

COLOSSIANS CHAPTER THREE  
YOUR LIFE IN CHRIST

“Ye died, and your life is hid with Christ.” (3:3)

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**3:1. If then ye were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God. 2. Set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are upon the earth.**

### *Translation and Paraphrase*

3:1. Therefore since you were raised with Christ (at the time of your baptism, from your state of spiritual death), be seeking the (holy and spiritual) things that are above, where Christ (now) is, seated at the right hand of God.

2. Set your mind on (the) things that are above; (be earnest about them); and (set) not (your minds) upon the things upon the earth (which are disappointing and perishing).

### *Notes*

1. Colossians chapter three begins a new section in the outline, dealing with our new life in Christ. It is a practical application of the preceding discussion of Christ's supremacy over false doctrine. In all of Paul's epistles to Gentile churches, he wrote a section of practical instructions in the closing parts of the epistles, following the doctrinal sections. See Romans 12:1ff; Gal. 5:16ff; Eph. 4:1ff; Phil. 3:17ff; etc.
2. Col. 3:1-4 reminds us again that we are not made right with God by keeping ordinances, or abusing the body (Col. 2:20-23), or any other such works. We are saved because we have been raised with Christ through faith in the working of God.

Then, having been thus saved, we are called upon to seek heavenly things, and to do good works (Col. 3:1, 12ff). Our new life and good works follow our being raised together with Christ. The works are not the cause of our being raised with Christ; they follow it.

Through our deliberate decision to put off our sins, and through faith in God's working, and through baptism (2:11-12), we are raised with Christ from the dead. Having thus been raised, we are made alive, and all our trespasses are forgiven. Then we can apply ourselves to the development of Godly character and to good works, not in order to be saved, but because we are saved.

Multitudes of people are not sure they are saved, because they feel that they are to be saved by works. They wonder, "Do I attend church enough times each week? Do I pray long enough each day to satisfy God? Does God require that I wear black clothes, or long-sleeved garments? Have I given enough money to pay what is due?"

To such people salvation hinges on what they DO, rather than upon accepting the promises of Christ. We can never do enough to merit the forgiveness of our sins. The Colossians had a mistaken idea about this. To them salvation was conditioned upon keeping the sabbath day, or not eating certain meats, or upon voluntary acts of humility, or on abusing and neglecting the body in various ways. Abuse of the body, seeing visions, and keeping regulations—these are not the gospel method of obtaining, nor of holding onto salvation.

3. Col. 3:1-4 is a positive paragraph, which tells us to set our minds on things above, where Christ is. It is followed by a negative paragraph (3:5-11), which lists sins to shun. This is the proper order to achieve victory in our lives. Unless we are given positive things to believe and do, we cannot succeed in keeping negative and unwholesome deeds out.

Some preachers make the mistake in their sermons of giving overly candid descriptions of sins, and then denouncing these. The denouncing may be good, but the descriptions may do little except to arouse sinful imaginations. It is better to major in the positive alternatives to sin, and minor in detailed descriptions and condemnations of sin.

4. "If then ye were raised together with Christ . . ." This clause is a simple conditional expression, which assumes that what is stated is true. We are assuredly raised with Christ. Col. 2:12, 30 has already revealed to us that we died and rose in the act of baptism. Compare Rom. 6:1-4.

It should be as great a surprise to see a Christian living in sin, as it would be to see a man who died walking about in the midst of living people.

5. We are to seek (literally, "Be seeking") the things above. The things above would include such things as the Holy Spirit, a Godlike character, and treasures in heaven. (Matt. 6:19-20, 33). All of these things we seek, not to discover them, but to obtain them for ourselves.
6. "Above" does not refer to any particular upward spot in space, but to where Christ is. Anything that is away from the earth may be legitimately spoken of as "above."
7. Christ is seated at the right hand of God, the place of honor. (Psalm 110:1; Matt. 26:64; Eph. 1:20; Heb. 1:3; 8:1). The teaching of Christ's ascended glory is one of the great doctrines, truths, and comforts of the church. (Acts 1:6-11; 2:33-36; Mark 16:19; I Tim. 3:16).
8. The statement in Col. 3:2 that we are to set our minds on things above, points out that we are not to seek the things above (3:1) as a legalistic duty, which we must do or be damned; but that we seek them because we have truly set our hearts and minds upon them; we truly desire to obtain these things. We do not seek the Lord because we must do so, but because we love Him. We have our minds set upon Him.

To achieve this state of mind, we may at first have to deliberately discipline and direct our thinking. But soon the glory of the things above will possess us, and dominate every desire and meditation within us.

9. We are not to set our minds upon things that are upon the earth—its honors, offices, wealth, learning, material possessions, and comforts.

Yet in another sense we should set our minds upon the things on the earth—upon its lost condition, the sorrows of people, its hunger, pain, war; its deluded state of mind. Only by thinking about these things will we be moved to try to do something about them.

We know many Christian brothers who have left houses, wives, brethren, parents, children, for the kingdom of God's sake (Luke 18:29). These have both set their minds upon the world, so as to help it; and at the same time have not set their minds upon the world, not seeking its comforts and honors.

**3. For ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God. 4. When Christ, who is our life, shall be manifested, then shall ye also with him be manifested in glory.**

### *Translation and Paraphrase*

3. (It is necessary that you seek the heavenly things,) for you died (both in your sins and unto your sins), and your life is now hidden with Christ in God, (that is, it is kept laid up in heaven by God alongside Christ; you are raised with him).

