

Practicing Godly Values

Colossians 3:5-17
SS Lesson for 08/26/2018

Devotional Scripture: Eph 4:25–5:2

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Introduction

Overview and Key Verse of the Lesson

The lesson reveals to us and helps us to clearly understand the godly virtues presented in this passage so that our lives display **Practicing Godly Values**. The **study's aim** is to learn that living out these virtues will honor God and be a blessing to others. The **study's application** is to make sure these godly virtues characterize our lives.

(Adapted from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary)

Key Verse: Col 3:12

Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering;

Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

Knowing that all wisdom is in Christ (2:1-5), Paul urged the Colossian Christians to continue in Him (2:6-7), not being deceived by vain philosophies (2:8-10). Since believers are identified with Christ, they are not to live under Jewish laws (2:11-17), for that would only rob them of their rewards (2:18-19). They have died with Christ and hence need not submit to legalistic rules (2:20-23). Furthermore, they have also been raised with Christ. So they should set their hearts on heavenly things (3:1-4), put to death sinful worldly practices (3:5-11), and clothe themselves with Christ's virtues (3:12-17). Stated in another way, believers are to seek spiritual values (3:1-4), put off the sins of the old life (3:5-11), and put on the virtues of the new life (3:12-17). This in turn should affect their relationships with other members of their families and society (3:18-4:1).

3:1. Since believers have not only died with Christ but **have also been raised with Christ** (cf. Rom. 6:8-10; Col. 2:12-13), they should **set their hearts on things above**. That is, believers' lives should be dominated by the pattern of heaven, bringing heavenly direction to their earthly duties. "Set" (*zēteite*) means "to seek or strive for earnestly" (cf. Rev. 9:6; 1 Cor. 7:27). Fixing their attention decisively toward "things above" involves centering their lives on the ascended (Eph. 4:10), glorified (John 17:5; Phil. 2:9) **Christ, who is seated at the right hand of God** (Ps. 110:1; Luke 22:69; Acts 2:33; 5:31; Rom. 8:34; Eph. 1:20; Heb. 1:3, 13; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2; 1 Peter 3:22). This is His seat of divine authority because He has defeated the forces of evil and death (Heb. 2:14-15).

3:2. Also Paul wrote, **Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.** That is, concentrate your concern on the eternal, not the temporal. “Fix [your] eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal” (2 Cor. 4:18). The similarity of the two commands in Colossians 3:1-2 reinforces their impact. “Set your hearts on things above” is *ta anō zēteite*, and “Set your minds on things above” is *ta anō phroneite*. The first suggests striving; the second suggests concentrating. Paul was not enjoining an other-world asceticism; he had just condemned that (2:20-23). He was saying that life *in this world* will be better if it is lived by a power *beyond this world*, the power of the resurrected, ascended, glorified Christ. The “earthly things” (*ta epi tēs gēs*, lit., “things upon the earth,” 3:2; the same Gr. words are used in v. 5) to be avoided are moral, not physical (cf. immorality, impurity, lust, etc., in v. 5). Paul was not encouraging a kind of Gnostic disdain for material things. Every physical thing God created, including the body and sex, is good (cf. Gen. 1:27-30; 1 Tim. 4:1-4). However, since having a physical body does give occasion for the works of the (moral) flesh (cf. Rom. 7:4-6), Paul warned against setting one’s affections in this area and perverting God’s purpose for them.

3:3-4. At the moment of his salvation, a Christian **died** to the evil of the “flesh,” the sin nature (Rom. 6:3-8; Col. 2:11), and his **life is now hidden with Christ in God.** “Hidden” implies both concealment and safety; both invisibility and security. He is not yet glorified, but he is secure and safe in **Christ.** In fact, Christ is his very **life.** Christ said He was going where “the world will not see Me anymore” (John 14:19). But when He will appear at the Rapture (1 Thes. 4:16-18), believers **will appear with Him** and will be glorified. As John put it, “We know that when He appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is” (i.e., believers will be glorified as He is glorified; 1 John 3:2; cf. 1 Cor. 13:12; Col. 1:27). So Paul added a new direction to the believers’ focus of attention: they should look *upward* to Christ’s reign over them in heaven and also *forward* to His return for them in the clouds.

