

THE BIBLE SPEAKS:
STUDIES FROM THE WORD OF GOD



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Colossians 3: True Christian Living

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Colossians 3: True Christian Living

By Harold Camping

We are going to begin to look at a passage found in the New Testament, Colossians chapter 3. As we go through this chapter carefully, let us be open to what God can teach us in His Word.

We begin by reading the opening verses of Colossians 3, verses 1 and 2:

“1. If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. 2. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.”

God has just called for us to shift our minds from the things on earth to the things in Heaven. Notice that this passage is addressed to you who are risen with Christ. So we know this is addressed to the true believers, as they are the ones who are risen with Christ.

If you are risen with Christ, it means He has brought you to everlasting life. As a person on this earth, you were like everyone else, but God has done something wonderful in your life: He has saved you, and given you a new resurrected soul. You have been justified and sanctified.

Every person has a soul or spirit essence. We can't see it, but it is real. That soul was spiritually dead until God worked in you and brought you from death to life. God Himself gave you a brand new living soul that is alive forever when He saved you. The Bible calls that being born again.

A person who has been born again through God's action has received eternal life. God has given this individual a new soul, or heart, which has been eternally changed. You are a new person entirely - a new creature who will want to always serve Christ. God has made you brand new, and the change is permanent. This is the wonder of what salvation is all about.

We know this is so because God declares in 2 Corinthians 5:17,

“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”

This is what happens when God saves us. At the moment of salvation our dead soul is replaced by a brand new living soul. This was only possible because Christ did the work required to pay the penalty for our sins, and now He can give us eternal life.

For a person to go from spiritual death to spiritual life - from a follower of Satan to a follower of the Lord Jesus - is a miracle that is beyond our understanding. And yet it is absolutely true. He or she has been completely changed into a new person.

So now in Colossians 3:1 God gives instructions to this person who is risen with Christ.

We read again, **“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.”**

The change in this person’s life from death to life has a profound effect on every aspect of his life. These changes are not temporary in nature - they are eternal in character. We are a completely new creature.

And now God calls for action on our part. There are changes we have to make as a result of the change God has wrought in our soul. We are to seek the things which are above, where Christ sits on the right hand of God. This is a tremendous change, because all during our life our focus has been mostly on the things of this earth. So we as true believers must make Heaven our final goal, and we will want to seek God’s favor in everything that we do. Christ is seated at the right hand of God. That means He is reigning in Heaven as God. He is on the throne, and He carries out God’s will as He operates in this world. He is up there, but He is the ruler of this world.

Christ paid a tremendous price in order to give us a place in Heaven. He is our King, our Savior, and our Friend, and we should live our life in a way that is pleasing to Him. It is Christ’s victory over the sin in our lives that enables us to change our focus from earthly things to heavenly things.

The change in our soul as a result of salvation is a permanent change. It is for eternity. The changes we make in our lives as a result should also be permanent. Our new focus on spiritual things should become our new reality. Every aspect of our life has been changed, and it should definitely show up in the way we conduct ourselves following this change.

This statement reminds us of another verse, Matthew 6:33, where God declares: **“Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness.”** The Kingdom of God belongs to God. As we seek the things which are above, those are things that relate to Christ and His Kingdom. If we are seeking the righteousness of Christ, we will keep our focus on Him as we live out our life.

Those of us who are the true believers are to seek the things which are above; that is, the heavenly, spiritual things. We are to set our affections on things above, not things on this earth, verse 2 declares. Our affections relate to what is important to us. It is what we put first in our mind and thoughts.

The things relating to God are to be our first priority. We are to seek to do His will constantly, and His will only. God’s will must guide our own will. Our mind should be set on pleasing God. How can we put our mind on God? We were created to live on this earth. We do not yet have our glorified spiritual body - that won’t come until we go to Heaven. We are earthly, and we get excited about things on earth, whatever they may be. But things on earth frequently are in opposition to things above. You cannot love both equally.

We are to set our affections on things above; that is, spiritual things. Our focus is to be on Christ. We should love Him and our relationship with Him more than anything here on this earth. Our great desire should be for heavenly things: I want to be more holy; I want things that will help me focus on Christ. If I do that, it will be readily seen that I have a tremendous desire to please Christ in all that I do.

That sounds very noble and holy, but how does that work out in my life? It means that my love; my thinking; my desires - everything important in my life will ultimately be controlled by my desire to please God. This attitude will impact all of my activities and my thoughts.

