

Colossians Chapter 3

Colossians 3:1 "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God."

“If ye then be risen” (or, “therefore, since you were raised”): This verb actually means “to be co-resurrected.” Because of their union with Christ, believers spiritually entered His death and resurrection at the moment of their conversion (see notes on Rom. 6:3-4; Gal 2:20), and have been and are now alive in Him so as to understand spiritual truths, realities, blessings, and the will of God.

Those glorious benedictions (Eph. 1:3), are the privileges and riches of the heavenly kingdom, all of which are at our disposal. Paul called them “things above.” To understand what these are (see note on 2:3).

The word “risen” therefore infers a corollary truth from 2:20 (“you died with Christ”), not only have the Colossian believers been freed from sin, they have also turned to a new life, leaving behind old ways, habits, values, vices, interests, and sins.

“Seek those things which are above”: These “things” include deeper knowledge of Christ, closer fellowship with Him, experience of His resurrection power, victory over sin (verses 5-11); the development of godly virtues (verses 12-17); the fulfillment of domestic and social responsibilities (3:18 – 4:1); and effective prayer life (4:2); fruitfulness in witnessing (4:3-6).

“Sitteth on the right hand of God”: The position of honor and majesty (Psalm 110:1; Luke 22:69; Acts 2:33; 5:31; 7:56; Eph. 1:20; Heb. 1:3; 8:1; 1 Pet. 3:22), that Christ enjoys as the exalted Son of God (see note on Phil. 2:9). That exaltation makes Him the fountain of blessing for His people (John 14:13-14; 2 Cor. 1:20).

In a word, the attainment of Christian maturity, and all the spiritual benefits God has for His people during their days on earth. To have been raised with Christ and not to seek these blessings, would be a contradiction.

Christians are in this world, but not of this world. Our home is in heaven. We are seated in heavenly places with Christ Jesus. We are strangers in this land. We are foreigners, since our homeland is heaven. We are to lay up our treasures in heaven, not here on this earth.

We should get our eyes off the circumstances which surround us on this earth. We should keep our eyes on Jesus and heaven. The desires of this earth, and of our flesh, should be far from us. We should be looking to heavenly rewards. Jesus is seated in heaven at the right hand of the Father, because His work is done. It was done when He said, “It is finished”, on the cross.

Colossians 3:2 "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth."

“Set your affection on things above”: The Greek word literally says, “Set your mind on things above.”

This can also be translated “think,” or “have this inner disposition.” As a compass points north, the believer’s entire disposition should point itself toward the things of heaven. Heavenly thoughts can only come by understanding heavenly realities from Scripture (Rom. 8:5; 12:2; Phil. 1:23; 4:8; 1 John 2:15-17; see note on Matt. 6:33).

The readers are not to be preoccupied with “things on the earth,” such as current heretical philosophies (2:8), legalistic practices (2:16, 21-23), and vices (verse 5). Nor are they to dwell on things that are not wrong in themselves (houses, jobs, careers, ambitions, etc.), but can be wrong should they become priorities above Christ.

Our affections should be for our home in heaven. We should not love the earth.

Colossians 3:3 "For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God."

“Ye are dead” (see notes on Rom. 6:1-11; 2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:14). The verb’s tense indicates that a death occurred in the past, in this case at the death of Jesus Christ, where believers were united with Him. Their penalty of sin was paid, and they arose with Him in new life.

“Your life is hid with Christ in God” (or, “Your life is deposited with Christ, who is in intimate relation with God”).

This rich expression has a threefold meaning:

- (1) Believers have a common spiritual life with the Father and Son (1 Cor. 6:17; 2 Pet. 1:4);
- (2) The world cannot understand the full import of the believer’s new life (1 Cor. 2:14; 1 John 3:2); and
- (3) Believers are eternally secure, protected from all spiritual enemies, and with access to all God’s blessings (John 10:28; Rom. 8:31-39; Heb. 7:25; 1 Pet. 1:4).

As all wisdom and knowledge reside in Christ (2:3), so the believer’s new life is stored up in Him. This means that the Christian life belongs to the spiritual or heavenly realm.

Jesus is in intimate relation with God; they should seek those matters and interests pertaining to heaven and not to earth.

We are dead to this world, dead to fleshly desires, even dead to sin itself. We must be buried with Him, to rise to new life in Him. It is a mystery indeed, that we are in Christ and He is in us. We are seated in the heavenlies with Him, and yet He dwells within us here on the earth.

This has to be the omnipresence of God. This is saying that Christians are dead to the lusts of this earth, but alive to heavenly thoughts and deeds.

