

# Introduction to Colossians

## Chapter 3

### *Raised with Christ: The Theology and Practice of the New Life*

If Colossians chapter 1 is the declaration of Christ's supremacy and chapter 2 is the defense of His sufficiency, then chapter 3 is the demonstration of what supremacy and sufficiency look like when they take up residence in ordinary human life. The great doctrinal freight of the first two chapters does not hang in the air as abstract theology. It lands. It lands in the bedroom and the kitchen table, in the workplace and the neighborhood, in the marriage and the nursery and the way a person speaks to the people above them and below them in the social order. Chapter 3 is where the gospel gets dressed and goes to work.

The chapter opens with what is, in many ways, the governing logic of the entire Christian life: since you have been raised with Christ, set your minds on things above. The resurrection is not merely a future event to be anticipated or a past event to be commemorated. It is a present reality to be lived from. The Colossian believers have been raised — past tense, accomplished, real — and that resurrection changes not just their eternal destination but their daily orientation. The mind that is set on things above does not float detached from earthly life. It engages earthly life from a completely different vantage point, with completely different priorities, fueled by completely different desires.

From this resurrection foundation, Paul constructs what is essentially a theology of radical personal transformation — framed around two of the most vivid metaphors in all his letters: taking off old clothes and putting on new ones. The old self — with its sexual immorality, its consuming greed, its volcanic anger, its habitual lying — is not to be managed, negotiated with, or gradually reduced. It is to be put to death. The language is deliberately violent, because the reality it describes is genuinely costly. Sanctification is not self-improvement. It is execution of the old nature and resurrection into the new. It is the daily, active, ruthless cooperation with the work the Spirit is already doing in the believer.

The new self that replaces the old is clothed in a wardrobe that reads like the character of Christ made wearable: compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, forgiveness, and above all, love — which Paul calls the bond of perfection, the thing that holds every other virtue in its proper place and relationship. Alongside this, the peace of Christ is meant to rule like an umpire in the heart, calling the plays, settling disputes, determining the outcome of every interior contest. And the word of Christ is meant to dwell richly in the community — not simply known by individuals but shared, sung, taught, and celebrated together as the living substance of the church's common life.

The chapter closes with the most controversial section for many modern readers: the household codes. Paul addresses wives and husbands, children and fathers, bondservants and masters — and in every case, the governing reality is the same: the

Lord. Wives submit as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands love as Christ loved. Children obey as pleasing to the Lord. Fathers do not embitter as the Lord would not. Bondservants work as for the Lord. Masters treat bondservants knowing the Lord is their Master too. Every earthly relationship is reoriented around a single Person. This is not a social conservatism that sanctifies the status quo. It is a revolutionary reframing of every human relationship around the lordship of the One who redefined power as service and greatness as love.

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## Opening Prayer

*Heavenly Father,*

*We confess that we have often treated the Christian life as a set of beliefs to be held rather than a resurrection to be lived from. We know the doctrines. We can recite the declarations. But we have sometimes left our minds set firmly on earthly things — on comfort, on reputation, on the satisfaction of desires that belong to the old self we were told to put to death — while calling ourselves people of the resurrection.*

*Father, do in us what only You can do: reset our minds. Turn our gaze upward — not away from the world You love, but toward the Christ who redeems it, so that we engage everything below with the wisdom and love and patience that come from above. Let the resurrection of Your Son be not just a fact we affirm but a reality we draw on, daily, as the source of every thought, every choice, every word, and every act.*

*Where the old self is still alive in us — where anger still erupts without restraint, where lust still directs the gaze, where greed still organizes the priorities, where pride still filters every relationship — bring death. The real death Paul describes: the daily, ruthless cooperation with what the cross already accomplished. We do not want managed sin. We want crucified sin. And we know that crucifixion is not our work alone — it is the Spirit's work, and we ask You to do it.*

*And where the new self is struggling to take shape — where compassion is thin, patience is short, forgiveness is stalled, and love is more of a decision than a delight — clothe us. Put on us what we cannot generate from within. Let the peace of Christ rule our hearts. Let the word of Christ dwell richly among us. And let everything we do — in word or deed, in kitchen or boardroom, in marriage or parenthood or labor — be done in the name of the Lord Jesus, with thanksgiving to You.*