We live on this earth and we have to function every day. We take care of our families, perhaps; we have a job; we have responsibilities; we have decisions to make; we have leisure time. How do we spend our leisure time? As we go through these things every day, always at the back of our mind should be the controlling force: is this pleasing to God? Am I keeping Christ at the forefront of my mind? Is my greatest love for Him and not for these earthly things that I think I must have or spend time with? This is how we seek the things that are above, and keep our mind

and affections on things above. We have to be thinking all the time about the things that are pleasing unto God, and that is frequently alien to human thinking. So it is not easy at all, but that is what God is asking of us.

The more that I love Christ, the less I will love the things of this earth. This is the beginning solution to a serious problem. We have to keep our mind on Christ, and as we do this more and more, we will find that we will achieve the result of putting our mind on the things above. Of course this is only possible because God has made me a new creature. He has given me a new mind. He has given me new desires that identify altogether with Heaven. This is a miracle we do not understand but it will be true in our lives if we actually have become a child of God.

Of course if God has not given someone a new mind, then we can try to focus on the things of God instead of the things of this world, but we will fail. We may feel frustrated, but we will fail. We cannot do this until Christ Himself has made a change in our minds. He has to give me a new mind and new desires that identify altogether with Heaven. Does Christ do this? Absolutely. That is what salvation is all about. If that hasn't happened, then it means we are not saved.

We go on in Colossians 3, and God declares in verse 3: **“For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.”** These are words that God Himself has stated.

We know that because this passage is talking to true believers, this phrase “ye are dead” does not mean here in this context that you are dead in your soul, so that there is no spiritual life there. On the contrary, it means that because you have everlasting life, you are now dead to sin. Sin does not rule over your life as it did before God saved you. If we are truly saved, our life is hid with Christ in God.

The life of a Christian is hid with Christ. He is our security; we belong to Him entirely. Indeed, we read in I Corinthians 6:19-20,

“Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.”

This is wonderful statement that applies to every true believer. So you see, the true believers are hid with Christ because we are not our own. Therefore we are to glorify Him in all things as we keep our focus on Christ. We are dead to self.

We are ruled over by Christ because once He saves us, we are part of His Kingdom - the Kingdom of God. That is something that is eternal in character. When God saves us, it is an eternal situation that has developed. We belong to Him forevermore. We are no longer part of the Kingdom of Satan, which we belonged to before God gave us the gift of salvation and brought us into His Kingdom. There is the key. It is God that has brought us into His Kingdom. It is way beyond anything we can control; it is something that God has done. We are still living *in* the world, but we are not *of* the world. We belong to Christ for eternity; it will never change.

Now we are going to read the next few verses, where God will give us further instructions for the true believers. We read, beginning with verse 4 of Colossians 3:

“When Christ, *who is our life*, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory.”

Christ is reminding us that He is our life; we belong to Him - and we will spend eternity with Him in Heaven. He is our life; that is, He is the very essence of our being. He is our source of life; physical life first of all, but more importantly, spiritual life.

Without Christ we are spiritually dead. Our spiritual life brings us into a relationship with God Himself, so that God becomes all-important to us. Without the life given to us from God we can be physically alive but spiritually dead. But when Christ saved us, He gave us eternal life. He has become my life; that is, everything I do is tied in with Christ Himself.

We will be with Him forever, either because we die and go to Heaven, or because when He returns some day, He will take the true believers up to be with Him in glory.

We go on in verses 5 to 7:

“5. Mortify [that is, put to death] therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil

concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: 6. For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: 7. In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them."

God here lists different kinds of gross sins. All of these sins are really very much alike, as they are words that refer to evil, lustful desire.

Fornication is a synonym for immorality, which refers to lustful sexual desire. But when we become a child of God, that desire should have been cut way back, so that it is not troublesome to us anymore.

Uncleanness refers to spiritual uncleanness. There is no purity in a heart that is spiritually unclean. It has not been washed clean by Christ.

Inordinate affection: inordinate is an old word that means excessive or immoderate. In other words, it is affection for the wrong things. If we are very honest with ourselves, we know when we have affectionate desires for wrong things. Here God is bringing it right out into the open: this must not be.

Evil concupiscence: concupiscence is another old English word that means sinful desire or lust. We know what sinful desire or lust is.

Covetousness, which is idolatry. To covet means to set our love on things that we really want to have, to the point that we idolize these things, even though we know deep in our hearts that these are wrong things for us to have. We love these things instead of setting our love on God.

These are all sins that will bring God's wrath upon the children of disobedience; that is, upon those who are not saved and are in rebellion against God and His law. By having these sins in my life and thinking about them, it means I am desiring them and showing that I deserve the wrath of God. I may try to cover up these sins, but the fact is that I am in trouble with God, and I should be crying out to God for His mercy.

If we are already saved, why does God tell us here to put these terrible sins to death in ourselves? Why even talk about it?