4. When Christ (he who is) our life shall be manifested (at his second coming), then shall you also be manifested with him in glory. (You will be raised in glorious immortal bodies like his.)

### *Notes*

1. Col. 3:3-4 gives some reasons why we should seek the things above, and set our minds sincerely upon them. The reasons are: (1) We are dead to the world; (2) Our life is hid with Christ in God; (3) We shall share openly in Christ's magnificent glory when He comes back.
2. "Ye died!" Yes, we died to sin and to the world on that day when we truly believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, and truly repented. We died when we said, "Lord, I'll do whatever you want me to do, and I'll quit doing what you do not want me to do." Having made that decision, we were baptized, buried with Him by baptism; and in that same act we were raised with Christ. (Col. 2:21; Rom. 6:2-5).

Have you died unto sin and the world, and been buried with Christ?

3. Our life is not *hid* with Christ in God, that is, it is kept laid up with God in heaven. It is hidden only to the world, which does not comprehend that we are truly children of God himself. "For this cause the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved now are we children of God, and it is

not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that when he shall be manifested, we shall be like him, for we shall see him even as he is." (I John 3:1-2).

4. The fact that our lives are *hidden* with Christ brings to our minds the fact that we are spiritually secure in Christ. No one can take us out of God's hands. Jesus said about His sheep, "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of my hand." (John 10:28-29). Many other Scriptures testify to the security of the child of God. (See Jude 24). Christ will not cast us out (John 6:37). No one can separate us from God's love. (Romans 8:38-39).

We are keenly aware that it is possible for us to depart from the living God and be lost. (Heb. 3:12). But we are persuaded from the scriptures that this never needs to happen. God will do His part to see that it does not take place. We need only hold fast to Him.

5. Paul's observation that our life is *hid* with Christ is possibly an allusion to the Gnostic claims that they had found the *hidden* wisdom. What they thought they had found apart from Jesus Christ, is all concentrated in Him.
6. When Christ comes back, our bodies are instantly going to be changed, to become powerful, glorious, immortal. (I Cor. 15:51-53, 42-44; Phil. 3:20-21). This hope is so marvelous that "the earnest expectation of the (whole) creation waits for the revealing of the sons of God." Creation waits, as it were breathlessly, for your revealing! (Rom. 8:19).

At that time many a lady with crippled limbs and wrinkled features will be revealed for what she is—a soul more beautiful than the fairest and strongest of earth's daughters.

7. The second coming of Christ is a motive to cause us to seek the things above and set our hearts upon them.
8. The words "Christ . . . our life" bring a full glory to our emotions and hopes. Our life is not only hid in Christ. It is Christ. (Gal. 2:20).

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**5. Put to death therefore your members which are upon the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry; 6. for which things' sake cometh the wrath of God upon the sons of disobedience:**

*Translation and Paraphrase*

5. Put to death, therefore, the (sins done by your physical) members upon the earth. (Bring them into such complete control that it will be as if they were dead. These include such things as:) fornication, uncleanness (of mind and life), passionate desire, evil desire (for what is forbidden), and covetousness (the desire to have more and more), which is (a form of) idolatry.

6. On account of these (things) the wrath of God comes upon the sons who are disobedient.

*Notes*

1. Colossians 3:5-11 gives a list of some of the sins that we are to put to death. Paul declares that these sins are the work of the "old man," our old nature that we had before we became Christians. This "old man" is contrasted with the "new man."

The five vices Paul lists in 3:5 involve the sinner as he is in himself. In 3:8 he lists five more vices that involve the sinner in relation to other people.

2. "MORTIFY therefore your members which are upon the earth." (Col. 3:5, KJV). *Mortify* means to put to death, or give over to death. (The words mortify, mortuary, and mortal are all related words, referring to death in various ways.) The Greek verb (*nekrosate*) is in the aorist tense, a form indicating point action, rather than continuous action. When dealing with sins, the way to stop is to stop! Tapering off gradually does not get the job done. Putting sins to death can be done. It must be done. Now. (Gal. 5:24).
3. Put to death your *members*. These *members* are identified as being certain sins that are done by the members of our bodies, by our minds, hands, eyes, etc. John Calvin said that our vices are here called "members" because they adhere so closely to us. (Matt. 5:29-30).

Perhaps a simpler explanation for their being called members is that they are called such by a figure of speech (a metonymy, the container standing for the contained objects). We sometimes use similar expressions: e.g. "I'll have none of your *lip*."

4. Though we put our "members" to death, this death is of such nature that they may revive, if a man walks in any other power than the Lord's.

5. We might wonder: How can we put to death our members when we have already died? (Col. 3:3). Both the scriptures and experience tell us that in this life our state as children of God does not always fully coincide with our condition in the flesh. Nonetheless, our intentions must always be that our fleshly members be dead to disobeying God.

6. These are the five sins which Paul calls "members:"

(1) *Fornication*. This term refers to illegal sexual intercourse in general, both by those married and those unmarried. Acts 15:29; I Cor. 5:1; 6:15, 18; 7:2.

(2) *Uncleanness*. In its moral meaning this refers to a state of mind that delights in immoral, lustful, luxurious, lawless things. Paul uses the word to refer to impure motives in I Thess. 2:3. Compare Rom. 1:24; 6:19; II Cor. 12:21; Gal. 5:19; Eph. 4:19; 5:3.

(3) *Passion* (KJV, *inordinate affection*; Gr. *pathos*). This word may refer to various feelings which the mind suffers; emotion; passion; passionate desire. Paul obviously uses it here in a bad sense, referring to depraved passions. *Passion* is a more specific term than *evil desire* (No. (4)). *Passion* is the ungovernable desire. It refers to desire for sexual perversion in Rom. 1:26-27.