Romans 5:21 "That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord."

Colossians 3:4 "When Christ, [who is] our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory."

When Christ ... shall appear": At His second coming (Rev. 19:11-13, 15-16).

Paul says it best when he says, absent in body, but present in spirit. All of our hopes are caught up in Him. We are in Him and He is our life.

Colossians 3:5 "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:"

"Mortify therefore" (see note on Rom. 8:13; Zech. 4:6; Eph. 5:18; 6:17; 1 John 2:14). This refers to a conscious effort to slay the remaining sin in our flesh.

"Mortify" means to "put to death." By a figure of speech "members" is put in place of the various sins that exist in, and seek to express themselves through different "members" of the human body. Paul urges his readers to "put to death all sins residing in your bodily members."

"Therefore" looks back (to verse 3): Since they "are dead" to sin, they are to make this death to the old life a reality in daily living.

"Fornication": This refers to any form of sexual sin (see note on Gal. 5:19; 1 Thess. 4:3).

"Uncleanness": This term goes beyond sexual acts of sin to encompass evil thoughts and intentions as well (see note on Gal. 5:19; Matt. 5:28; Mark 7:21-22; 1 Thess. 4:7).

"Inordinate affection, evil concupiscence": Similar terms that refer to sexual lust. "Inordinate affection" is the physical side of that vice and "evil concupiscence" is the mental side (see notes on Rom. 1:26; 1 Thess. 4:3; James 1:15).

"Covetousness": Literally this term means "to have more." It is the insatiable desire to gain more, especially of things that are forbidden (Exodus 20:17; Deut. 5:21; James 4:2).

"Which is Idolatry": When people engage in either greed or the sexual sins Paul has cataloged, they follow their desires rather than God's, in essence worshiping themselves, which is idolatry (Num. 25:1-3; Eph. 5:3-5).

These things are earthly things. These are sins of the flesh. These things are no longer part of a Christian's life, when they become born of the spirit. "Mortify" means to totally do away with. These are all sins of flesh man. They are not part of the life of a spirit man. The desire to commit any of these sins must be put to death that the spirit might live.

I have mentioned so many times, that we are a spirit living in a body of flesh, and that one of the two will rule the soul, or will of man. If we follow the flesh, we are flesh man. If we do away with fleshly desires and let the spirit rule, we are spirit. If the sins mentioned above are active in your life, you are not spirit man. You are of the flesh.

Colossians 3:6 "For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience:"

“Wrath of God”: His constant, invariable reaction against sin (see notes on John 3:36; Rom. 1:18; Rev. 11:18).

“Children of disobedience” (see note on Eph. 2:2). This expression designates unbelievers as bearing the very nature and character of the disobedient, rebellious sinfulness they love.

Notice the word children, in the verse above. This could mean then, that these are people who profess Christianity but are not Christians. Wrath is when God cannot look the other way any longer. His fury (wrath), comes up in His face, and He rains terror upon those disobedient. God will not overlook the sins mentioned in verse 5.

Colossians 3:7 "In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them."

“In the which ye also walked”: Before their conversion (Eph. 2:1-5; Titus 3:3-4).

This is saying that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, when they were walking in the flesh, before they were saved. This is the walk of the flesh.

Colossians 3:8 "But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth."

“Put ... off” A Greek word used for taking off clothes. (Acts 7:58; Rom. 13:12-14; 1 Pet. 2:1). Like one who removes his dirty clothes at day’s end, believers must discard the filthy garments of their old, sinful lives.

“Anger”: A deep, smoldering bitterness; the settled heart attitude of an angry person (Eph. 4:31; James 1:19-20).

“Wrath”: Unlike God’s settled and righteous wrath (see note on Rom. 1:18), this is a sudden outburst of sinful anger, usually the eruption that flows out of “anger” (see note on Gal. 5:20; Luke 4:28; Acts 19:28; Eph. 4:31).

“Malice”: From the Greek term that denotes general moral evil. Here it probably refers to the damage caused by evil speech (1 Pet. 2:1).

The normal translation when using the word “slander” when it refers to God is “blasphemy.” But here, since it refers to people, it is better translated “slander.” To slander people, however is to blaspheme God (James 3:9; Matt. 5:22; James 3:10).

All of these sins are part of that old flesh man that must be buried for the spirit man to live. All of the things above such as anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, and filthy communication should not be a part of the Christian.

The Christian is a new creature in Christ. The spirit is in control. The Life within them is Christ living through them. The words of our mouth speak what is in our heart. Filthy communication comes from the mouth of the lost.