The reason is given in verse 7: **"In the which ye also walked some time,**

when ye lived in them.” That is to say, we actually committed some of these sins before we were saved. God is reminding us that we lived in sin before He saved us. And we want to be sure that there is not even a trace of these sins still in our lives now that we have been saved from sin. The child of God has a conscious desire to do the will of God. It is a deep, true desire.

But if we find that these sins are still showing up in our lives, then we must understand that probably we are not a child of God at all. But the wonderful thing is that as we are reminded of our sins, we can cry to God for mercy. He is a merciful God. We must face the reality that some people who claim to be true believers may still be under the wrath of God. This is something that we have to look at very candidly; very honestly. Because if we don't, we may end up under the wrath of God when we die. But there is always hope that we are one of God's elect, and we can continue to cry out to God for mercy.

So if a person who professes to be a believer sees any of these sins in his life, he knows he is in terrible trouble with God. There are many people who are convinced they are a child of God because of some experience they have had, or something they believed or were taught as a child, and they therefore have the false assurance that they are a child of God. We really want to know if we are a child of God. The sins of the world have no place in the life of a child of God. This is why we keep our eyes upon Christ at all times as we live out our lives.

God is giving us a reminder of what our character was before God saved us, and it is also a warning to examine ourselves honestly and carefully.

In the next few verses, God will warn us about even more sins that should not be seen in the life of a Christian. We read, beginning in Colossians 3:8 -10:

“8. But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. 9. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; 10. And have put on the new *man*, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him.”

Have you done any of these things lately? Did you lash out in anger at someone? Did you want to get back at someone for something they had done to you? Did you say something that wasn't really true?

Obviously God is very concerned about these sins. The sins listed in verses 8 and 9 are all things that will show up by what comes out of our mouth. Anger and wrath lead to angry words. Malice is evil intent that can lead to hostility and cruelty. Blasphemy means using language that is profane or sacrilegious...it is against God Himself. Filthy communication out of your mouth is just what it seems.....filthy words.

These are all types of behavior that are unacceptable in the life of a Christian. They are all to be put away and not enjoyed ever again. They are part of what we were before we were a child of God.

Unfortunately, however, too often these types of sin remain a part of our personality. If that is the case, where then is the cleansing from sin which is supposed to dominate our life since that enormously wonderful event - that of putting on Christ in all of our life?

This is the reason we should not commit any of these sins - because we have put off the old man and put on the new. At the moment of salvation we became a new person.

The "old man" refers to our old nature that we have before we are saved. We can read more about this in Romans 6:6-7, where God declares:

"Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with *Him*, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he is that is dead is freed from sin."

In other words, when we were saved, our old sinful nature was destroyed. We are no longer slaves to sin, and therefore all sinful behavior should be gone from our character. This does not mean we will never again sin, but it means that we should recognize sinful behavior and get it out of our personality.

We must recognize with full awareness that the matter of becoming a Christian is not just conversation. It is a real, substantive fact that has substantially changed our life altogether for the better. It is a fact that has overwhelmed the sin that previously had a hold on our life. And the hold on our life had been so tight that it appeared to control us. We were serving our sin.

But that is what salvation is all about. When we become truly saved, the tenacious iron grip that sin previously had upon us is forever broken.

And we are able to function as a child of God, ready to turn against the evil of sin.

Thus we must understand that this matter of becoming a new man in Christ is actually a very large transaction that affects our whole personality; our whole body; our whole future - along with the immediate present time. It is of greatest importance as we continue to live for Christ.

In fact we must never consider the facing of sin in our life, however incidental we may think it is, as something unimportant. Sin on any level is a bitter enemy of Christ, and should always be considered to be a bitter enemy of ourselves. Therefore we must never consider ongoing sin in our own life or situation as incidental or relatively unimportant. A child of God is always in opposition to sinful activity.

That is why sin must be considered to be a tremendous foe that must be dealt with and destroyed as quickly as possible. A true believer cannot continue in sin because God has given him a hatred for sin. And if we are continuing in a sinful action against someone for any reason, it is evidence that we had better examine our lives very carefully. Are we really a child of God?

Who is the big help in our war against sin? We immediately should look to the Lord Jesus Christ. We have been created in His image, and He is our Lord and Master; our Savior. He will help us win the battle against sin.

What glory to have Him as our guaranteed help! Even when sin seems to keep popping up in our life, sin will not have the victory over us. We know this is true because as a child of God, Christ will give us victory over sin. This is why prayer is so important: we can pray to God for mercy. This victory will come because a child of God belongs to Christ forever. The victory over sin will begin to develop in a person's life as he or she cries out in anguish to God: "O Lord, have mercy over me. I'm a sinner and I desperately need Your help."