(4) *Evil desire* (KJV, *evil concupiscence*; Gr. *epithumia*). The word *desire* by itself simply refers to yearning, or longing, and may be good or bad. Note the good meaning in I Thess. 2:17; Phil. 1:23. In a bad sense it is desire for what is forbidden, or lust. (Rom. 7:7; James 1:14; I Peter 1:14; Gal. 5:24). *Evil desire* seems to describe that type of life which is always desirous of things forbidden. This evil desire frequently rises to peaks of passion.

(5) *Covetousness* (Gr. *pleonexia*). Covetousness is greedy desire to have more. It is the constant desire for material things, and the feeling that material things make up real life. (Luke 12:15).

Covetousness is rooted in selfishness and a mistrust of God. Its fruit is discontent, stealing, debt, and other such undesirables.

7. Anything that normally occupies our minds and loyalties is a god to us. Covetousness is a constant desire for earthly things.

Hence the things are a god to us, and the desire for them is a form of idolatry. It takes us from God, Eph. 5:2, 5.

8. The sins which Paul mentions—fornication, covetousness, evil desire, etc.—are practically unchecked by human laws, even the finest human laws. The thief will probably be punished, but the fornicator goes on his way almost unhindered. The law of Christ is therefore superior to human law, because it blocks evil at its source, in the heart.
9. If Paul felt obliged to warn the Christians in Colossae about the sins of the flesh, how much more must the non-Christians have given themselves over to immortality and covetousness. These sins must have been rampant in Colossae.
10. The wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, those who are guilty of fornication, evil desire, covetousness, etc. "Sons of disobedience" is an expression referring to those people who disobey God. The wrath of God is coming upon all such. Too little is said today about the wrath of God. Some people are opposed to teaching about the wrath of God, as if we had developed beyond this doctrine. We never shall.

Whether we like it or not, the wrath of God is coming upon all who disobey Him. (John 3:36; Matt. 3:7; Eph. 5:6). The disobedient will drink the full cup of God's wrath, undiluted. (Rev. 14:10). God has seven fearsome bowls (or vials) of wrath to pour out upon evildoers; in these is completed the wrath of God (Rev. 15-16). God's wrath is fierce. Rev. 19:15). Evil-doers will suffer frightening vengeance for their defiance of God the Almighty, and His son.

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7. wherein ye also once walked, when ye lived in these things; 8. but now do ye also put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, railing, shameful speaking out of your mouth:

### *Translation and Paraphrase*

7. In these (sins) ye (Colossians) also once walked when ye were living in them;

8. But now (in sharp contrast to your former walk in sins) you (must) put (them) all away (from yourself, like dirty clothes. These include things like) an angry disposition, (fits of) rage, a desire to harm people, hurtful speaking, (and) obscene speech.

## Notes

1. The past life and the present life of Christians should usually present a conspicuous contrast. It may not do this in the case of those brought up in God-fearing homes, but in the case of the Colossians it surely did. The "but now" in 3:8 makes a sharp contrast with the past life.

Paul reminds them that they had once walked and lived in their sins. Now they should put them all away, once for all.

2. The word *wherein* (KJV, "in the which") at the start of 3:7 may refer back grammatically either to "sons of disobedience" or to the sinful things mentioned in 3:5-6.

We prefer to think that it refers to the sinful things. It seems too apparent to need stating, that formerly Christians walked and lived among the sons of disobedience.

3. We not only once walked in these things—fornication, covetousness, evil desires, etc.—but we *lived* in them, in the sense of interest, motive, and congenial attitude.
4. Paul by his authority as an apostle of Jesus Christ commands us to put away now all such evil things. We are to put them away decisively, once for all (this is indicated by the aorist tense). Note that we are to put them ALL away.
5. To the sins listed in 3:5 Paul here adds several more of like character. (See notes on 3:5-6).

(1) *Anger* (Gr. *orge*). This is chronic anger, anger maintained as a basic part of our normal attitude. (Eph. 4:31).

(2) *Wrath* (Gr. *thumos*). This is sudden anger, anger boiling over into rage and then subsiding.

(3) *Malice* (Gr. *kakia*). This is the desire to injure and hurt people; a vicious disposition; ill will; wickedness that is not ashamed to break the laws. (I Peter 2:16; Rom. 1:29; Titus 3:3).

(4) *Railing* (KJV, *blasphemy*; Gr. *blasphemia*). This is hurtful, injurious speech, directed towards either man or God, though we sometimes falsely limit it to that toward God only. Any type of slander or reviling is here forbidden. (Matt. 12:31; 15:19; Eph. 4:31; I Tim. 6:4; Jude 9).

(5) *Shameful speaking* (KJV, *filthy communication*; Gr. *aischrologia*). This is foul speaking, low and obscene speaking. Eph. 5:4). Many in our generation are demanding their "rights" to say anything, anywhere, anytime, regardless of its offensive-

ness to people. As Christians we must not take this attitude. We put away all shameful speaking out of our mouth, and out of our hearts too, although the latter may take longer.

6. The sins listed in 3:8 may seem like little sins. They are often practiced by those of professed faith. These offences may not look great to us, but they are. "Little sins" are just as sinful in God's eyes as the ones that involve damage to people or property, which we call big sins.
7. The Christian character is an un sinning character. See I John 1:8; 3:6-9. This thought will raise our ideals and accomplishments.