*In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.*

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## Colossians 3:1–4

### Since You Have Been Raised: The Resurrection as the Foundation of the Christian Life

*(1) Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.  
(2) Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.  
(3) For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.  
(4) When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.*

#### THE CONTEXT

Four verses. A universe of implication. Paul has spent two chapters establishing who Christ is and what He has accomplished — the cosmic Lord, the full dwelling place of God, the One through whom the debt was canceled and every hostile power disarmed. Now he turns and says: given all of that, here is what it means for Monday morning. The hinge word is 'since.' Not 'if you have been raised.' Not 'try to imagine that you have been raised.' Since. The resurrection of the believer with Christ is a settled, accomplished, past-tense reality — grounded in union with Christ, sealed by the Spirit, as certain as the resurrection of Christ Himself from the tomb. And since it is true, something follows. Something is required. Something must change — not in your legal standing, which has already changed, but in the daily orientation of your interior life.

The command to set your minds on things above appears twice in two verses — first as 'set your hearts' and then as 'set your minds' — signaling that Paul wants the full person engaged: the affections and the intellect, the emotional center and the thinking center, both reoriented toward the same destination: things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. This is not a call to escape the world or to treat earthly life as spiritually irrelevant. It is a call to engage earthly life from above — to bring a heavenly vantage point, shaped by Christ and His priorities, to every earthly encounter and decision.

Verse 3 is among the most quietly remarkable statements in the New Testament: your life is now hidden with Christ in God. Hidden — not lost, not invisible in some negative sense, but secure, protected, lodged in the safest possible location. The believer's true life, their deepest identity, the most real thing about them — is not visible to the world, not accessible to the enemy, not subject to the fluctuations of earthly circumstance. It is hidden. In Christ. In God. And verse 4 adds the final dimension: this hidden life will one day be revealed in glory, when the Christ who is our life appears. The hiddenness is temporary. The glory is permanent.

#### PLAIN AMERICAN ENGLISH

*You have been raised with Christ — so direct your heart's desires toward the things above, where Christ is sitting at God's right hand. Fix your thinking on what is above, not on what belongs to this earth. Because you died — your old life is over — and your new life is tucked away safely in God, hidden together*

*with Christ. And when Christ — who is your actual life — is revealed to the world, you will be revealed with Him in glory.*

## KEY OBSERVATIONS

**"Since you have been raised with Christ":** This signifies **The Resurrection Is the Starting Point of Christian Ethics, Not the Reward for It.**

Paul does not say: live well enough and you will eventually be raised with Christ. He says: you have been raised, therefore live accordingly. The resurrection is not the goal of the Christian life — it is its foundation. Every ethical instruction that follows in chapter 3 is grounded not in what believers must achieve but in what has already been accomplished for them and in them. The put-to-death of the old nature and the put-on of the new are not the conditions for resurrection life. They are the expressions of a resurrection life that has already begun. Morality flows from identity in Paul's theology, always — never the other direction.

**"Set your minds on things above":** This signifies **The Mind Is the Battlefield, and Its Orientation Determines the Direction of the Life.**

Paul does not simply say 'do heavenly things.' He says set your minds — 'phroneō' in Greek, the same word used in Philippians 2:5 ('have the same mindset as Christ Jesus') and in Romans 8:5 ('those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires'). The mind is the governing center. Whatever the mind is habitually set on becomes the organizing principle of the life — shaping desires, forming habits, directing choices, and ultimately producing the character of the person. To set the mind on things above is not to ignore the earth. It is to interpret the earth, engage the earth, and make decisions about the earth from a vantage point that the resurrection has opened.