3:5-6. Paul’s imagery moved from death and life to putting clothes on and off. **Put to death... whatever belongs to your earthly nature.** The Greek tense in this command suggests a decisive action, as if Paul said, “Mortify it! Do it now! Do it resolutely!” Of course, God has already done it, but Christians are to *know* this, *count* it to be true, and *act* accordingly (Rom. 6:5-14). In other words, they are not to go on living as though they are still alive to sin when in actuality they are not. They are to put away that old life, which springs from their earthly natures. “Whatever belongs to your earthly nature” is literally “the members that are upon the earth” (*ta melē ta epi tēs gēs*). These contrast with the “things above” (Col. 3:1; *ta epi tēs gēs* is also used in v. 2). This “earthly nature” is the “old self” (or “sinful nature” [2:13], or “old man” [KJV]; Eph. 4:22; Col. 3:9). Some take this to mean the persons Christians were before conversion, whereas others take it (more likely) to refer to the evil tendencies in believers today (i.e., their “old natures”). Even if it means the former, the net effect is the same: they should not live as they did before, because they are new creations in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17). The list of evil activities flowing from man’s earthly nature includes **immorality** (*porneia*, “fornication”), **impurity** (a wider perversion), **lust** (*pathos*, “uncontrollable passion”), **evil desires** (“illicit craving”), and **greed** (or coveting), **which is idolatry** (because it seeks satisfaction in things below and not above). Similar lists of sins appear often in Paul’s writings (Rom. 1:29-31; 1 Cor. 5:11; 6:9; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 5:3-5). Paul added that **because of these evils the wrath of God is coming.** The words “is coming” render the present tense *erchetai* (lit., “comes”). This suggests that God’s wrath has already begun (cf. John 3:36). It will, of course, culminate in His future climactic visitation on evil (Rom. 2:5; 2 Thes. 1:7-9).

3:7-9. Though the Colossian Christians **used to walk** [live] **in these evil ways**, before they came to know Christ, Paul commanded that they do so no more. **Now you must rid yourselves of all such things.** The word “rid” (*apothesthe*) means “to put off” like a suit of clothes. In its ethical use here it means “throw it off like a dirty shirt” (cf. Rom. 13:12; Eph. 4:22, 25; Heb. 12:1; James 1:21; 1 Peter 2:1). In the Bible, behavior is often likened to a garment (e.g., Job 29:14; Ps. 35:26; Isa. 11:5; Rom. 13:12; 1 Thes. 5:8). Repulsive habits—**anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language**—do not fit or suit Christians. They are unbecoming to believers (cf. Eph. 4:17, 31). “Anger” (*orgēn*) is a chronic attitude of smoldering hatred, whereas “rage” (*thymon*) is an acute outburst. *Thymos* elsewhere is rendered “outbursts of anger” (2 Cor. 12:20), “fits of rage” (Gal. 5:20), and “rage” (Eph. 4:31). “Malice” (*kakian*, the vice that lies below anger and rage as their root) is forbidden, as is “slander” (*blasphēmian*, “railing or evil speaking”). “Filthy language” (*aischrologian*) is shameful or abrasive speech. Neither should Christians **lie** (cf. Eph. 4:25) for truthfulness is essential in followers of the One who is “the Truth” (John 14:6). Lying and all other vices are inappropriate for a Christian for at salvation he discarded his **old self** (lit., “the old man,” i.e., the former sinful way of living, characteristic of the unregenerate; Col. 2:11, 13a) **with its practices** (cf. “died” in 2:20; 3:3).

3:10. A Christian is to **put on** (cf. v. 12) **the new self** (new way of life or disposition). Hence his conduct should be in accord with his new position. This “new self” needs constant renewal or refreshing—it is **being renewed** (pres. tense), in order to keep it victorious over sin. Paul also expressed this idea of continual renewal in 2 Corinthians 4:16 (“Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day”); in Romans 12:2 (being “transformed by the renewing of your mind”); and in Ephesians 4:23 (“to be made new in the attitude of your minds”). This renewal of the new self is **in knowledge** (*eis epignōsin*; cf. Col. 1:9; 2:2). It takes place as a believer comes to a personal, deep knowledge of and fellowship with Christ. And the renewal is **in** (*kat’* “according to”) **the image of its Creator**; its goal is to make believers like Him, for the “new self [was] created to be like God” (Eph. 4:24). Adam was created in the image of God (Gen. 1:27), which included a moral and intellectual likeness to God. Though this image was not erased (but only effaced) by the Fall (Gen. 9:6; James 3:9), yet it was corrupted and needs to be repaired and renewed. Christians become increasingly like the Lord as they refresh their new natures, yielding to the Holy Spirit’s sanctifying work. And in the resurrection believers “shall bear the likeness of the Man [Christ] from heaven” (1 Cor. 15:49). Then the task of restoring God’s image will be complete, for “we shall be like Him” (1 John 3:2).

3:11. In Christ distinctions are removed. These include national distinctions (**Greek or Jew**; Jews called all those outside their nation Greeks; cf. Gal. 3:28); religious distinctions (**circumcised or uncircumcised**); cultural distinctions (anyone foreign to Greek culture was a **barbarian**, and a **Scythian** was a wild, savage nomad); and economic or social distinctions (**slave or free**). If a Greek, an uncircumcised person, a barbarian, a Scythian, or a slave became a believer, he was a “new creation” (2 Cor. 5:17), a “new self” (Col. 3:10), just like a Jew or free person who became a Christian. For **Christ is all, and is in all**. That is, normal human distinctions are overruled and transfigured by one’s union in Christ. All barriers are destroyed in Christ, and all believers are truly “created equal.” Because of their new lives in Christ all believers are called on to clothe themselves in virtue, letting Christ’s peace rule their hearts. His Word should dwell in them richly, and they should do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus.