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**9. lie not one to another; seeing that ye have put off the old man with his doings,**

### *Translation and Paraphrase*

9. (And furthermore) do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old man with his evil deeds, (that is, you have now in Christ put off your old nature, as if it were a dirty garment).

### *Notes*

Christians have stripped off, or put off, the old man, their former nature, like undesirable clothes. Because of this they ought not to lie to one another. Lying would make it appear that their old man was still living. (Eph. 4:22, 24, 25).

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**10. and have put on the new man, that is being renewed unto knowledge after the image of him that created him: 11. where there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman; but Christ is all, and in all.**

### *Translation and Paraphrase*

10. (You must not lie because you have put off your old nature,) and (also you) have put on the new man, (which is) being renewed unto knowledge, (learning more every day of the precise knowledge of God. Also you are being renewed) in a manner agreeable to the likeness of (God) who created him (the new man).

11. (This new man, or new nature which we have put on, is a state) wherein there is no (distinction recognized between) Greek and Jew; circumcision (Jews) and uncircumcision (Gentiles);

foreigners; (wild despised people like the) Scythians; slave (or) freeman; but Christ is all (that matters), and (Christ is) in all (of his people).

### Notes

1. In 3:10 Paul gives a second reason why we should not lie to one another: we have put on the new man, or new nature. Then he describes this new man in two ways: (1) He is constantly being renewed and improving so as to become God-like; (2) In the new man there cannot be distinctions of race or social standing. Christ is all that matters, and He is in all of his people, to purify and empower them.
2. "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature," a new man. (II Cor. 5:17). We clothe ourselves with this new man, the new character that Christ gives unto us. (Eph. 4:24; II Cor. 4:16).
3. This new man is continually being renewed unto spiritual knowledge, so as to capture new and fresh intimacy with God and the deep satisfying truths of God.
4. It is wonderful to think that Christians are being renewed unto knowledge (Gr. *epignosis*, precise knowledge). Most of us live by our feelings and emotions. We are governed less by truth than by prejudice. We do indeed find a full range of emotions in our Christian experience. But so often our emotions are temporary and misleading. We should rejoice that we are being renewed unto knowledge, unto true facts and authoritative principles plainly stated in God's word.
5. The new man is also being renewed "after the image of him that created him." "After" (Gr. *kata*) here may either mean "in the direction towards" or "in a manner agreeable to." The process of being renewed to conform to the image, or likeness, of God is a lifelong glory road. It goes forward best without our thinking about it, as we serve our Christ and learn of Him. "We all . . . beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image, from glory to glory." (II Cor. 3:18).
6. The reference to "him that created him" seems to refer to our spiritual re-creation at conversion, since only Adam and Eve were physically created by God. Compare Gen. 1:26-27. (Eph. 2:10; II Cor. 5:17).

7. An added marvel about the "new man" that Christians have put on, is that in this new state all distinctions based on race or social differences are eliminated. (Compare Gal. 3:28). Paul itemizes a few of these abolished distinctions.

(a) *Greek-Jew*. The Greeks (Hellenists in this case) had been in bitter warfare with the Jews during the Maccabean period, about 165 B.C. The Greeks thought the Jews were uncultured, the Jews regarded the Hellenists as pagans, idolaters, and corrupters of true faith and morals.

(b) *Circumcision-uncircumcision*. This is simply the distinction between the Jews as a circumcised race, and the Gentiles as predominantly not so. Over the centuries Gentiles have often been guilty of anti-Semitic prejudice; but the Jews have also been guilty of an anti-Goyim (anti-Gentile) prejudice.

No Christian dares hate the Jews! Some preachers have gone into horrible error about this. They write and preach hate messages, claiming that the Jews are behind world Communism, or are planning to take over the world, or to outlaw Christianity, or a hundred other dreadful crimes. We do not deny that there have been and are bad Jews and undesirable Jews. Paul did not either. See I Thess. 2:14-16. But there are just as many rotten Gentiles proportionately as there are undesirable Jews.

Even if modern Jews should be plotting all the things some accuse them of (which we do not believe), this is no cause for Christians to hate them, nor would this be anything new. Jews plotted to kill Jesus and to kill Paul. They hounded his footsteps everywhere. But Paul loved his fellow-kinsmen the Jews so much that he was willing to be accursed himself before God, if that might bring them salvation. (Rom. 9:3). He loved his nation, and denied that God had cast them off. (Rom. 11:1).

We Christians must hold Paul's attitude toward the Jews and not the attitude of the professional anti-Semites and hate-mongers.

(c) *Barbarians*. This term refers to any who speak a foreign or strange language, which is not understood by those speaking. The Greeks called any foreigners who were ignorant of their language and culture barbarians, as if they were speaking the baby-like syllables *Bar-bar*. Such contempt is excluded in Christ.

(d) *Scythians*. The Scythians were a people from the steppes of southern Russia. They invaded the Middle East and Palestine in the late seventh century before Christ (about 625 B.C.). They were regarded as the wildest of all barbarians by the more civilized nations.

(e) *Bondman-freeman*. Christ is the master of masters and the brother of slaves. In Christ slaves are brothers to their masters. This thought is developed to glorious heights in Col. 3:22—4:1, and in Philemon.