Verses 3:9-10: Lie not ... put on” (see notes on verse 8; Eph. 4:24-25). These words are the basis for the command of (verse 8). Because the old man died in Christ, and the new man lives in Christ. Because that is the fact of new creation or regeneration (2 Cor. 5:17), believers must put off remaining sinful deeds and be continually renewed into the Christlikeness to which they are called.

Colossians 3:9 "Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;"

“Old man”: The old, unregenerate self, originating in Adam (see notes on Rom. 5:12-14; 6:6; Eph. 4:22).

“Seeing” means “since.” The “old man”, is all that a person was prior to salvation: his worldly thinking and sinful acts. Since all this was renounced at conversion, one should “lie not.” Falsehood ill becomes the person claiming to be a disciple of Him who said, “I am the ... truth.”

We can see from the following Scripture, where lies come from.

John 8:44 "Ye are of [your] father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it."

Look with me at the seriousness of lying in the next verse.

Revelation 22:15 "For without [are] dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie."

Colossians 3:10 "And have put on the new [man], which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:"

“The new man” is the person one becomes after conversion: he possesses a new nature, values, aspirations, and a new life-style. This “new man” is constantly being “renewed” or developed until he attains a mature “knowledge” of the God who (re) “created” him. The more a believer knows and understands of God, the more he will be like God in character and conduct.

The new, regenerate self, which replaces the old self; this is the essence of what believers are in Christ (Eph. 4:17; 5:1, 8, 15). The reason believers still sin is their unredeemed flesh (see notes on Rom. 6:6, 12; 7:5).

“Renewed” (see note on 2 Cor. 4:16; Rom. 12:2; 2 Cor. 3:18). This Greek verb contains a sense of contrast with the former reality. It describes a new quality of life that never before existed (Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:22). Just like a baby is born complete but immature, the new self is complete, but has the capacity to grow.

“Knowledge” (see note on 1:9). A deep, thorough knowledge, without which there can be no spiritual growth or renewal (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 1 Peter 2:2).

“Image of him that created him”: It is God’s plan that believers become progressively more like Jesus Christ, the one who made them (Rom. 8:29; 1 Cor. 15:49; 1 John 3:2; see notes on Phil. 3:12-14, 19-20).

When we become Christians, we have turned our will over to the spirit and have taken all authority away from the flesh.

Romans 8:5 "For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit."

God is a Spirit, if we are in His image; we are a spirit man, as well. Christians should be Christlike. We should reflect the Light of Jesus in our lives.

Colossians 3:11 "Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond [nor] free: but Christ [is] all, and in all."

Even as individual believers must discard old, sinful habits, the body of Christ must realize its unity and destroy the old barriers that separated people (Gal. 3:28; Eph. 2:15).

“Greek”: A Gentile or non-Jew (see note on Romans 1:14).

“Jew”: A descendant of Abraham through Isaac (see note on Rom. 2:17).

“Barbarian” (see note on Rom. 1:14).

“Scythian”: An ancient nomadic and warlike people that invaded the Fertile Crescent in the seventh century B.C. Noted for their savagery, they were the most hated and feared of all the so-called barbarians.

“Bond ... free”: A social barrier had always existed between slave and freemen; Aristotle had referred to slaves as “a living tool.” But faith in Christ removed the separation (1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:28; Philemon 6).

“Christ is all, and in all”: Because Jesus Christ is the Savior of all believers, He is equally the all-sufficient Lord of them all.

Not only is the “new man” to put sin to death, he is also to put away man-made barriers that divide people and that nourish the vices of the old life. Among renewed humanity there are no national, ceremonial, cultural, or social distinctions. To the redeemed “Christ is all;” that is, He is everything, and He is what matters most to them. And “Christ is ... in all;” that is, He dwells in all believers.

We find a companion Scripture to this (in Galatians):

Galatians 3:28 "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus."

God looks on the spirit of mankind, and not on the flesh. All of the separations mentioned in both verses above are in the flesh. A spirit does not segregate because of nationality, or color, or gender. Circumcision is not even important in the spirit, because the flesh has been done away with.

Those who are free, are Christ's servants, and those who are slaves, are Christ's freeman. The Spirit of Christ is in all who believe.

Colossians 3:12 "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;"

In view of what God has done through Jesus Christ for the believer, Paul described the behavior and attitude God expects in response (verses 12-17).

“Put on” literally means to “dress oneself” (with clothes); here used metaphorically, it means to take on or assume certain virtues and qualities.