Thus, however low this person has fallen, there is a light shining brightly in front of him or her: the light of salvation. So the true child of God always has hope. We never need to despair or feel helpless. We belong to Christ, and we can simply cry to Him, "O God, I need Thee every moment; every hour. O God, don't leave me or forsake me." That is a prayer that God is listening to and will respond to.

In our examination of Colossians chapter 3, we have come down to verse 11. We read there:

“Where there is neither Greek *nor* Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ *is* all, and in all. “

God is here pointing out that in the Kingdom of God, those who have been saved belong to Christ and have no other label or distinction put upon them. Christ is all, and in all. Christ is everything. God does not save us based upon our country of origin or our position in society. He does not choose us because of our church background. No, when He chose us before the foundations of the world, none of those things mattered, and they still don't matter at all.

We don't know how or why God chose the ones He elected to salvation. But because of salvation, the differences between us are no longer to be recognized. They have been set aside by God Himself. We are one in Christ.

Now let's go on to verses 12 and 13. There we read:

“12. Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; 13. Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also *do ye.*”

Those are the words that Christ has for those who belong to Him. In the previous verses we looked at, God talked about the types of sinful behavior that should no longer be part of our personalities since we have become saved. Now God has shifted the emphasis. He is here going to discuss how we should live as Christians, and what types of behavior should now be seen in us always.

As the elect of God, as new creatures, these characteristics which have been listed in these two verses should be a part of our personality. The character traits of a non-Christian should have disappeared from our personality. In other words, the fact that we are a new creature in Christ ought to be clearly seen in the way that we are conducting our life.

God says first of all that the elect of God are “holy and beloved.” Beloved of whom? Beloved particularly of God. We are holy because

we have God's holiness. We are beloved because of God's great love for us. And so now we are to be merciful, kind, humble, meek, longsuffering, patient, and forgiving. All of these characteristics should now be found in our life. Are they?

These characteristics should always be in view; they are the opposite of hatred, selfishness, cruelty or pride - the behaviors we harbored before we were saved, and are typical of the people in the world. We can almost always discover how we are to look to the world and how we are to look to God. We do that by looking at an average person in the world in relationship to the rules that God gives to everyone, and see how they relate to those rules. If we relate very similarly to the average person, we can know that there is something deadly wrong with our relationship with God. Because if we are a child of God, we are a different kind of person. We have a different kind of action in the world, and it had better be substantially different.

Because God has given us a new heart, there has to be a great difference in our lifestyle and in our thinking, and also now Christ dwells within us. That means that there should really be something quite different in our lifestyle. God expects His elect to be humble, merciful, kind, forgiving - even as Christ is. We can have this kind of spirit only because we have been given a new heart, and Christ dwells in us.

God reminds us that our sins against Him have been forgiven. Is that true? Well, God is true in what He tells us. If God says we are forgiven, then we are forgiven. And as Christ forgave us, so He requires us to have a spirit of forgiveness for our fellow man. That should be there.

He goes on in verse 14: **“And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.”** Charity is an old English word for love. Love is the utmost characteristic that should be seen in the child of God. It is God's love that caused Him to save us. It is our love for God and others that enables us to be merciful, humble, kind and forgiving. These are the things that should be expected in the life of a true child of God.

That is, we are duplicating what Christ has already done in our life. As Christ's love has begun to dominate in our life when we have truly become a child of God, so too our love should dominate our life. That is the truth, and should be clearly seen in the life of a true believer. So this is the standard that God has set for us, and if we don't see these

character traits in our personality, we know there is a serious problem in our life.

These required character traits are not natural to a typical human being, because by nature mankind is very self-centered. That is why pride is so prevalent. But our lives must now be centered on Christ, not on ourselves. A spirit of true humbleness or meekness is something that God has to bestow upon us and endow us with. That is something that only God can do. That is something we should be praying for, as it is something ultra-important. If that is not there, we are not endowed with a new life. We are still in a situation where we are going our own way. So this is something we have to keep praying for.

That is why if we find a lack of humility toward others, we have a signal that we are not walking closely with Christ, who keeps us from sin. We are still trying to live our own life apart from God.

We must ask ourselves the question: How do I stand with God? It is one thing to ask: how do I stand with other people? But that's not nearly as significant as: how do I stand with God? If I find I can't live happily and be contented by following God's rules, it means that I am in trouble with Almighty God in my own life, and I need to go to Him in prayer. I need to go humbly to Him, beseeching Him for help. If this is true of me, it should drive me to God. This is the solution - to cry out to God for mercy. God is a merciful God. We cannot forget that. He is merciful, and we should never hesitate to come to Him and talk with Him.