**"Your life is now hidden with Christ in God":** This signifies **The Believer's True Identity Is Secured in a Location Inaccessible to Every Enemy.**

The hiddenness of the believer's life in God is not a theological abstraction. It is a pastoral comfort of the highest order. Whatever can be taken from you — health, relationships, reputation, financial security, even physical freedom — your life cannot be taken, because it is not stored in any of those places. It is hidden with Christ in God. The enemy cannot reach it. Circumstance cannot touch it. Death itself cannot access it — because the life hidden in God is the resurrection life that has already passed through death and come out the other side. This is why Paul can say later, in Philippians 4:11, that he has learned the secret of contentment in all circumstances. The person whose life is hidden in God cannot be ultimately diminished by anything that happens in the visible world.

**"Christ, who is your life":** This signifies **Christianity Is Not a Set of Beliefs About Christ — It Is Christ Himself as the Substance of Existence.**

The phrase 'Christ, who is your life' is one of the most radical identifications in the New Testament. Not 'Christ, who improves your life.' Not 'Christ, who gives your life meaning.' Christ, who is your life — the actual substance of it, the source from which it flows, the Person in whom it is grounded and toward whom it moves. Paul said the same thing in Philippians 1:21: 'For me, to live is Christ.' This is not poetic hyperbole. It is a

description of a fundamental reorientation of personal existence: the center of gravity has shifted from self to Christ, from the old identity to the new, from the visible to the hidden. When Christ appears, this hidden life will be made visible — and the glory of that appearing will reveal what was always most true about the person who belonged to Him.

#### WHAT THIS MEANS FOR US TODAY

**1. You Are Already Living a Resurrection Life — Start Living Like It:** The grammar of verse 1 is in the past tense: you have been raised. This is not a future aspiration or a conditional promise. It is an accomplished reality, secured in your union with Christ. The practical implication is enormous: the resurrection life is not something you are working toward. It is something you are working from. Every morning you wake up, you wake up as a person who has already been raised with Christ. The question is not whether you have the resurrection. The question is whether you are living out of it — whether the orientation of your heart and mind reflects the reality of the life you have already been given.

**2. What You Set Your Mind On Shapes Who You Become:** The instruction to set your mind on things above is not a one-time decision. It is a daily, repeated, active discipline — a choice to direct the mind's attention toward Christ, His character, His priorities, His word, and the realities of the kingdom, rather than allowing the mind to drift by default into the gravitational pull of earthly preoccupations. What you habitually think about shapes what you desire. What you desire shapes what you pursue. What you pursue shapes who you become. The mind is not neutral terrain. It is the most consequential real estate in your life, and Paul says it must be deliberately and repeatedly set on what is above.

**3. Your Real Life Cannot Be Taken from You:** In a season where so much feels uncertain — where health, security, relationships, and cultural stability all seem more fragile than they did — the promise of verse 3 is a stabilizing anchor. Your real life is hidden with Christ in God. Not in your bank account, not in your health, not in your reputation, not in any relationship, not in any earthly institution. Hidden. With Christ. In God. The things that can be shaken are not the things your life is stored in. And when the shaking comes — as it always does — the life hidden in God remains exactly where it was: secure, untouched, and waiting for the glory of its final revelation.

#### HOW THIS RELATES TO TODAY

The instruction to set your mind on things above is one of the most countercultural imperatives in the entire New Testament — not because it calls believers to be otherworldly and disengaged, but because it calls them to be governed by a set of values and priorities that the surrounding culture has no mechanism for producing. A mind set on things above does not organize its life primarily around personal comfort, social status, financial security, or the approval of the people around it. It organizes its life around the priorities of the kingdom: the glory of God, the love of neighbor, the integrity of character, the advance of the gospel, and the coming of Christ. These are not the organizing priorities of any major cultural institution in the contemporary world. They are, however, the organizing priorities of a life that has been raised with Christ.

The hiddenness of the believer's life in verse 3 also speaks directly to the identity crisis that characterizes so much of contemporary culture. When identity is constructed from external sources — appearance, achievement, social performance, political affiliation, consumer choice — it is necessarily unstable, because every source it draws from is subject to change, loss, and the judgment of others. The Christian's identity is hidden in God — which means it is grounded in the most stable possible location and defined by the most reliable possible Author. The person whose life is hidden with Christ in God does not need to perform their identity for public validation, because their identity is not the public's to give or take. It has already been given, by God, in Christ, and it is kept in a place no audience can reach.

