



Study Guide: Colossians – Chapter 3

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This study guide provides an educational overview of Colossians Chapter 3 using a verse-by-verse structure, theological context, and application-oriented insights grounded in Scripture.

Introduction

Colossians Chapter 3 serves as a pivotal section in Paul’s letter, transitioning from doctrinal truths about Christ’s supremacy to practical instructions for Christian living. This chapter emphasizes the believer’s new identity in Christ and the ethical implications that flow from this reality. Readers are invited to shift their focus from earthly concerns to heavenly priorities, embodying the transformative power of the gospel in everyday relationships and conduct. As you study this chapter, watch for how Paul connects spiritual truths with tangible behaviors, highlighting the unity and holiness expected in the Christian community.

Context

The immediate context of Colossians 3 follows Paul’s exposition of Christ’s preeminence and the fullness believers have in Him. Written to the church in Colossae, a city influenced by various religious and philosophical ideas, Paul addresses the challenge of syncretism and false teachings. The letter is authored by Paul during his imprisonment, underscoring the urgency and authority of his message. The covenantal frame reflects the new covenant established through Christ, calling believers to live in a manner consistent with their redeemed status. Paul, as the key speaker, writes to encourage the Colossians to embrace their identity in Christ and to reject former worldly patterns.

Outline

The chapter begins by directing believers to set their minds on things above, establishing the foundation of a heavenly perspective. This is followed by a call to put to death earthly sinful behaviors and to clothe oneself with virtues reflective of the new life in Christ. The middle section addresses the transformation of personal identity, emphasizing that believers have died with Christ and are raised to new life. The latter part of the chapter transitions into specific ethical instructions for relationships within the Christian household,



including those between wives and husbands, children and parents, and slaves and masters. The chapter closes with a unifying exhortation to let the peace of Christ rule and to do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, highlighting the overarching principle of Christ-centered living.

Verse-by-Verse Study

Verses 1–3: Paul begins by urging believers to seek the things that are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. This heavenly focus reorients the believer’s mind and heart away from earthly distractions, emphasizing the believer’s union with Christ in His resurrection and future glory.

Verses 4–7: These verses call for the putting to death of earthly members—such as sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness—which are manifestations of the old self. Paul reminds the Colossians that they once lived in these sins but have now been raised with Christ, making such behaviors incompatible with their new identity.

Verses 8–11: Paul continues the ethical exhortation by listing attitudes and behaviors to be removed, including anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk. The emphasis is on the radical transformation that erases former distinctions of ethnicity, social status, and religion, uniting all believers in Christ.

Verses 12–14: Here, Paul describes the virtues that believers are to put on: compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Above all, love is highlighted as the binding virtue that perfects unity and peace within the community, reflecting the character of Christ.

Verses 15–17: The peace of Christ is to rule in believers’ hearts, accompanied by thankfulness. Paul instructs that the word of Christ dwell richly, encouraging teaching and admonishing one another with wisdom through psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. All actions are to be done in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father.

Verses 18–21: Paul addresses household relationships, beginning with wives submitting to husbands, husbands loving their wives without bitterness, children obeying parents, and fathers not provoking children. These instructions reflect the new order under Christ’s lordship, promoting harmony and mutual respect.

Verses 22–25: The chapter concludes with instructions to slaves to obey earthly masters sincerely, as serving Christ. Paul reminds them that God shows no partiality and that each



person will be rewarded according to their deeds, reinforcing accountability before God.

Key Themes

A central theme is the believer's new identity in Christ, which demands a decisive break from former sinful patterns and a commitment to holiness. The chapter underscores the importance of setting one's mind on heavenly realities rather than earthly concerns, reflecting the transformative power of resurrection life. Another key theme is the community's unity, transcending ethnic and social divisions through love and mutual submission. The role of Christ's peace as a governing principle in relationships and the call to do all things in His name highlight the integration of faith and practice. Finally, the chapter emphasizes accountability and the eternal perspective that motivates ethical conduct.

Cross-References

Romans 6:4 complements Colossians 3:1–3 by explaining the believer's union with Christ in His death and resurrection, which forms the basis for newness of life. Ephesians 4:22–24 parallels the call to put off the old self and put on the new, reinforcing the theme of transformation. Philippians 2:3–4 echoes the virtues of humility and consideration for others found in verses 12–14. 1 Peter 3:1–7 provides additional insight into household relationships, especially regarding wives and husbands. Finally, Galatians 5:22–23 highlights the fruit of the Spirit, which aligns with the virtues Paul encourages believers to embody in this chapter.

Application

Modern discipleship rooted in Colossians 3 calls believers to a radical reorientation of their priorities, focusing on eternal realities rather than temporal concerns. This involves a deliberate daily choice to reject sinful habits and attitudes and to cultivate Christlike virtues such as compassion, humility, and patience. The chapter challenges believers to examine their relationships—whether in marriage, family, or workplace—and to embody the peace and love of Christ as a witness to the world. It also encourages the integration of worship and gratitude into all aspects of life, reminding believers that their actions reflect their allegiance to Christ. Ultimately, this chapter invites a holistic transformation that impacts thoughts, behaviors, and interactions in every sphere.

Summary



Colossians Chapter 3 presents a comprehensive framework for Christian living grounded in the believer's union with Christ. It begins with a call to set the mind on heavenly things and to put to death earthly sins, followed by an exhortation to clothe oneself with virtues that reflect Christ's character. The chapter then provides practical instructions for household relationships, emphasizing mutual respect and love under Christ's lordship. Throughout, the peace of Christ and gratitude to God serve as guiding principles, culminating in the call to do everything in Jesus' name. This chapter powerfully integrates theological truth with ethical practice, urging believers to live out their new identity in tangible ways.