And this is an ongoing situation if we are a true child of God. That is, we had better be ready to come to God again and again with the request for His presence in our life, because we need Him so badly. God has set the standard for us here in Colossians 3, and we must examine ourselves honestly. If we see deficiencies in our personality, we need to set a higher standard of holiness and pray for God's help every day. We should never give up; we should make it a constant effort on our part to come to God every day. Because who are we? We can't do anything by ourselves; it all has to be done by God. God will do it; He has promised to be our God, so we should not hesitate to cry out to Him for help.

Each and every day we should cry out to God for His help, so that we will demonstrate the love that God requires and is characteristic of a true believer. We want to follow God's standard of holiness that assures that we honestly have a true desire to be obedient to Christ in our

attitudes and actions. In other words, our walk with Christ should be in evidence in the way we live our life. As it is in evidence, we want it to show that it is the life of someone who dearly loves the Lord Jesus Christ and is happiest to be under His constant care.

Remember, as a child of God we want to always do God's will. This is a dominant characteristic in the life of a child of God. So if that desire is not firmly entrenched in our thinking, it means that we are still searching for truth, and should continue to beseech the Lord for His mercy. Keep searching; keep asking; keep beseeching for mercy. It all has to be from the throne room of God, and not from any other place. We never need to give up hope that we may still be included in the family of believers.

In our study of Colossians chapter 3 we have come down to verse 15. We read there:

“And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.”

What is the peace of God? Is it relative to our relationship with God, or with our fellow man?

We can try to be at peace with our fellow man, but that can't really succeed, so we would not expect it to mean that. We would have to compromise in some way in order to be at peace with the world. No, the peace of God that is to rule in our hearts is peace with God Himself, made possible because Christ paid for our sins and He broke down the barriers between us and God, so that now we can be at complete peace with Him.

He has put His peace in our hearts and it is to rule our lives. It should cover every aspect of our life as we go on through this world. And the verse goes on to say that we are called in one body. That is to say, God does not have different levels of obedience. There is only one level. We all receive the same call to be perfectly obedient. All of the body of Christ - that is everyone who is a true believer - are to let the peace of God rule in their hearts. God wants us to walk perfectly before Him.

Ideally we want to walk perfectly before God. Do we have to be so idealistic? Do we have to be careful all the time? Will little slip-ups affect our relationship with God?

If we accept and follow a less than ideal path, we will live less ideally. Then we will not be following an ideal path. We know that as true believers, the target for our life should be an ideal relationship with God. That is, a perfect relationship with Him. We want to be perfectly obedient. We cannot let ourselves go even 1% in the direction of sin, because any direction that is less than perfect is the direction of sin, and that will set the standard for more sin. Our standard of living must be God's standard; that of perfect obedience. We come to a God who can guide us and qualify us so that we can begin to live with that perfect obedience. That is the only way we can achieve that desire. But that should be our desire.

And we are to be thankful. Thanksgiving to God should be uppermost in our hearts and minds. We should desire to be thankful because that is the only path that will keep us in the right path, so that we are following after God in true obedience. We should never feel that our striving after holiness is a burden to be borne. We should never look upon holy living as a burden upon us.

Holiness is what we should really desire; that is the perfection we are talking about. But if we find that the idea of holiness is a burden to us, then we have to stand back and look at what real holiness is. When we really look at holiness, we find that when we have been able to start walking in a way that is entirely pleasing to God - because that is what holiness is - then we find that the burden is lifted. Then we find that we can begin to find happiness in our life that has not been there before. This will be the beginning of real happiness, because we will be on the level of Godliness.

We should be thankful that God has set us on this path, because only God will do it. If we go into this business of trying to live right before God thinking that we must somehow find the strength or courage on our own, we'll never make it. We must realize that we can ask God to strengthen me; guide me; be everything for me. That is the only way we will ever achieve success.

That is where we desperately want success. Because when we find that that holiness exists in our life, the burden has been lifted from us and we stand cleaner before God than ever before. We should be thankful God has given us His wonderful peace, which the world cannot give us. Because if it did not come from God, it did not come. It cannot be found

anywhere else. The world cannot give it to us in any way, no matter how hard we try to wait upon the world or look in the world. We will not find peace with God. Peace with God comes from God, and only from God. By God's mercy we are able to pray for that peace. How wonderful it is to be at peace with God!

In our examination of Colossians chapter 3, we have come to a couple of very interesting verses. Of course every verse in the Bible is interesting, but these next two verses particularly apply to each one of us who is a true believer.

We read in Colossians 3:16-17:

“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 whatsoever ye *do* in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him.”

First of all, God says that the Word of Christ is to dwell in us richly in all wisdom.