**Key Lesson:** *The resurrection of Christ is not merely a doctrine to believe or a future to anticipate — it is the present foundation from which the entire Christian life is lived; because you have been raised with Christ, you have access to an orientation of mind, a security of identity, and a source of life that no earthly circumstance can produce or destroy, and the daily practice of setting your mind on things above is simply the daily act of living in accordance with what is already, irrevocably, true.*

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## Colossians 3:5–11

### Put to Death the Earthly Nature: The Violent Grace of Christian Sanctification

(5) Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.  
(6) Because of these, the wrath of God is coming.  
(7) You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived.  
(8) But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips.  
(9) Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices  
(10) and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.  
(11) Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.

#### THE CONTEXT

The word 'therefore' at the opening of verse 5 is the hinge between the theology of verses 1-4 and the ethics of what follows. Because you have been raised with Christ. Because your life is hidden in God. Because Christ is your life and will appear in glory — therefore put to death whatever belongs to your earthly nature. The connection between

indicative and imperative — between what God has done and what believers must do in response — is the structural logic of all of Paul's ethical instruction. He never starts with the command. He always starts with the accomplished reality and then draws the command from it like a conclusion from a premise.

The list of sins Paul catalogues divides naturally into two groups. The first, in verses 5-6, is what might be called the sins of private appetite: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires, and greed — inner dispositions and private behaviors that corrupt the person from within, centered on the disordering of desire. The second, in verses 8-9, is the sins of relational damage: anger, rage, malice, slander, filthy language, and lying — things that destroy community, rupture trust, and tear down what God intends to build. Both lists appear in the context of a community, because both kinds of sin — private and relational — damage the body as well as the individual. Sin is never entirely private. It always has a communal radius.

The climax of this passage is the declaration of verse 11: in the new humanity that Christ is creating, there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free. These were the deepest divisions of the ancient world — the ethnic, religious, cultural, and social fault lines that organized human society into a hierarchy of insiders and outsiders, the included and the excluded, the superior and the inferior. Christ does not merely bridge these divisions. He declares them irrelevant as markers of identity in the new community He is building. The only identity that matters in the new self is Christ — who is all, and is in all.

#### PLAIN AMERICAN ENGLISH

*Because of all this, put to death everything inside you that belongs to the old, earthly way of living: sexual immorality, moral impurity, consuming lust, evil desires, and greed — which is nothing less than idolatry. These are exactly the things that bring God's wrath. This is how you used to live, back in your old life. But now you have to get rid of all of it: anger that explodes, rage that rages, malice that plots harm, slander that destroys reputations, and filthy talk that comes out of your mouth. Stop lying to one another — because you have taken off the old self with all its ways, like a filthy set of clothes, and you have put on the new self, which God is continually renewing into the image of the One who created it. In this new humanity, the old categories don't apply anymore — not Gentile or Jew, not circumcised or uncircumcised, not barbarian, not Scythian, not slave, not free. What applies is this: Christ is everything, and He is in everyone.*

#### KEY OBSERVATIONS

**"Put to death whatever belongs to your earthly nature":** This signifies **Sanctification Requires the Active, Ruthless Cooperation of the Believer.**

The language Paul uses for sanctification here is deliberately violent. Not 'reduce,' not 'manage,' not 'gradually improve upon.' Put to death. The Greek word 'nekrōsate' is an aorist imperative — a decisive, complete act, not an ongoing process of mild adjustment. Paul is under no illusion that sin is a minor inconvenience to be politely discouraged. He knows it is a power that will kill you if you do not kill it first. This is what the Puritans called 'the mortification of sin' — the active, intentional, ongoing work of putting to

death in practice what Christ has already put to death in principle at the cross. The cross accomplished the death of sin's dominion. The believer's daily cooperation with the Spirit executes that verdict in lived experience.