8. In the "new man" which Christians have put on CHRIST IS ALL. If a Jew is in Christ, he is a beloved brother to his Gentile Christian neighbor. (The Gentile Christian should be gracious to the Jew, even if the Jew is still an unbeliever.) In Christ there can be no negro, Japanese, Russian, Indian, etc. Christ is all that matters. (I Cor. 15:28).
9. Not only is Christ all that matters, but Christ is *in all*. He sanctifies all in whom He dwells; he empowers them to overcome sin and prejudice. He is all and in all.
10. In our unbelieving generation, conservative Christians are sometimes accused of causing racial prejudice because they insist that Christ is the world's only savior, and that we cannot come to God except through Him. We do believe these truths. (John 14:6; Acts 4:12). But we deny that our commitment to Christ causes us to harm others or speak evil of them.

The people who have hurt the Jews through the centuries have NOT been Christians. Hitler was NOT a Christian. The persecuting popes of the middle ages were not following Christ Jesus nor Paul, for Christ and his apostles taught us to do good to *all* men. (Matt. 5:43-48; Gal. 6:10).

In our own times we have read of many violent conflicts and prejudices that have risen between groups when neither group even pretended to be Christians—between negroes and Jews, Arabs and Jews, negroes and whites, etc. Knowing the feelings in our own hearts toward other races and cultures, and seeing the hatreds in the non-Christian world, we deny that Christ causes race hatred. More than that, we affirm that only by common faith in Him will race hatred ever be eliminated. Laws have not eliminated it; government spending has not eliminated it. Only Christ can.

11. PUT TO DEATH	PUT ON
1. Fornication; 3:5.	1. Compassion; 3:12.
2. Uncleaness.	2. Kindness.
3. Passion.	3. Lowliness.
4. Evil desire.	4. Meekness.
5. Covetousness.	5. Longsuffering.
6. Anger; 3:8.	6. Forbearance; 3:13.
7. Wrath.	7. Forgiveness.
8. Malice.	8. Love; 3:14.
9. Railing.	9. Peace of Christ; 3:15.
10. Shameful speaking.	10. Thankfulness; 3:15.
11. Lies; 3:9.	11. The word of Christ in music; 3:16.
12. Racial and social prejudice; 3:11.	12. Dedication to Christ; 3:17.

12. Put on therefore, as God's elect, holy and beloved, a heart of compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, longsuffering; 13. forbearing one another, and forgiving each other, if any man have a complaint against any; even as the Lord forgave you, so also do ye:

### *Translation and Paraphrase*

12. Therefore (since you are a new being) put on as God's chosen ones, (who are) holy and beloved, a heart (or bowels) of compassion, pleasantness, lowliness of mind, gentleness, longsuffering (with the faults of others),

13. bearing with one another, and (graciously) forgiving each other, if any (of you) has something to blame someone for. Just as the Lord has forgiven you, you also (should forgive) in the same way.

### *Notes*

1. Col. 3:12 begins a new paragraph in our outline, a section that could be called "Things to put on for Christ." It is the positive alternative to the list of negative things to put off, given in 3:5-11.

We must deliberately put on certain qualities and acts, as well as putting off certain things. At least in our intentions and determination we must put them on. (Note the aorist tense of *put on*, indicating point action.) Determine that you are going to put them on, and do so to the utmost of your ability.

2. Paul called the Colossians God's *elect*, *holy*, and *beloved*. *Elect* means *chosen*. Christians are now God's chosen people. (Eph. 1:4). *Holy* means separated unto God in Christ. *Beloved* is a perfect passive participle, indicating a past action having continued effects. It is a term of affection, and refers to God's love for them, rather than Paul's.

Paul applies to the church these three terms, which were formerly applied to O.T. Israel. *Elect* (Psalms 105:6); *Holy* (Ex. 19:6); *Beloved* (Deut. 23:5):

3. The Colossians were to put on bowels of mercy, that is, a heart of compassion. Our modern English word *bowels* has too limited a meaning to adequately represent the Gr. *splanchna*, which referred to the bowels, and to the heart, and to the lungs, and in a broader meaning to the emotions and compassion.

Compassion is not something that grows naturally in the human bosom. In ancient times the aged, insane, weak, etc. were sometimes thrust out and mistreated. Compassion was made into a living reality by Christ.

4. Put on *kindness*, that is, sweetness, moral goodness, or integrity. Romans 2:4; II Cor. 6:6; Gal. 5:22.
5. *Meekness*. Meekness is a quality of gentleness and submissiveness to authority which does not imply that the one having it will not resist evil strongly. Moses was meek (Num. 12:3). Christ was meek. (Matt. 11:29).
6. *Longsuffering* (*mukrothumia*) is the quality of endurance that will not be exasperated. It is the self-restraint that will not quickly retaliate a wrong. It is the opposite of wrath and revenge. (Col. 1:11; Eph. 4:2; II Tim. 3:10).
7. Longsuffering should manifest itself in two stages: (1) *forbearing*, or bearing with others; and (2) *forgiving* one another. The word *forgive* here means to forgive graciously. (It has the same root as the word *grace*.)
8. The possibility of complaints and quarrels of Christians against one another is conceded in Paul's statement "If any man have a complaint against any." However the use of the conditional conjunction *ean* presents it, as it were, reluctantly, a case just supposable.
9. Forgiving others as the Lord forgave you. (Matt. 6:12, 14; 18:35; Luke 11:4; Mark 11:25; Eph. 4:32.)

14. and above all these things *put on* love, which is the bond of perfectness.

