

Colossians Chapter 3

Colossians chapter 3 can be misinterpreted as a rule book but it's not, it's more of a road map guiding you to a life pleasing to the Lord and the many rich blessings that you'll receive so long as you follow the map without deviating.

Verses 1-4 (Amplified) Therefore if you have been raised with Christ to a new life (sharing in His resurrection from the dead), keep seeking the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind and keep focused habitually on the things above [the heavenly things], not on things that are on the earth [which have only temporal value]. For you died [to this world], and your [new, real] life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

What is Paul talking about, seeking the things that are above? Examples please. Look at second half of the passage, and the opposite of things above, what are 'things that are on earth? Examples please. Look up Matthew 5:19-21. In chapter 2 we were talking about our past 'old self' dying and being resurrected as a new person and demonstrating that through baptism Colossians 2:11-12. Paul talks about this new person as being hidden. What he means by hidden is that this 'new person' isn't anything physical, he/she will still have grey hair, wrinkles and a host of other physical ailments, but more importantly there's a transformation of the persona. Well that's the positive but also there's the flip side of the coin, the negatives. There used to be plenty, but now, there's far fewer negatives, and what remains, the Christian is in constant battle to overcome.

But what form does that transformation take? Let's have a look at verse 5. Can you identify with any of the sins listed? If you've got a high sex drive, you're naturally materialistic and you like your creature comforts, or if you tend to throw yourself into a cause, hobby or pastime such as family, hobby, career or politics, you'll recognise yourself in there. That's your battleground. We're all conditioned and brought up to believe that these are all good things to be encouraged, but the Bible tells us that they can become replacements for God and have to be resisted. Acts 17:29-31, Galatians 4:8 & 5:19-21. Paul reminds you that you need to overcome them because that's where you used to be, as a son/daughter of disobedience, heading towards the wrath of God; so you need to put as much distance from those days as you possibly can.

There's more! More sins to resist in verses 8-9 followed by:

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. Colossians 3:9-10 NKJV.

The old man / woman is described in verses 5-8; the new man / woman is described in verses 12-15 and in Romans 12:2-3

Back to verses 10-11; there's attitudes to embrace: do not distinguish between race, background, religion, culture or social status. Christ is in us all. This is a concept that was quite foreign to Paul's Zionist upbringing but when he became an apostle he readily believed and taught of God's universal love and exhorted us to emulate that. Romans 10:12, 1 Corinthians 12:13, Galatians 3:27-28 & 2:11-12.

In verses 12-13 there are more positive attitudes starting with addressing this church as, 'the elect of God, holy and beloved.' Some of these adjectives apply to our relationships

with everyone and others apply particularly to our brothers and sisters in Christ. This passage starts with the words 'put on,' ie wear them, like a coat. In other words, this has to be an instant transition rather than a gradual evolution. Similarly Paul tells the Ephesians to put on the whole armour Ephesians 6:11. Let's read the list. These positive attitudes are all covered in Matthew's account of Jesus's sermon on the mount, Matthew chapters 5-7.

Now ask ourselves, what's that word that encapsulates all of these? Love. That's the final adjective in this list and again, we put it on like a coat rather than gradually growing and nurturing it. Paul describes love as the bond of perfection. There are two definitions of the word bond, a sticking together of two surfaces - they've become bonded together and tie between two or more groups of people such as a family or a club. I think in this context the word bond applies to both of these definitions but more the latter.

In v 15 Paul writes: 'And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.' That one body is bonded. Psalm 29:7, Isaiah 26:12, John 14:27.

Then we have a list of marital and family advice.

18. Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Ephesians 5:21-24.

19. Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them. Ephesians 5:25:

20. Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord. Ephesians 6:1-2 Does your relationship with your parents really affect your life expectancy?

21. Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged. Ephesians 6:4
Job 1:5

22. Bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God. Ephesians 6:5-9. Is this at odds with Luke 4:18?

What is a Bible times bondservant? The most notable was a man called Onesimus who was an escaped bondservant who found himself visiting Paul who'd been banged up in prison. Philemon 1:10. It seems that slavery was a fact of life from Genesis onwards. The Bible doesn't condemn it, but it does regulate slavery, particularly slavery of fellow Israelites, such as the 7 year rule Exodus 21:2. The difference between slave and servant is a bit blurred Leviticus 25:39-40 so whilst he might be a slave in title, he's to be treated as a paid servant. Slavery was still prevalent in Roman times and Jesus and the epistle writers used slavery to illustrate bondage to sin, freedom and bondage to God. Here's some examples - John 8:34, Romans 6:19, 2 Peter 2:19.

In verses 23-25 this last one Paul extends to all believers since we're all bondservants to God. 2 Timothy 2:24, 2 Peter 2:16, Revelation 1:1 and Peter and Jude introduce themselves as bondservants to God. There's instruction, prize and penalty.