**"Greed, which is idolatry":** This signifies **Every Sin Is, at Root, a Worship Disorder.**

Paul's identification of greed as idolatry is one of the most diagnostic statements in the New Testament. Greed is not primarily a financial problem. It is a worship problem — the disordering of desire that elevates a created thing (money, possessions, security, status) to the place in the heart that belongs to God alone. And what is true of greed is true of every sin on Paul's list: sexual immorality is the worship of pleasure and intimacy above the Creator who gives them. Rage is the worship of self-vindication. Slander is the worship of one's own reputation at the expense of another's. Every sin is, in its deepest structure, a turning of the heart toward a created thing as though it were ultimate. This is why the gospel — which reorients the heart toward God — is the only true and lasting solution to sin.

**"You have taken off your old self and put on the new self":** This signifies **Conversion Is a Change of Costume That Must Become a Change of Character.**

The metaphor of taking off and putting on clothing appears throughout this chapter and carries the full weight of Paul's understanding of Christian identity. The old self — with its specific practices, its characteristic sins, its habitual patterns — has been taken off. This happened at conversion, objectively, in the decisive moment of union with Christ. But the putting on of the new self is described as an ongoing process: 'being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.' The decisive act of conversion initiates a process of transformation that continues, day by day, as the knowledge of God reshapes the person from the inside. You took off the old clothes once. You are being renewed into the new ones continuously.

**"Christ is all, and is in all":** This signifies **The New Community Has One Identity Marker, and It Is a Person.**

The declaration of verse 11 is nothing less than a social revolution accomplished from the inside out. Every category the ancient world used to stratify human beings — ethnic identity, religious practice, cultural sophistication, legal status — is swept aside in the new humanity that Christ is forming. Not because these differences do not exist, but because they are no longer the primary identity markers that determine worth, belonging, or standing before God. In the new community, the one marker that matters is the one that cannot be manufactured, purchased, inherited, or earned: Christ, who is all and is in all. Every believer — regardless of background, ethnicity, education, or social standing — is equally in Christ, equally filled with Christ, equally defined by Christ.

#### **WHAT THIS MEANS FOR US TODAY**

**1. Do Not Manage Your Sin — Execute It:** The contemporary Christian tendency to manage sin rather than mortify it is one of the most debilitating patterns in the life of individual believers and local churches. Managing sin means keeping it at an acceptable

level, ensuring it does not become too embarrassing or too publicly damaging, while allowing its root to remain alive. Paul calls for something far more radical: put to death. The root itself. The desire beneath the behavior. The idol beneath the greed. The wound beneath the rage. This requires the kind of ruthless self-examination that is deeply uncomfortable, the kind of transparent accountability that is deeply countercultural, and the kind of sustained dependence on the Spirit that is deeply humbling. But it is the only path to genuine freedom, because a managed sin is a living sin — and a living sin will eventually kill what it was supposed to inhabit.

**2. Trace Every Sin to Its Idol:** Paul's identification of greed as idolatry hands believers a diagnostic tool of enormous practical value. When a particular sin pattern proves persistent — when the same behavior keeps returning despite genuine attempts to address it — the question to ask is not 'How do I stop doing this?' but 'What am I worshiping when I do this?' What created thing has taken the place in your heart that belongs to God? What is being promised to you by the sin that only God can actually deliver? Answering that question honestly is often the first step toward genuine freedom, because it moves the battle from the behavioral surface to the worship center, where the real war is always fought.

**3. The Ground Is Level at the Cross:** The social and ethnic and religious hierarchies that verse 11 dismantles were not minor inconveniences in the ancient world. They were the bedrock of social organization — deeply felt, vigorously maintained, and regularly used to justify the exclusion and diminishment of those who fell on the wrong side of the line. Paul declares all of it irrelevant in Christ. The implications for every church in every culture in every century are staggering: the ground is level at the cross, and any community that organizes itself around any other identity marker — racial, economic, educational, political — has imported a structure that the gospel of Jesus Christ has explicitly abolished. Christ is all. That means everything else is not.