### *Translation and Paraphrase*

14. But upon (above) all things (put on) love, which is (the) bond (that holds all things in a state) of perfectness.

### *Notes*

1. Put on love over all the qualities of compassion, kindness, etc. Love is like the girdle, or sash, that binds all our garments together into one united adornment. (Eph. 4:3).
2. Love in Col. 3:14 is *agape*, that wide-reaching affection, good will, and benevolence such as Christ has toward men. (John 15:9; II Cor. 5:14; Rom. 13:8, 10).
3. Love is the bond of perfectness. This may mean "the perfect bond." However, the meaning seems rather to be "the bond that brings perfectness or completeness."
4. The tendency of any body of people is to fly apart sooner or later. A *bond* is something which binds or ties together. Love is the bond which binds the church together into a perfect unity.

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

### *Translation and Paraphrase*

15. And let the peace which Christ gives rule (as an umpire directs a game) in your hearts; (for) you were called (by God) unto this (peace); and be ye thankful (for it).

### *Notes*

1. Peace has always been an outstanding characteristic of God's children, and a notable lack in sinners. "I am for peace; but when I speak, they are for war." (Psalm 120:7). "There is no peace saith my God to the wicked." (Isa. 57:20-21). Our God is a God of peace. (Rom. 16:20).
2. The peace of Christ (John 14:27) is to rule in our hearts, like an umpire or arbiter. Do not permit angry emotions to rule in our hearts. Let the peace of Christ rule your minds, will, emotions, and conscience.

3. We were called to become Christians with the intention that we should permit the peace of Christ to rule in our own lives, and in our group as a whole. (I Thess. 2:14). We are called individually to enjoy God's peace, and also called as a group in *one body* unto peace. The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace and only grows well in peace. (James 3:18). No good progress can be made while fighting is going on.
4. Many Bible verses exhort us to be thankful. (I Thess. 5:18). The context of Col. 3:15 suggests that we should be thankful that we have been called in peace into one body. The peace of God is to arbitrate in our hearts, and in our group, whenever there are strains within the body that would tend to make it fly apart. For this we should be thankful.

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**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 unto God.**

### *Translation and Paraphrase*

16. Let the word (the message) of Christ dwell within you richly. (Learn it fully; meditate upon it; live by it.) (Then) with all (the) wisdom (you can employ, be) teaching and admonishing one another by psalms (songs and music such as David wrote in the book of Psalms; and) hymns (of praise to God, and) songs having the character of the (Holy) Spirit.

### *Notes*

1. If we expect to have the *peace* of Christ (3:15) in our hearts, we must let the *word* of Christ dwell in us richly.
2. The *word of Christ* must refer to the Scriptures. If it refers to anything else, we are left to be pushed around about in our thinking according to the conflicting and changing ideas of men. We must fill our hearts with written words of the gospel.
3. The word of Christ is not to dwell within us, and then remain there. We are to teach and admonish (or warn) one another with this word.
4. The words "in all wisdom" may be grammatically interpreted as being connected with "dwell" (as in KJV, "dwell in you richly in all wisdom"). Or they may be connected with the word

"teaching" that follows them (as in ASV, "in all wisdom teaching and admonishing"). In the light of verses using similar expressions (Col. 1:28; Eph. 5:18-19), we feel that "in all wisdom" goes with the phrase that follows it. We are to teach and admonish one another in all wisdom.

5. One of the most effective ways to teach and admonish one another is by music. (Eph. 5:19). People quickly learn songs and remember them. They hum and meditate upon the music. Ancient peoples taught and preserved the famous events in their history by ballads, before written material was easily available. The ungodly people in our world today know the power of music. They keep a tidal wave of suggestive, lawless, emotion-stirring songs coming on all the time, and see to it that the radio waves are saturated with them. Talented Christians should dedicate themselves to the composition, production, promotion, and teaching of worthwhile gospel music. Christianity has always been a singing religion.
6. Our music should be designed to teach and admonish, not just to appeal to the emotions, or to vanity. So often a hymn or anthem is just "rendered," and is not used for instruction and admonition of one another.
7. Three types of music are listed as desirable: psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. The distinction between these terms is given in Thayer's *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, under the word *humnos* (hymn).

*Ode* (song) is the generic term; *psalmos* (psalm) and *humnos* (hymn) are specific, the former (*psalmos*) designating a song which took its general character from the O.T. 'Psalms' (although not restricted to them; see I Cor. 14:15, 26), the latter (*humnos*) a song of praise. [Thayer then quotes Bishop Lightfoot, on Col. 3:16.] "While the leading idea of *psalmos* is a musical accompaniment, and that of *humnos* praise to God, *ode* is the general word for a song, whether accompanied or unaccompanied, whether of praise or on any other subject. Thus it was quite possible for the same song to be at once *psalmos*, *humnos*, and *ode*."

Paul exhorts us here to use psalms. How many of the psalms have you learned or used?

8. *Psalmos* (or its cognate verb *psallo*) is used to mean instrumental music, or a song played to musical accompaniment in the Greek Old Testament (LXX) in I Sam. 16:23; Psalm 98:5; 71:22; and many other places. Also Josephus, the Jewish historian of the first century A.D., used the word to refer to instrumental accompaniment in *Antiquities* VI, viii, 2; VI, xi, 3; and some other places.

For these reasons and others we believe that Paul's use of the term *psalm* shows that God approves the use of instrumental music in our teaching and admonishing. However, they do not establish that such music must be used at all times. The music referred to as *hymns* and *spiritual songs* is not necessarily accompanied by instruments.

9. Colossians 3:16, when very literally translated, closes by saying, "In the grace singing in your hearts unto God." This suggests that we sing *in grace*. It is perfectly correct to translate this as it is in most versions, "singing with grace," but it seems to us that the idea of singing *in grace* is a very likely situation. Those people who are most keenly aware of the grace of God and what it has done in their lives are the people most likely to sing about it. "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound!"

