital that our speech before unbelievers be carefully watched; perhaps because the tongue is “an unruly evil, full of deadly poison” (James 3:8). A Christian's speech is to be...
 - 1) “with grace”. When our speech is edifying, it brings grace to those who hear us.
 - 2) “seasoned with salt”. Among the Jews, salt was used as a metaphor for wisdom. The idea, then, is that our speech should be seasoned or flavored with wisdom.
 - 3) “that you may know how you ought to answer each one”. When unbelievers see a difference in us, they may ask questions, and we need to be ready to answer (cp. 1 Peter 3:15). Hence the need for wisdom and grace.

Applications

1. When we obeyed the gospel, the old man was put to death and buried with Christ, and we arose to a new life in Christ. Putting off the old man and putting on the new man is something we will be doing throughout our lives. We must constantly be watching and examining our ways to ensure that we are growing and living a life that is consistent with our new life in Christ.
2. Paul says that the new man is “renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him”. It is vital that we understand what this means; it is not merely a knowledge about Christ, but a full comprehensive, personal knowledge. I recommend you study Philippians 3:10.

3. Paul says that we must put on love above all things. Love is the fulfillment of the Law and, here, it is said to be the bond of perfection. If we ever doubt whether a word or a deed is good or bad, then let us simply ask if such a word or deed is of love. In fact Paul says, “Let all that you do be done with love” (1 **Corinthians 16:14**).
4. Every Christian is to “let the word of Christ dwell in you richly”. This means we ought to devote ourselves to reading, studying, meditating, and memorizing. But, of course, this knowledge must be applied to our daily lives; letting the word of the Spirit guide our motives, attitudes, thoughts, speech, and conduct. Many of the problems that Christians have can often be traced back to that one not letting the word dwell in them richly.
5. We all have to sustain relationships with people of all ages and from various backgrounds: some are relatives, some brethren, some friends, some workmates, etc. In dealing with various relationships in life (**Colossians 3:18-25**), look at these phrases: “fitting in the Lord”, “well pleasing to the Lord”, “fearing God”, “as to the Lord”, and, “you serve the Lord Christ”. So as we seek to maintain various relationships, we must ensure that we do so seeking to please the Lord. Paul wrote, “Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him” (2 **Corinthians 5:9**).