#### HOW THIS RELATES TO TODAY

The list of sins in verses 5-9 maps with uncomfortable precision onto the interior landscape of contemporary digital life. Sexual immorality and lust have never been more accessible, more normalized, or more algorithmically curated for individual consumption. Greed has been elevated from a vice to a virtue in most of the major economic and aspirational narratives of Western culture. Anger and rage have become the dominant currencies of public discourse — rewarded by engagement metrics, cultivated by media ecosystems, and celebrated as authenticity. Slander and filthy language have found their highest expression in social media comment sections where the absence of consequence removes the last remaining check on what the unrenewed tongue will say. Paul's list is not ancient history. It is a diagnostic for the present moment.

The declaration of verse 11 also speaks with direct force into the racial and cultural fractures that continue to run through the contemporary church. The categories Paul lists — Jew and Gentile, barbarian and Scythian, slave and free — were the sharpest divisions of his world, equivalent in their power to the racial, economic, and political divisions that fracture communities today. And Paul does not merely suggest that these divisions should be softened, or that people on different sides should try harder to

understand each other. He declares them dismantled — rendered inoperative as identity markers — in the new humanity Christ is forming. A church that is still organized primarily around racial, economic, or political identity rather than around the all-sufficient identity of Christ has not yet caught up with the sociology of the resurrection.

**Key Lesson:** *The same resurrection that rescued you from the dominion of darkness now demands the execution of everything in you that still belongs to that dominion — not as a condition for being loved, but as the only coherent response of a person who has been raised into a new life, a new identity, and a new community where the only thing that determines worth and belonging is the Christ who is all and is in all.*

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## Colossians 3:12–14

### Clothe Yourselves: The Wardrobe of the New Humanity

*(12) Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. (13) Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. (14) And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.*

#### THE CONTEXT

Paul has spent verses 5-11 describing what must be taken off — the old self with its corrosive sins and fragmenting habits. Now he turns to the wardrobe of the new self, and the contrast is stark and beautiful. Where the old nature produced sexual immorality, greed, rage, and slander — things that consume the self and destroy others — the new nature, clothed in Christ, produces compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, and forgiveness. These are not moral achievements. They are garments — things that are put on, received, worn. The image is of a person being dressed, which suggests that these virtues are not generated from within by an act of willpower but received from outside and worn by an act of daily decision.

The identity from which this dressing proceeds is everything: as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved. Paul does not say 'clothe yourselves with compassion because you need to improve.' He says 'clothe yourselves because of who you are' — chosen, holy, dearly loved. The virtues that follow are not the means by which these people earn their status before God. They are the expression of a status already given. Chosen before they did anything. Holy because of what Christ has done, not what they have achieved. Dearly loved — the Greek word 'ēgapēmenoi' is a perfect passive participle, indicating a completed action with ongoing results: you were loved, you are loved, the loving continues. From this foundation of unconditional, unearned, ongoing love, a person can afford to be compassionate, humble, and gentle with others.

The climax of the clothing metaphor is love — described as the garment that goes over all the others, the outer robe that holds every virtue in its proper relationship. The word Paul uses for this binding function — 'syndesmos' — is the same word used in verse 19 for the ligaments and sinews that hold the body together through connection to the head. Love is not one virtue among the others, weighted equally with compassion and patience. It is the structural integrating force that makes all the other virtues coherent, relational, and genuinely Christlike rather than merely moral. Without love, patience becomes endurance without warmth. Humility becomes self-deprecation. Kindness becomes performance. Love is what makes the whole wardrobe alive.

#### PLAIN AMERICAN ENGLISH

*So then — as people God has chosen, set apart as holy, and deeply and genuinely loved — dress yourself in compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Put up with one another. And when someone does something that gives you a real grievance against them, forgive them — the same way the Lord has forgiven you. And on top of everything else, put on love. Love is the one thing that ties all the others together and makes the whole outfit complete.*

#### KEY OBSERVATIONS

**"As God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved":** This signifies **Identity Always Precedes Instruction in the Gospel.**

Three descriptions. Three unearned, God-given realities that precede every ethical demand. Chosen — elected by God before time, before any act that could merit selection, on the basis of His own sovereign love. Holy — set apart, belonging to God, defined not by personal attainment but by divine designation. Dearly loved — the Greek perfect passive participial form indicates love that was given at a point in the past and whose results continue without interruption into the present. Paul always starts here. The person being instructed to clothe themselves with compassion is not an anonymous moral agent trying to improve. They are a known, named, chosen, loved child of God. The instruction flows from the identity. Never the reverse.