3:12. Again Paul called on believers to take a decisive action: **Clothe yourselves** (*endysasthe*). Because they have “put on (*endysamenoī*) the new self” (v. 10), they should live accordingly, with appropriate attributes and attitudes. In verses 8-9 Paul listed six vices (anger, rage, malice, slander, filthy language, and lying). Now in contrast to them, Christians—as **God’s chosen people** (cf. Rom. 8:33; Titus 1:1), **holy** (“separated to God”; cf. Col. 1:2) **and dearly loved** (cf. Rom. 5:8; 1 John 4:9-11, 19)—are to have several virtues. These include **compassion** (*splanchna oiktirmou*, lit., “tender sympathy of heartfelt compassion”—an unusually touching expression; in Phil. 2:1 Paul joined these two nouns with “and”), **kindness** (benevolence in action; cf. 2 Cor. 6:6), **humility** (a lowly attitude toward God; cf. Phil. 2:3; 1 Peter 5:5), **gentleness** (*prautēta*), meekness, a lowly attitude toward others, **and patience** (*makrothymian*, self-restraint, a steady response in the face of provocation; cf. Col. 1:11). The last three of these are mentioned in the Greek in the same order in Ephesians 4:2; and Galatians 5:22-23 in the Greek includes three of them: patience and gentleness, as well as kindness.

3:13. Furthermore, believers are to **bear with each other** (i.e., “put up with each other”) with the attitudes just mentioned in v. 12. Also they are to **forgive whatever grievances** (complaints) they **may have against** others. How? By forgiving **as the Lord forgave** them, graciously and freely (Eph. 4:32). Grudges have no place in a Christian’s life for they may lead to the sins mentioned in Colossians 3:8-9.

3:14. But **over all these virtues** Christians are to **put on love**. As Paul wrote elsewhere, “The greatest of these is love” (1 Cor. 13:13). In one’s catalog of virtues love should be the cover, because it is of supreme importance and is the perfect bond, holding **them all together in perfect unity**.

3:15. Believers are also to **let the peace of Christ rule in their hearts** because they are **called to peace** as **members of one body**. The closer believers are to Christ (and His likeness), the closer they are to each other. In interpersonal relationships “peace” (transcendent, God-given tranquillity) should rule (*brabeuetō*, “arbitrate, decide every debate”; a word used only here in the NT; cf. *katabrabeuetō*, “decide against,” 2:18). Christ’s followers who have put on the virtues Paul listed (3:12-14), are concerned about being arbitrated in every trying circumstance by His peace, not by their wrangling. Also Christians are to **be thankful** (cf. Phil. 4:6; Col. 1:12; 3:16-17; 4:2; 1 Thes. 5:18). An attitude of gratitude contributes to an enjoyment of spiritual tranquillity, whereas grumbling makes for inner agitation.

3:16. The new life Christians must “put on” is one in which **the Word of Christ** dwells **richly**. Christ’s words were recorded by Spirit-guided apostles (cf. John 14:26; 16:13; 20:31). The words of the Bible, God’s written Word, are to **dwell in** believers. That is, by study, meditation, and application of the Word, it

becomes a permanent abiding part of one's life. When the words of Christ become part of a believer's nature, they spring forth naturally and daily in **psalms** (songs from the Book of Psalms), **hymns** (other songs of praise), and **spiritual songs** (as opposed to secular odes) **with gratitude** (*en tē chariti*; lit., "in grace"). This can mean either (a) God's grace, (b) graciousness in Christian singing, or (c) Christian thanks. As suggested by the NIV it probably has the third meaning. Such joyful singing is not only to please oneself or others but is to be praise **to God**. Through this Spirit-filled kind of life (cf. Eph. 5:18-19), Christians can **teach** (instruct) and **admonish** ("counsel") **one another** (Col. 3:16; cf. "admonishing and teaching" in 1:28) if it is done **with all wisdom** (*sophia*; cf. 1:9; 2:3; 4:5) and not tactlessly (cf. Gal. 6:1).

3:17. Whatever one does (cf. v. 23)—for there is no sacred-secular split in God's eyes; He is Sovereign over all—**whether in word or deed** (by lip or life) should **all** be done **in the name of the Lord Jesus** (i.e., for His glory; cf. 1 Cor. 10:31) and with a thankful spirit (cf. Phil. 4:6; 1 Thes. 5:18). Three times in three verses Paul mentioned thankfulness: "be thankful" (Col. 3:15) "sing... with gratitude" (v. 16), and give **thanks to God the Father** (v. 17).