When God saves someone, He indwells that person from then on. We are given the Spirit of God. But here we are instructed to let the Word of Christ dwell in us. That is, the Word of God should be in our hearts. That is the source of all true wisdom.

But the verse goes on to talk about singing spiritual songs. As the Word of God is in our hearts, we are to be singing to the Lord.

What is the purpose of Christian songs? On Family Radio we play a lot of Christ-centered music. This is not just to fill time or sound beautiful. God tells us here in this verse that Christian music is for the purpose of teaching and admonishing one another, in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.

In other words, our music must be true to God's Word because it serves an important purpose that God has ordained. That is why the old hymns are so wonderful. The hymn writers wrote about sin, salvation, God's mercy, His amazing grace, and so on. These hymns are reminders of what God's Word teaches us.

In the Bible we are all familiar with the book of Psalms. These Psalms were written to be sung as songs. That is why even today many of the Psalms have been put to music. They are an example for us of the kind of music God wants us to be singing: psalms, hymns and spiritual songs.

And God goes on to say that we should be singing with grace in our hearts to the Lord. Where does grace come from? From God Himself. His grace is the source of our salvation, and we in turn are to show our gratitude by singing to the Lord. We have much to sing about! So we have songs like “Amazing Grace” and “Wonderful Grace of Jesus.” We sing these songs with joy in our hearts and praise to God.

This attitude of praise to God will help us be obedient to the next verse, which tells us that everything we do or say must be done in the name of Jesus, with thanksgiving. We read in verse 17: **“And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him.”**

We have all heard this verse before, but has it made a real impact upon us? Have we really listened to what this verse is saying? Everything that we do or say - all of it - must be done in the name of the Lord Jesus. If we live that way, that will have a serious impact upon our lifestyle. It means that we constantly have to think before we speak or act: is this pleasing to God? Is it really in Jesus’ name? This is how we are to live as a Christian.

God is giving us guidelines that will help us have the proper characteristics of behavior in our personality. How we behave is an outward manifestation of what is in our heart. If we have an attitude of thanksgiving and praise and are singing with grace to the Lord, it will be a lot easier to live a life that is pleasing to God. This is what every true believer wants to do.

Why are we really spending time looking at these verses? They seem pretty straight-forward and easy to understand. As we have been hearing all this, we can be thankful to God and agree to its truthfulness. So now what?

Our purpose in this study is to stir up all aspects of true Christian living. When we hear these things, do we continue our lifestyle without making any change or really reflecting on what we have heard? If so, then it has not really gained our attention. This Scripture passage should

impact our lives. That is why we do these Bible studies. We want to help every Christian to really live in accord with the words from the Bible - the way God wants us to live.

In Colossians 3 we have been receiving instructions from God as to how we are to live as Christians. But now God is going to change the focus. He is going to give us special instructions for every Christian family. God is going to talk about how we should relate as husbands and wives, and as parents to children.

Many of you are married, or perhaps planning to marry. What does God tell us in these couple of verses in Colossians 3? God is bringing us back to where we have to start from - that is, our family relationships. We often refuse instructions in this area; we think we already know it all. But this is instruction we desperately need.

We should be so thankful that God has led us to this teaching for our families. And this is very personal. God is speaking to you and to me. We should not be looking at our friends and neighbors, but at ourselves. We all have the tendency to look at other people, but we must start with our own homes.

We read in Colossians 3: 18-19:

“18. Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord. 19. Husbands, love *your* wives, and be not bitter against them.”

God has quite a bit to say about marriage in other passages, such as Ephesians 5, for example. But here in these two verses in Colossians 3 God gives husbands and wives a couple of important, basic rules for Christian households.

First of all, wives, submit yourselves to your husbands, as it is fit in the Lord. God is telling wives that they are to be in submission to their husbands. This does not mean that their husband can be a tyrant. It means that the Christian husband is ruling his household in a way that is pleasing to God, and his wife is under his loving care.

Many wives have a hard time with the idea of being submissive to their husbands. They feel it is demeaning to them or makes them inferior. But this is not the case. God makes sure the relationship stays healthy by commanding the husbands to love their wives, and not be bitter

against them. This is God's declaration to every husband: love your wife. Do not be bitter.

That means that if a husband who claims to be a Christian does not love his wife, or is bitter about his wife, he is in violation of God's rules for marriage. Notice God does not say, Husbands, rule over your wives. No, He says: Love your wives. That is how a man can be the kind of a husband that a wife can willingly submit to. He is to be kind and affectionate and caring - all the things that show his love.

His wife in turn will not have a hard time being submissive to his will, because of his great love for her. In his love he will put her needs ahead of his own.