“Elect of God”: This designates true Christians as those who have been chosen by God. No one is converted solely by his own choice, but only in response to God’s effectual, free, uninfluenced and sovereign grace (see notes on John 15:16; Rom. 8:29; 9:14-23; Eph. 1:4; 2 Thess. 2:13-14; 2 Tim. 1:8-9; 1 Pet. 1-2; Acts 13:46-48; Rom. 11:4-5).

“Beloved”: Election means believers are the objects of God’s incomprehensible special love (John 13:1; Eph. 1:4-5).

“Bowels of mercies” means heartfelt compassion. It is a Hebraism that connotes the internal organs of the human body as used figuratively to describe the seat of the emotions (Matt. 9:36; Luke 6:36; James 5:11).

“Kindness”: Refers to a goodness toward others that pervades the entire person, mellowing all harsh aspects (Matt. 11:29-30; Luke 10:25-37).

“Humbleness of mind” (see notes on Rom. 12:3, 10; Phil. 2:3; Matt. 18:4; John 13:14-16; James 4:6, 10). This is the perfect antidote to the self-love that poisons human relationships.

“Meekness” (see notes on Matt. 5:5; Gal. 5:23). Sometimes referred to as “Humility”, it is the willingness to suffer injury or insult rather than to inflict such hurts.

“Longsuffering” (see note on 1:11; Rom. 2:4). It is also translated “Patience”, the opposite of quick anger, resentment, or revenge and thus epitomizes Jesus Christ (1 Tim. 1:16; 2 Pet. 3:15). It endures injustice and troublesome circumstances with hope for coming relief.

This is describing the personality of those who have Christ living in them. These are really the gifts of the Spirit that come to us, when we are baptized in the Holy Spirit of God.

Paul is saying, you are the elect of God, now do your part by living like the elect of God. We are to be holy, for He is holy. These virtues of kindness, mercy, humbleness of mind, meekness, and longsuffering are descriptions of the Lord's personality. If we have taken on Christ, then they are our personality, too.

Colossians 3:13 "Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also [do] ye."

“As Christ forgave you” (see notes on Matt. 18:23-34; Eph. 4:32). Because Christ; as the model of forgiveness has forgiven all our sins totally (1:14; 2:13-14), believers must be willing to forgive others.

The fact of believers being urged to assume the virtues of (verse 12), signifies that none has yet “arrived” spiritually. As the believer is developing these virtues, he must be “forbearing” and “forgiving” toward his fellow church member.

For his Christian brother is also in the process of acquiring the virtues of (verse 12), and therefore retains some flaws, deficiencies, and weaknesses. Hence the need of forbearance and forgiveness.

God loves the unlovable, as He loved us while we were yet in sin. Forgive, and you shall be forgiven.

Matthew 18:21-22 "Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?" "Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven."

This is just saying, forgive him every time he asks for forgiveness. Don't let the sun go down on your wrath. Do not be angry without a cause.

Colossians 3:14 "And above all these things [put on] charity, which is the bond of perfectness."

“Bond of perfectness” (see notes on Eph. 4:3; Phil. 1:27; 2:2). Supernatural love poured into the hearts of believers is the adhesive of the church (Rom. 5:5; 1 Thess. 4:9).

“Charity” is love, here called the “bond of perfectness.” Love is the crowning grace completing the list of virtues required for perfectness or spiritual maturity. As a “bond”, it binds all other virtues together in harmony and unity.

The charity that this is speaking of is a Godly kind of love. This is love in spite of what a person has done to you, not because of what they can do for you. Jesus told the rich young ruler, if he would be perfect, to sell what he had and give it to the poor.

Charity covers a multitude of sin. God deals with us in the manner we have treated others with. There is no greater gift than Agape love.

Colossians Chapter 3 Questions

1. If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are _____.
2. Where does Christ sit?
3. The Christian's home is in _____.
4. Why is Jesus seated at the right hand of the Father in heaven?
5. Set your affections on things _____.
6. Your life is ____ with Christ in God.
7. What are some of the things we are dead to, if we are Christians?
8. What is a mystery indeed?
9. What appears with Him, our spirit, or our body?
10. Name some of the things Christians should mortify in their life?
11. What does "mortify" mean?
12. How can you tell the difference between spirit man and flesh man?
13. The wrath of God comes on whom?
14. Verse 8 says, Christians must put off what things?
15. The _____ of our _____ speak what is in our heart.

16. What other sins are grouped with loving and making a lie?
17. How are we in the image of God?
18. Where is there a companion Scripture to Colossians chapter 3 verse 11?
19. Why are none of these separations not important to God?
20. Describe the personality of the elect of God.
21. ___ loves the unlovable.
22. How many times did Jesus tell Peter to forgive someone?
23. What is the bond of perfectness?