Commentary from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary

This text is about practicing godly virtues, empowered by our new life in Christ. The context of the passage teaches us that we have a new life to live in Christ (Col. 3:3), which, of course, has come from Him. He has bestowed His grace upon us from above (vss. 1-2). We are therefore to put off the old man (vs. 9) and kill off all of his deeds (vss. 5-9); instead, we are to live out the life of a new man in Christ (vs. 10). That means embracing godly virtues. We see in the passage an emphasis both on the foundation and the practice of these virtues. First of all, part of the foundation is that we are now the "elect of God." This refers to the privilege we have as believers, having been chosen to be God's special people (cf. 1 Pet. 2:4-5). We have a distinct calling to live for God in this world. The lost do not belong to God in the same sense that believers do. Believers are the elect of God. Another part of the foundation is that we are "holy," or sanctified, set apart unto God to be instruments of His in the world. And we also are "beloved," that is, especially loved by God. We have received a loving and sanctifying call to salvation; therefore our identity is not what it once was. We must learn to live in keeping with our new identity as God's elect, holy, and beloved people. Our foundation in Christ argues for new characteristics and qualities to form in our lives through the presence of His Spirit. Our text lists five key virtues that should emerge. First, there are "bowels of mercies," a phrase that means that mercy and love should characterize our inmost beings. Since we have been dealt with in mercy by the Lord Jesus, we should heartily desire to be merciful to others. Next, we are to display "kindness," a term that simply means to be good to others. The grace of God in our lives mellows us and takes out the harder edges from our spirits so that we can treat others kindly. Third, we should be living with "humbleness of mind." The term used here refers to an attitude that is content to be unrecognized. We no longer care unduly about being noticed; all we want is the Lord's will to be done in the lives of people. Fourth, we are to seek meekness, a gentle and courteous manner. We are to deal with others in a soft and yielding way, not with harshness and ugliness. Finally, we are to be long-suffering. Of course, this is a term for patience. It means going a long distance in our dealings with people and not being easily provoked. New life in Christ should bring a different practice to our lives. As God's grace works its way into our hearts and spirits, it begins to be evident in how we live. The Lord Jesus has given us new life and a renewed inner man. Are we aware of these virtues, and do we see them emerging in our practical Christian living? As we grow in Christ, these virtues should be as readily seen as a new set of clothes, for we are new people in Christ.

Lesson Introduction and Background

From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Often in classic TV or movie Westerns, a new sheriff comes into a corrupt locale and proceeds to "clean things up." A twentieth-century true version of the story is found in the life of Sheriff Buford Pusser (1937-1974). In the late 1950s, Pusser moved from his childhood home in McNairy County, Tennessee, to earn a living as a local wrestler in Chicago under the name "Buford the Bull." Pusser returned home in 1962 after marrying. He then became police chief of Adamsville, Tennessee, a position his father once held. After the sheriff of McNairy County was killed in an auto accident, Pusser was elected to that position. Despite being the youngest sheriff in Tennessee's history, Pusser promptly began trying to eliminate organized crime in his county. His one-man war on moonshine, prostitution, and gambling along the Tennessee-Mississippi state line became legendary. The 1973 movie *Walking Tall* was based on Pusser's story. The film spawned sequels, a series, and a remake. There

is much that is corrupt with our world. But how can we make a difference when problems seem overwhelming? Paul tells us how to be a true agent of change in our world.

The letter to the Colossians is one of the four “prison epistles,” letters written by Paul while under arrest in Rome. The other three are Ephesians, Philippians, and Philemon. The letter we call 2 Timothy was also written by Paul while imprisoned (later), but that letter is grouped with the pastoral epistles. We estimate that Paul wrote the four prison epistles about the year AD 63. The letter under consideration was addressed to the church in Colossae. That town was situated on the Lycus River in southwest Asia Minor (modern Turkey) on an important commercial highway. The church was made up primarily of Gentiles. The book of Acts does not mention Paul’s being in Colossae, but we believe that Philemon (the recipient of a letter from Paul that bears his name) lived there. This is because Onesimus, the slave whom Paul sent back to Philemon (Philemon 10-12), lived in Colossae for he is mentioned in Colossians 4:9 as “one of” the Colossians. We find powerful doctrinal content in the first two chapters of Colossians, given by Paul to combat false teaching in the church. He refers to this as “philosophy” (Colossians 2:8), and it seems to have included false teaching about the nature of Christ. As he often does in his letters, Paul follows the opening doctrinal section with practical teachings on how to live out these great truths. Coming to chapter 3, Paul twice encourages his readers to focus on things above (Colossians 3:1, 2). This means that their behavior should be according to God’s standards, not earthly standards. They should conduct themselves in expectations of Christ’s return (3:4). This is a way of exhorting them not to be engaged in activities that would embarrass themselves if their Lord made a sudden appearance. This brings us to today’s text.

Major Theme Analysis

(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

(NOTE: The lesson points and cross-references were adapted from previous SS Lesson dated 02/17/2013)

Vices to Eliminate (3:5-9)

5 Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

6 Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience,

7 in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them.

8 But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth.

9 Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds,

Immoral Behavior (5-7)

Eliminate because we sin against our own body (1 Cor 6:18)

18 Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body.

Eliminate because it is an act of our sinful nature (Gal 5:19-21)

19 The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; 20 idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions 21 and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Eliminate because we are God's holy people (Eph 5:3)

3 But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people.

Eliminate because we should be sanctified (1 Thess 4:3)

It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality;

Hostile Attitudes (8)

Eliminate because it leads to evil (Ps 37:8)

Refrain from anger and turn from wrath; do not fret--it leads only to evil.

Eliminate because it stirs up dissension (Prov 29:22)

An angry man stirs up dissension, and a hot-tempered one commits many sins.

Eliminate because we will be subject to judgment (Matt 5:22)

But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, 'Raca,' is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell.