It is not difficult to see that if husbands and wives both follow these instructions from God, their marriage will be on solid ground. A lot of problems will be avoided. God knows our hearts, and He knows the kinds of problems that can arise in a marriage, even in a Christian marriage. The problems arise when a husband or wife puts themselves first, rather than their spouse. God's rules clearly put the needs of the spouse in the forefront.

God, after all, is the author of marriage. He therefore knows what needs to happen in order for a marriage to be happy and God-glorifying. He knows that a selfish or self-centered spouse will not have the right attitudes for a successful marriage.

As you think about these things, remember what we said in the beginning of this study: this lesson needs to be applied to me and to you; not other people. Each of us should look at our own relationships to our family. It is very personal. As we follow God's rules for husbands and wives, we can expect God's blessing upon our marriage and our family.

Going on to verses 20 and 21, God speaks about the relationship of parents and children. We read:

“20. Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord. 21. Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.”

God speaks first of all to the children. They are commanded to obey their parents in all things, because this is well pleasing unto the Lord.

God has placed children under the care and authority of their parents. As we are expected to be obedient to God, so children are expected to obey their parents.

Most of us are familiar with the Ten Commandments, so we have heard the 5th command: Honor thy father and mother. We can read this in Exodus 20:12. From the beginning of time God had in mind that children are to honor their parents.

Now here in Colossians 3:20, God tells children to obey their parents because this is pleasing to the Lord. Therefore it follows that disobedience to parents is not at all pleasing to the Lord. God expects obedience.

Ultimately it should be the grand desire of every true believer to do that which is pleasing to the Lord. But we don't wait until we are an adult - God is here addressing the children. He is speaking directly to the children: obey your parents.

But parents also have a responsibility to be good parents. Verse 21 says: **"Fathers, provoke not your children to anger lest they be discouraged."** The words "to anger" were inserted by the translators, by the way. These words were not in the original Greek manuscript. The idea of provoking your children presents the idea of unkindness and harshness. To provoke is to incite or aggravate.

The Bible has a lot to say about parenting. In Proverbs 22:6, for example, God commands us to: **"Train up a child in the way that he should go..."** The way he should go would be God's way. We are to train our children in the things of the Lord, and that includes necessary discipline along with love and caring. We know the training includes love because God is a God of love.

But to provoke our children is not acceptable to the Lord. God does not want children to be discouraged because their parents are overly harsh. We should always encourage our children to be Godly and obedient. We should be setting an example to them of Godly behavior.

Notice that this verse is addressed to the fathers. They are normally the head of the house, and set the tone in the home. They are in charge of the nurturing of the children. So God points out to them that they should not provoke and discourage their children. A parent who always

is criticizing his child will cause the child to feel like he or she can never please the parent. They will become very discouraged.

Sometimes Christian parents, when they see the sin in their children, respond with harsh discipline. They want their children to be God-fearing, obedient children, but they try to achieve this with constant disciplinary measures.

Our children need our protection. They are under our care for many years, and they should be trained in a loving, gentle way. Over-harshness can actually lead to rebellion against parents, and finally against God. The hallmark of a Christian home should be kindness, gentleness, peace, and above all, love. If these attributes are not a normal part of the focus in our home, we are going to lose out. We will leave our children or spouse with wrong attitudes as to what a Christian should be.

We must be careful that we are not constantly criticizing. Any necessary discipline must be carried out with love and kindness; never in a moment of anger. No matter what the situation, children must know that their parents love them.

We should talk right here about the importance of prayer. Our children have been given to us by God. But being a parent is a very difficult job, without question, and we must convey our difficulty to God in intense prayer. "Oh God, help me to have wisdom as a parent; help me to be always loving." We can't ever pray too often.

We want all the wonderful words given to us by God Himself to also enter the hearts of our children. We should be praying for wisdom for ourselves as parents, but we should also be praying for our children constantly. We must pray for their obedience; we must pray for their salvation.

How wonderful it is to be able to pray! God knows our need to be able to go to Him at any moment. Prayer is the backbone of our Christian walk - in all areas of our life. God has provided this means to help with the difficult things we encounter each day, as we try to live our lives as pleasing unto the Lord.

As we go on in Colossians 3, we see that God now addresses another group of people.

We read in Colossians 3:22-23:

“22. Servants, obey in all things *your* masters according to the flesh; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God. 23. And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men.”

At first glance, we might think this command does not apply to us, and so we don't pay much attention to it. After all, I am not a servant, am I? However, in reality anyone who serves someone else is a servant. This could apply, for example, to employees who serve their employer. That includes just about everyone. Like it or not, almost every one of us is under the authority of someone. Of course ultimately we are all under God's authority, but we are under the authority of people in our daily life.