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**17. And whatsoever ye do, in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.**

### *Translation and Paraphrase*

17. And (in) everything that you do, (whether) in speech or in deed, (do) all in (a manner that will show you love and honor) the name of (the) Lord Jesus, giving thanks (always) to God the father through him (through Christ).

### *Notes*

1. Probably the peak of dedication to Christ is summarized in Col. 3:17: Do everything you do, and say everything you say in the name of Christ. (I Cor. 10:31).
2. The *name* of Christ stands for everything about Christ—his authority, his love, his deity, his grace, etc. Do everything in the name of Christ.
3. While we should do everything in Christ's name, we should do it with thankfulness, not with submissive resentfulness to His overpowering authority.

4. Paul exhorted us to use music in 3:16. The close connection of that verse with 3:17 leads us to believe that our music must express thanks, as well as all our other acts.
5. One of the best tests of any action is: Can I do it in the name of the Lord Jesus, and give thanks to God about it? (Eph. 5:20).
6. The fact that we are to give thanks to God through Christ rather suggests that we are unworthy even of the right of coming to God with thanks except as we come through Christ.

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**18. Wives, be in subjection to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. 19. Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.**

### *Translation and Paraphrase*

18. (You) women, be in subjection to (your) husbands, as is proper in (the) Lord (Jesus). (Arrange yourselves in the proper relationships with your husbands.)

19. (You) men, love (your) wives, and do not be embittered toward them. (Do not allow bitterness to build up within you, or to issue from your mouth.)

### *Notes*

1. Colossians 3:18—4:1 is a new section in our outline. Instructions for special groups of people. It deals with interpersonal relationships between Christians. Note that all of our interpersonal relationships are to be done "in the Lord." (3:18, 20, 22). If the Lord does not guide all of your life, he probably is not Lord at all.
2. Colossians and Ephesians alone of all of Paul's writings give a detailed treatment of the home and the duties of husbands and wives. (Eph. 5:22-33; Compare I Peter 3:1-7.)

The fact that Colossians and Ephesians both contain this material that is unique in all of Paul's letters tends to confirm the close relationship between the two letters. We believe that they were written within a few days of one another, and sent out together. \*

3. Let us not forget that the remarks in the preceding passages apply to Paul's discussion about the home. In our homes we must seek the things that are above, not the things on the earth. (3:1-2). In our homes we must put to death the members of

the flesh. (3:5). In our homes we must put on the new man. (3:10). In our homes we must do everything in Christ's name. (3:17).

4. In one way husbands and wives are perfectly equal. (Gal. 3:28). But in another way the wife is to be in subjection to the husband, as the church is subject unto Christ.

The wife's subjection is not a state of slavery to the husband. Nowhere in scripture is the wife commanded to *obey* her husband. He has no right to order her about. Her subjection consists in her recognition that she was created as a helper for him, and that he is the head of the home. It is her responsibility to help him, and go with him in fulfillment of his life's work. She will find her happiness and fulfillment in her joyful acceptance of this role.

If the husband is as kind a head over his house, as Christ is kind as head over the church, no woman could possibly resent her husband's headship.

5. It is fitting, or proper, in the Lord that the wife thus be in subjection. It is fitting both in the eyes of men and of God
6. The Roman world gave very little honor and few rights to women and children. Christianity gives rights to them as well as to husbands and fathers.
7. The command for husbands to love their wives is always needed. Love will wipe suspicions away, produce gratitude and kindness, and keep a multitude of small misunderstandings from eroding away the happiness of a basically blessed marriage.

The command to husbands to love their wives would be especially needed in a society where marriages were arranged by the parents on the basis of social and financial considerations, and not by the couple themselves on the basis of love.

8. Husbands must be careful not to be bitter or irritated against their wives, and careful not to speak bitterly. The husband may soon forget what he said, but such words may burn more deeply into the feelings of the wife than the husband ever knows.
9. In Titus 2:4 the wife also is instructed to love her husband. Thus love is not solely a responsibility that the husband must take care to cultivate in marriage; the wife must be loving too.

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**20. Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing in the Lord. 21. Fathers, provoke not your children, that they be not discouraged.**

*Translation and Paraphrase*

20. (You) children (and youths), be obedient to (your) parents in everything, for this is well pleasing in the Lord (and to the Lord).

21. (You) fathers, do not stir up (the emotions of) your children (so as to provoke them), lest they become disheartened.

*Notes*

1. Probably the most difficult place to be a true Christian is in our homes. There we do not have to impress anyone, or maintain an "image." We may be ourselves, and often the ugly feelings stirred up outside the home are released at home.
2. In the home children are to *obey* their parents in all things. The term *children* is by no means limited to those under twelve! Many teen-agers need to give heed to this verse. Probably they have more ability to give heed to it, and often more need to do so, than younger children.
3. The father in the home (and indeed the mother too) has a grave responsibility. He must avoid the twin pitfalls of child discipline: over-leniency and over-strictness may induce rebellion or lack of personal decisiveness in the child.
4. Parents should not *provoke* children. Provoke here means to excite, stimulate, or rouse the emotions, particularly in a bad sense. Parents may do this by constant criticism, by uneven discipline (sometimes strict, sometimes lenient), by refusing to let their children "grow up", and many other unwise acts.
5. The result of prolonged provoking children is that they may become discouraged (broken-spirited), or that they may rebel. Parents should encourage children, rather than discourage them. Children do not often rise higher than the confidence their parents show in them.