Eliminate because it could lead to destruction (Gal 5:15)

If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.

Eliminate because we shouldn't let the sun go down while we are angry (Eph 4:26)

"In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry,

Improper Speech (8-9)

Eliminate because it causes disputes to break out (Prov 17:14)

Starting a quarrel is like breaching a dam; so drop the matter before a dispute breaks out.

Eliminate because it means we are still worldly (1 Cor 3:3)

You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere men?

Eliminate because we must only speak those things that are helpful (Eph 4:29)

Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.

Eliminate because it is out of place (Eph 5:4)

Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving.

Meanings of types improper speech (From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary)

Slander describes the kind of insulting talk that can be directed toward God or toward other people. *Filthy language* translates a Greek word that suggests communication that is abusive or obscene. This is another term that seems especially relevant in our day. Nearly every movie and television program contains what might be described as *filthy language*. The language is used either to shock or to provide a twisted form of humor, neither of which is an acceptable use of God's precious gift of speech.

Virtues to Cultivate (3:10-17)

10 and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,
11 where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.

12 Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering;

13 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.

14 But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection.

15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.

16 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.

17 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.

Remember Who We Are (10-11)

We are a new creation (2 Cor 5:17)

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!

We are God's workmanship (Eph 2:10)

For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

We were created to be like God (Eph 4:24)

and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

We are transformed (Rom 12:2)

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is-his good, pleasing and perfect will.

We are in Jesus (1 Cor 1:30)

It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God-that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.

We are of Christ who is of God (1 Cor 3:23)

and you are of Christ, and Christ is of God.

We are heirs to the promise of Abraham (Gal 3:29)

If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

A Merciful spirit (12)

By cultivating compassion (Eph 4:32)

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

By cultivating peace loving (James 3:17)

But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.

By cultivating harmony (1 Peter 3:8)

Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble.

By cultivating cheerful mercy (Rom 12:8)

if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.

By cultivating merciful judgment (James 2:13)

because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment!

By cultivating being a witness to the lost (Jude 22-23)

22 Be merciful to those who doubt; 23 snatch others from the fire and save them; to others show mercy, mixed with fear-hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh.

A Forgiving spirit (13)

By forgiving so that God will forgive us (Matt 6:14-15)

14 For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

By forgiving as many times as wronged (Matt 18:21-22)

21 Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?" 22 Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.

By forgiving during prayer (Mark 11:25)

And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins."

By forgiving because God is merciful (Luke 6:36)

Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

By forgiving because mercy triumphs over judgment (James 2:13)

because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment!

By forgiving so that Satan will now outwit us (2 Cor 2:10-11)

10 If you forgive anyone, I also forgive him. And what I have forgiven-if there was anything to forgive-I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake, 11 in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes.

A Loving spirit (14)

By loving others (John 13:34)

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.

By being willing to lay down our life (John 15:13)

Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.

By making love an outstanding debt (Rom 13:8)

Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law.

By seeking love as if it was the greatest gift (1 Cor 13:13)

And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

By living a life of love (Eph 5:2)

and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

By responding to the teaching of God (1 Thess 4:9)

Now about brotherly love we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other.

By having a pure heart and a good conscience (1 Tim 1:5)

The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.

By loving others deeply (1 Peter 4:8)

Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.

A Peaceful spirit (15)

By depending on the peace Jesus gives us (John 14:27)

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

By relying on the power of Jesus' peace who overcame the world (John 16:33)

"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

By the justification through faith (Rom 5:1)

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

By the reconciliation of Jesus (Eph 2:13-14)

13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. 14 For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility,

By remembering that God's peace transcends understanding (Phil 4:7)

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

A Grateful spirit (16-17)

By always giving thanks to God for everything (Eph 5:20)

always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

By giving thanks to God regardless of the circumstances (1 Thess 5:18)

give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

By offering sacrifices of thanks to God (Heb 13:15)

Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that confess his name.

By having and sharing our faith so that God gets the thanksgiving (2 Cor 4:15)

All this is for your benefit, so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God.

By always praying with thanksgiving (Phil 4:6)

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

By devoting ourselves to thankful prayer (Col 4:2)

Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Concluding Thoughts from Thomas Constable

Paul moved from doctrine to practice, from the truth to its application in daily living. He began this next major section of the epistle by setting forth a basic principle. Then he explained the proper method of living. This led him to discuss the Christian's fundamental relationships. He concluded this section by summarizing the essential practice.

Verse 3

Our life is hidden away with Christ. This statement that the believer died with Christ in the past (aorist tense in Greek) and continues to live with Christ in the present (perfect tense) suggests three thoughts. Our life draws nourishment from secret springs (cf. John 14:19; Philippians 3:20). Our life is as safe as a deposit locked in a bank vault. Our life is one with Christ who is in the bosom of the Father. [Note: Johnson, 479:212-13.] "The aorist is simply a powerful metaphor for the fact that when they believed in Christ in baptism they were putting their previous way of life to death and having it buried out of sight. Consequently, it should no longer be a factor in their new way of life." [Note: Dunn, p206.] For the false teachers, the treasures of wisdom were hidden in their secret books (Gr. *apokryphoi*), but for believers Christ is the treasury of Wisdom of Solomon, and our life is hidden (Gr. *kekryptai*) in Him.