The principle that God is setting forth is one of obedience to the one who is in authority over you. The point being made here is two-fold: first, we are to obey in all things. Second, we must have an attitude of fearing God. God says to be obedient **“not with eye-service, as men-pleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God.”** In other words, the obedience is not to just be an outward show. It is to come from the heart, with the goal of being pleasing to God. God is the one we are to be thinking about.

If you have a good, kind employer, who is a pleasure to work for, you may find this command to be very easy. But many, many people have difficult employers who they do not think are kind or fair. But this command is not conditional. We are to be obedient to them in all things, and to do so without resentment.

If you hate your job or can't stand your boss, it is real easy to complain and feel resentful. And you may feel very justified in your complaints. But we have to remember God's command of obedience, and the reason behind it. We are to do everything to the Lord, not to please men, but to please God. In other words, when your boss gives you a job to do that you are not very happy about, it will go a lot easier if you have in mind that you are doing this for the Lord.

And whatever we do in this world, we are to do heartily - that is, with all of our effort. We do everything for the Lord, not for men. This is again talking about our attitude of obedience. We are not trying to please

other people - we are trying to please the Lord. We are to do everything with all of our efforts, not half-heartedly. This is pleasing to God. He is watching what we do and He is noticing our attitude.

If we are a true believer, we always should want to be pleasing to God, and therefore we live a life that is God-fearing. This should impact every aspect of our lives - not only in our family relationships, but also our work relationships.

God tells us to be obedient to our masters, whether that be an employer or someone else in authority over us, so we should pray for an obedient heart and a right attitude. This is how we show our obedience to God.

In the next verse of Colossians 3, God gives us the reason why we should do everything unto the Lord. We read in Colossians 3:24:

“Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.”

Christ is the one we serve. Everything finally comes through Christ, and therefore our relationship with Christ and our obedience to Him should be our chief concern.

The inheritance is our reward - not because we did such a good job and we deserve it, but because Christ saved us and qualified us to receive the inheritance, which is a wonderful gift from God. What inheritance is this? It is to be with Christ for eternity. We read for example in 1 Peter 1:3-4:

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you.”

This is what awaits every true believer. It is reserved in heaven for every child of God. When Christ saves someone because He has paid for their sins, that individual receives the gift of eternal life. At the moment of salvation he receives a new living soul. We read in 2 Corinthians 5:17:

“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” So even if his body dies, his soul will live on for eternity.

But more than that, he becomes qualified to receive the inheritance which God, who is our heavenly Father, has in store for His children. He can look forward to living in the new heaven and the new earth with God for eternity. He will be with God forever. He will dwell with Christ in all of His glory forever and ever. Nothing can ever change that relationship.

We cannot begin to fathom how wonderful this inheritance is! It is a glorious, magnificent inheritance that you can never lose. It is provided by God, the Ruler of the world. No earthly inheritance can begin to compare with it. That is why it is so terrible to be under the wrath of God. A person who has not become saved will not receive the inheritance, and will not be with God.

What is the future then for those who do not receive this inheritance from Christ? This is the other side of the story. We read in the Colossians 3:25:

“But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons.”

That is to say, those whose sins are not forgiven will pay the penalty for their sins. What is that penalty? God tells us that the penalty is eternal death. The Bible says very plainly in Romans 6:23: **“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”**

The Bible could not be more clear that death is the final outcome of sin.

The soul of an unbeliever will not live on for eternity. God declared in Ezekiel 18:4: **“The soul that sinneth, it shall die.”** A person who is not saved has a dead soul, not a living soul, so when that person dies physically, that is the end of his or her existence.

God assures us that He is not a respecter of persons. That means that anyone and everyone who stands guilty before God will receive the result of death. When they die that will be their end. There will be no eternal life in store for that person.

It makes no difference who they are or what position they hold in this world. Skin color, social standing, wealth - none of that matters. How or why you die doesn't matter. Either you receive the eternal inheritance, or you don't. There is no other alternative.

Death is the exact opposite of living forever with Christ. Whenever we talk about death, we are talking about the finality of the most terrible punishment that can come to man. We were created to live. Death removes forever the potential for life. It is the end of hope. At the moment of death all that is left is a cold carcass that immediately begins to decay. At that moment you are separated forever from the inheritance.

The final end of each person is ultimately known only to God. We leave it with God. We can continue to pray for anyone who is still alive on this earth. We can pray for them up until they take their final breath. Whether someone is with Christ for eternity, or no longer in existence, is something only God knows for sure, and we can be content to leave this with the Lord.

We serve a wonderful, merciful Savior. As we think about what God has taught us in Colossians 3, let us strive to live a Christian life that is pleasing to God in accordance with His Word, the Bible.