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22. Servants, obey in all things them that are your masters according to the flesh; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing the Lord:

*Translation and Paraphrase*

22. (You) slaves, be obedient in every manner to those who are (your) lords according to the flesh, not with eye-service (service only when the master has his eye upon you) as (if you were just)

men-pleasers, but (be obedient) with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord (Jesus, whose eye is ever upon you).

### Notes

1. Paul gives a rather long exhortation to slaves in the epistle to the Colossians. (4:22-25). Probably the presence of Onesimus returning to Colossae with Tychicus made this section about bondservants pertinent. (See notes on Col. 4:9, and the book of Philemon.) Certainly in the light of this section no one could say that Paul was behind any violent slave revolutions!
2. The basic duty of slaves was to obey—to obey their masters in all things. This obedience was, however, coupled with such instructions to the masters, and such a new relationship between Christian masters and slaves, that it was not a painful servitude anymore. The teaching given by Paul to slaves and to masters led to love and real liberty for both.
3. Paul refers to the slave masters as "masters according to the flesh." This hints that according to spiritual relationships, the masters were not masters, but were equals and brothers. Still the fleshly situation could not be ignored.
4. Slaves were warned not to work and serve with eye-service (eye-bondage) as men-pleasers. Eye-service is begrudging service that is performed only when the master's eye (or the inspector's eye) is upon you, or looks over your work.

Non-Christian masters who suddenly found their once-recalcitrant slaves now serving willingly, would probably inquire as to why the change. This would give the new Christian slave an opportunity to tell of his new faith in Christ.

5. Slaves were to serve in singleness of heart. Singleness here means sincerity, mental honesty, singleness of purpose. They were to have only one objective—to please and serve their masters, and thereby to serve Christ.
6. The service of the slave was to be done "fearing the Lord." He might well fear a cruel, unreasonable master. But the slave had a greater master in heaven, who had told him to serve his earthly masters faithfully. Out of Godly and loving (but real) fear of Christ, he would willingly serve the earthly master.

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**23. whatsoever ye do, work heartily, as unto the Lord, and not unto men; 24. knowing that from the Lord ye shall receive the recompence of the inheritance: ye serve the Lord Christ.**

*Translation and Paraphrase*

23. (And) whatever you do, work from (your) soul (work heartily), as unto the Lord, and not (as just) unto men,

24. because you know that from the Lord you shall receive the recompense (repayment) of (your works, which is) the inheritance (of God; for in faithfully serving your masters) you are serving the Lord Christ.

*Notes*

1. Paul revealed a glorious promise to the slaves: They would receive an inheritance and a recompense (repayment) from the Lord.
2. Slaves were called upon again to work heartily (literally, "from the soul"). They were to work that way whatever they did, and some jobs were very disagreeable. They were to work as if they were working for the Lord Jesus, and not unto men. In truth they were working for the Lord.
3. Slaves were told that they could *know* they would receive from the Lord the reward of a heavenly inheritance. It was a great marvel that *slaves* should expect to receive an inheritance from the Lord. On earth children of masters might inherit, but slaves never.
4. To some modern people Paul's instructions to slaves might sound very unappealing, as if he had said, "Be good boys, and you'll get pie in the sky by and by." Many moderns would have advised the slaves to strike, to revolt, to stage demonstrations, to protest.

In the light of the good effects which Paul's commands to slaves produced (they were really God's commands), we believe that Paul gave the right advice; and the methods of modern revolutionaries would only have caused more misery to come upon everyone, the slaves included.

5. All of us should desire and work for the heavenly inheritance above all else. (Rom. 8:18; I Peter 1:4, 13).
6. In serving our masters or employers faithfully, we serve the Lord Christ. Faithful service on our part will impress our employers with the reality of our Christian faith, and will probably give us an opportunity to testify about our faith. Poor service will do just the opposite.

There is simply no place in the church of Christ for those who will not work sincerely. (I Thess. 3:11-12; II Thess. 3:10-11; Eph. 4:28).

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**25. For the one who does wrong shall get back that which he has wrongfully done; and there is no partiality (with God the divine judge in repaying wrongs).**

### *Translation and Paraphrase*

25. For the one who goes wrong shall get back that which he has wrongfully done; and there is no partiality (with God the divine judge in repaying wrongs).

### *Notes*

1. Paul followed up his glorious promise to slaves about their heavenly inheritance with a warning: Those who do wrong shall receive back the very wrong that they have done. Those who cheat will be cheated. Those who lie will be lied to. Those who damage the master's goods will suffer damage to their heavenly inheritance.
2. Very often in life we see this principle work out. Those who are kind to others receive kindness. Those who are unfair to others receive unfair treatment. We admit freely that this does not always work out in this life this way. Sometimes evil-doers die apparently triumphant in evil, never being punished for it. But God will square the accounts, and repay evil doers according to their works on the day of judgment.
3. In dealing with God we must never forget that there is no partiality with Him, no respect of persons. God will punish evil-doers, whether they be educated or illiterate, strong or weak, rich or poor, influential or unknown.

God has no special pity for slaves and no partiality to them. God has no special preference for masters, nor is He afraid of them. Whoever does wrong will receive back a punishment of like kind for the wrong he has done.

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## QUESTIONS over Colossians Chapter Three.

Questions over Colossians chapter three are given following the notes on Col. 4:6. The outline section "CHRIST—the basis of a new life" extends from 3:1 through 4:6. Questions over this entire section are given at the close of the section.