Verse 4

"Sometimes we say of a Prayer of Manasseh, "Music is his life-Sport is his life-He lives for his work." Such a man finds life and all that life means in music, in sport, in work, as the case may be. For the Christian, Christ is his life. Jesus Christ dominates his thought and fills his life." [Note: Barclay, p179. Cf. Philippians 1:21.] "Whenever" indicates that a revelation of Christ in the future is certain, but its time is unknown. The Greek word *phaneroo* ("revealed") stresses the open display of Christ at His coming. This is probably a reference to the Rapture. When He is revealed to us then, our lives will no longer be hidden in Him but revealed for what they are in our glorification. The Rapture will be a glorious revelation of Him to us and us in our glorified state. Now our eternal life is hidden (Colossians 3:3), but then it will be manifest. "In Colossians . . . there is an emphasis on realized eschatology. Within the "already-not yet" tension the stress falls upon the former, called forth by the circumstances of the letter.... The "already" of salvation needed to be asserted repeatedly over against those who were interested in the heavenly realm but who had false notions about it, believing it could be reached by legalistic observances, knowledge, visionary experiences and the like.. . "But if the "already" pole received the emphasis, the "not yet" of salvation still needed to be mentioned, and here in Colossians 3:4 we find a clear future reference." [Note: O'Brien, Colossians . . . , pp171-72.] In view of this prospect the Colossians and we need not pursue another system that claims to provide more than we have in Christ. God has provided all we need for acceptance with Him and godly living in Christ. All we need to do is act on the implications of these truths, which Paul proceeded to help his readers do.

Verse 5

In view of our actual position (Colossians 3:1) we should adopt a certain attitude toward our present phase of experience. This will help us to become what we are. The key word translated "consider ... as dead" is an aorist imperative and means "put to death." There must be a decisive initial act (aorist tense) that introduces a settled attitude (present tense). [Note: Bruce, Commentary on ..., p267.] "Despite the power of their having been identified with Christ in his death, there were still things, parts of their old lives, habits of hand and mind, which tied them "to the earth" and hindered the outworking of the "mind set on what is above."" [Note: Dunn, p212.] To put something to death is never pleasant. "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. Song of Solomon , 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 (cf. Romans 8:13)." [Note: Johnson, 481:24.] Paul's first list deals with sexual practices. Lists of virtues and vices were common in the ethical systems of the ancient world, and the imagery of putting off and on was also well-known. [Note: Dunn, p211; O'Brien, Colossians . . . , pp179-81. Cf. Romans 1:29-32; 1 Corinthians 5:9-11; 6:9-10; Galatians 5:19-23; Philippians 4:8; 1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 4:3; et al. See Ren A. Lpez, "A Study of Pauline Passages with Vice Lists," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 168:671 (July-September 2011):301-16.] Immorality (Gr. *porneia*) refers to illicit sexual intercourse. Impurity (*akatharsia*) in any form is in view, especially moral impurity in this context. Passion (*pathos*) means uncontrolled illegitimate desire. Evil desire (*epithymian kaken*) means any evil desire in a more general sense. Greed (*pleonexian*, lit.

"desire to have more") is any materialistic desire, including lust, that disregards the rights of others. It is "the arrogant and ruthless assumption that all other persons and things exist for one's own benefit." [Note: G. B. Caird, Paul's Letters from Prison, p205.]

Verses 5-11

1. Things to put off 3:5-11

On the basis of their position in Christ, Paul urged his readers to separate from the practices of their former way of life. He did this to enable them to realize in their experience all that Jesus Christ could produce in and through them. Three imperatives indicate Paul's main points: consider as dead (lit. put to death, Colossians 3:5), put aside (Colossians 3:8), and do not lie (Colossians 3:9).

Verses 5-17

B. The proper method 3:5-17

"Colossians 3:1-4 has provided the perspective from which the daily life of the Colossian Christians should be lived out. Now follows more specific advice that should help them the better to carry out the thematic exhortation to "walk in him" (Colossians 2:6)." [Note: Dunn, p211.]

Verses 6-9

Such behavior will bring God's wrath eventually. That Isaiah, God will discipline Christians as well as non-believers who practice these things. These activities normally characterize the unsaved, so Christians are to lay them aside (Colossians 3:8; cf. Matthew 5:29-30; Romans 8:13; Ephesians 5:3-14). "The Christian must kill self-centeredness; he must regard as dead all private desires and ambitions. There must be in his life a radical transformation of the will, and a radical shift of the centre. Everything which would keep him from fully obeying God and fully surrendering to Christ must be surgically excised." [Note: Barclay, pp180-81.] The phrase "the wrath of God" (Colossians 3:6) is usually eschatological in the New Testament and refers to the Tribulation period (cf. 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 1 Thessalonians 5:9; Romans 5:9). That is probably its reference here too. Paul's second list deals with sins of speech. Anger (Gr. *orge*) is a settled attitude of hostility. Wrath (*thymos*) means a verbal outburst of evil passion. Malice (*kakia*) is ill will, a vicious disposition that results in hurt to one's neighbor. Slander (*blasphemia*) refers to insulting, injurious, malicious speech in general. Abusive speech (*aischrologia*) means filthy, disgraceful, dishonorable speech. Lying (*pseudesthe*) refers to deceptive, distorting, untruthful speech. The imperative command against lying is very strong. Paul said, Never lie. The reason given (Colossians 3:9) applies to all the preceding activities. The "old self" is the person the Christian was before God united him or her with Christ.

Verse 10

The "new self" is who the Christian is after his or her union with Christ. One writer argued that "the new man" refers to the church, the body of Christ. [Note: Darrell L. Bock, "'The New Man' as Community in Colossians and Ephesians," in Integrity of Heart, Skillfulness of Hands, pp158-60.] But this is a minority view. Colossians 3:10 describes the process of individual sanctification. "True knowledge" (*epignosis*) is full knowledge of God and His will. Sanctification results in increasing likeness to Christ. Only by sanctification can people attain to the full image of God and Christ that God created them to bear (Genesis 1:26-28).

Verse 11

There is no national or racial distinction that determines one's acceptability to God nor is there any religious, cultural, or social distinction. Jesus Christ is essentially all that we need for new birth and growth. He indwells every believer and permeates all the relationships of life. "In all" probably means that Christ is everything (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:28; Galatians 3:28). [Note: See C. F. D. Moule, The Epistles ..., pp121-22.] A barbarian was one who did not know Greek; his or her language was foreign. Scythians originated from the Black Sea and Caspian Sea area, and the Greeks thought of them as the lowest type of barbarian. [Note: See McGee, 5:358.] "The new man lives in a new environment where all racial, national, religious, cultural and social distinctions are no more. Rather, Christ is now all that matters and in all who believe. The statement is one of the most inclusive in the New Testament and is amply supported by the pre-eminence of Christ in New Testament theology. It is a particularly appropriate statement for the Colossians and affords an excellent summary statement of the teaching of the letter. There are three realms, relevant to the Colossians, in which He is all. He is everything in *salvation*; hence there is no place for angelic mediation in God's redemptive work (cf. Colossians 1:18-22; Colossians 2:18). He is everything in *sanctification*; hence legality and asceticism are out of place in the Christian life (cf. Colossians 2:16-23). He is our life (Colossians 3:3-4). Finally, He is everything necessary for

human *satisfaction*; hence there is no need for philosophy, or the deeds of the old man (Colossians 1:26-28; Colossians 2:3; Colossians 2:9-10). He fills the whole life, and all else is hindering and harmful." [Note: Johnson, 481:28.]

Verses 12-14

Paul reminded the Colossians of who they were because an appreciation of who one is affects how he or she behaves. In doing prison evangelism, I have learned that many prisoners grew up hearing from their parent or parents that they would never amount to anything and would probably end up in prison. Thinking of themselves as "losers", they became what they thought they were. God has specially selected believers, has set them apart for great things, and has made them the objects of His love. In view of this privilege the following characteristics are only reasonable. "They deal with a believer's treatment of others, with his estimate of himself, and with his reaction to his treatment by others." [Note: Carson, p86.] Compassion (Gr. *splanchna oiktirmou*) shows sensitivity to those suffering and in need. Kindness (*chrestotes*) manifests itself in a sweet disposition and thoughtful interpersonal dealings. Humility (*tapeinophrosyne*) means having a realistic view of oneself, "thinking lowly of ourselves because we are so." [Note: C. J. Ellicott, A Critical and Grammatical Commentary on St. Paul's Epistles to the Philippians, Colossians, and to Philemon, p190.] Gentleness (*prautes*) means not behaving harshly, arrogantly, or self-assertively but with consideration for others. Patience (*makrothymia*) is the quality of being long-suffering, self-restraining. The following two qualities expand on the thought of patience. Forbearing (*anechomenoi*) means putting up with others and enduring discomfort. Forgiving (*charizomenoi*) involves not holding a grudge or grievance. Love (*agape*) means doing what is best for another person. All these features deal with the believer's interpersonal relationships. In this area of life especially the life of Christ should be visible in us. Love is the supremely important Christian virtue. We should put it on over all the other garments in this figure like a belt that holds the others in place (cf. Ephesians 6:14).

Verses 12-17

2. Things to put on: 3:12-17

Paul urged his readers not only to divest themselves of behavior that is inappropriate to their union with Christ but also to clothe themselves with attitudes and actions that are appropriate. He did so to complete their understanding of their responsibilities as Christians. "The emphasis in this section is on *motives*. Why should we put off the old deeds and put on the qualities of the new life? Paul explained four motives that ought to encourage us to walk in newness of life (Romans 6:4)." [Note: Wiersbe, 2:137.] ". . . I have written a message on this passage of Scripture, and I have called it, "What the Well-Dressed Christian Will Wear This Year."" [Note: McGee, 5:358.]

Verse 15

Four imperatives in Colossians 3:15-17 identify the precepts believers must follow. The first of these is "let rule." When Christians need to make choices, the peace that Christ produces in our hearts should be a determining factor. [Note: Lightfoot, p221.] We should choose what will result in peace between us and God, and between us and one another, if such a course of action lies within God's moral will (cf. John 14:27). "This directive forms, with the Word of God and the witness of the indwelling Spirit, one of the most important principles of guidance in the Christian life." [Note: Johnson, 481:30-31.] When these three indicators line up we can move ahead confidently. Realization of the unity of the body and the peace of Christ results in thankfulness that should also mark our behavior. The second imperative is "be thankful."

Verse 16

The third imperative is "let dwell." The "word of Christ," used only here in the New Testament, is Christ's teachings, not only during His earthly ministry but also in all of Scripture. His Word should permeate our whole being so that we make all decisions and plans in its light. ". . . as the rabbis later pointed out, he who dwells in a house is the master of the house, not just a passing guest ..." [Note: Dunn, p236.] "Thus we are to submit to the demands of the Christian message and let it become so deeply implanted within us as to control all our thinking." [Note: Vaughan, p216.] "Many saved people cannot honestly say that God's Word dwells in their hearts richly because they do not take time to read, study, and memorize it." [Note: Wiersbe, 2:140.] Teaching is the imparting of truth, and admonition is warning against error. We should perform these activities joyfully and with song. "Psalm" probably refers to the inspired Old Testament psalms. The word "psalms" implies that the believers sang them with musical accompaniment. Hymns are songs of praise and thanksgiving to God. Spiritual songs probably refer to expressions of Christian experience set to music. Thankfulness to God is to mark our singing too (cf. Colossians 3:15). [Note: See David F. Detwiler, "Church Music and Colossians 3:16," Bibliotheca Sacra 158:631 (July-September 2001):347-69.] "Whether with instrument or with voice or with both

it is all for naught if the adoration is not in the heart." [Note: Robertson, 4:505.] "One of the first descriptions of a Church service which we possess is that of Pliny, the Roman governor of Bithynia, who sent a report of the activities of the Christians to Trajan the Roman Emperor. In that report he said, "They meet at dawn to sing a hymn to Christ as God." The gratitude of the Church has always gone up to God in Christian praise and Christian song." [Note: Barclay, p191.] "It has often been noticed that the Colossian passage is parallel with Ephesians 5:18-20. In the latter passage the hymns and songs are the outgrowth of the filling of the Spirit, while in Colossians they are the result of the deep assimilation of the Word of God. In other words, the Word-filled Christian is a Spirit-filled Christian, and the examination of the two passages would save us from a great deal of error on this subject. Undisciplined emphasis on the Holy Spirit is accompanied too frequently by shallow grounding in the Word of God." [Note: Johnson, 481:32.]

Verse 17

This verse covers all other thoughts and actions. "The NT does not contain a detailed code of rules for the Christian, like those which were elaborated with ever-increasing particularity in rabbinical casuistry. Codes of rules, as Paul explains elsewhere (e.g. in Galatians 3:23 to Galatians 4:7), are suited to the period of immaturity when he and his readers were still under guardians; the son who has come to years of responsibility knows his father's will without having to be provided with a long list of "Do's" and "Don'ts [*sic*]." What the NT does provide is those basic principles of Christian living which may be applied to all the situations of life as they arise (cf. 1 Corinthians 10:21)." [Note: Bruce, Commentary on . . . , p285.] The basic principle, as opposed to a set of specific rules, is this. We should say all words and practice all deeds in harmony with the revelation of Jesus Christ, namely, under His authority and as His followers. The "name" comprehends everything revealed and known about the person bearing the name. Moreover we are to do all with thanksgiving to God. The fourth imperative is implicit in the Greek text, but the translators have supplied it in the English text: "Do." When faced with a question about what the Christian should do, Paul taught that we should simply ask ourselves what conduct would be appropriate for one identified with Christ. "What would Jesus do?" is quite similar. This approach is vastly different from the legal one that provides a specific command for every situation. In this contrast we see a basic difference between the New and Old Covenants.

(Adapted from URL: <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/dcc/colossians-3.html>)

Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Righteousness means doing the right thing. It is closely tied to the biblical understanding of justice: wanting to see the right thing done from God's perspective and according to his Word. The one who loves justice is the person who wants to see the right thing done for others. But sin stands in the way of that happening. Sin comes in two categories: acts of commission and acts of omission. God becomes angry not only when his commandments are actively broken but also when people fail to do what they should. When we commit unrighteous acts, we sin by commission; when we can correct an injustice we see but fail to act, we sin by omission. Both dishonor the name of the Lord Jesus. Both discredit what Paul says we have put on.

Practical Points from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary

1. We have been given very clear instructions on what should be removed from our lives {Col. 3: 5-8}
2. Since we have been made new in Christ, we are to be people who tell the truth at all times (vss. 9-10)
3. According to the Word of God, everyone is the same: We are sinners in need of a Savior (vs. 11)
4. As Christians, our lives should be marked by love and kindness, among other things (vss. 12-14)
5. Our lives should overflow with the words of Jesus (vss. 15-16)
6. Everything we do and everything we say should be done to please Christ (vs. 17)