**"Clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience":** This signifies **The Virtues of the New Life Are Not Personality Traits — They Are Deliberate Daily Choices.**

The clothing metaphor is not merely illustrative. It carries precise theological weight. You do not grow into clothes the way you grow into a personality trait. You choose them. You put them on, actively, deliberately, every morning. This is Paul's vision of Christian virtue: not a passive waiting for niceness to emerge, not a gradual accrual of good habits through self-discipline, but a daily, intentional act of choosing to wear what the Spirit has made available. Compassion is available. Put it on. Kindness is in the wardrobe. Choose it. Humility does not come naturally to the old self. Put it on anyway. The choosing, repeated daily, becomes the character. The character becomes the person.

**"Forgive as the Lord forgave you":** This signifies **The Measure of Christian Forgiveness Is Always the Cross.**

Every element of the ethical instruction in this chapter has a grounding reality behind it — something Christ has done that provides the basis and the measure for what the

believer is being asked to do. Nowhere is this clearer than in the instruction about forgiveness. The standard is not 'forgive when it feels appropriate' or 'forgive when the offense is below a certain threshold of seriousness.' The standard is: as the Lord forgave you. The Lord forgave you when you were His enemy. The Lord forgave you for an offense of infinite gravity — the rejection and rebellion of creatures against their Creator. The Lord forgave you at the cost of His own Son. That is the measure. And measured against that standard, the claim that another person's offense is too great to forgive is revealed as a profound failure to understand what we ourselves have been forgiven.

**"Love, which binds them all together in perfect unity": This signifies **Love Is Not One Virtue Among Many — It Is the Integrating Force of All of Them.****

Paul's description of love as the bond of perfection — 'syndesmos tēs teleiotētos' — places it in a category entirely its own. The other virtues are specific garments, each covering a particular dimension of character. Love is the belt that holds all the garments in place, the organizing principle that ensures each virtue is expressed in the right direction, at the right moment, toward the right person. Patience without love becomes stoic endurance. Humility without love becomes self-punishment. Kindness without love becomes manipulation. Love is what makes all the other virtues genuinely other-oriented, genuinely costly, genuinely reflective of the character of the God who is Himself love. Without it, the most impressive moral wardrobe is just very good-looking clothing on a body that is not alive.

#### **WHAT THIS MEANS FOR US TODAY**

**1. Know Who You Are Before You Try to Do What You Are Called to Do:** The sequence of verse 12 — identity first, instruction second — is not arbitrary. It is essential. A person who tries to be compassionate and humble and patient without first receiving and believing the identity God has assigned them will find the whole enterprise exhausting and ultimately futile. You cannot sustain a generosity of spirit toward others that is not rooted in a received generosity of God toward you. You cannot forgive freely when you have not internalized the forgiveness you have been given. You cannot be humble when your identity is under threat and must be defended. But a person who knows they are chosen, holy, and dearly loved by the God of the universe has nothing to prove, nothing to protect, and no reason to withhold from others what God has given them in abundance.

**2. Choose Your Clothing Every Morning:** The virtue of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience does not arrive as a permanent installation after a single spiritual experience. It is chosen — put on — every day, in the same way that physical clothing is chosen every morning. This is both humbling and liberating. Humbling, because it means the virtue is never automatic. Liberating, because it means yesterday's failure does not determine today's choice. Every morning is a new opportunity to put on the wardrobe of the new self. Every morning, the same clothes are available. The Spirit has not withdrawn them because of yesterday's impatience or unkindness. They are in the wardrobe. Choose them again.

**3. Let the Cross Calibrate Your Forgiveness:** When forgiveness feels impossible — when the offense is too recent, too repeated, or too serious, when the wound is too deep and the injustice too real — Paul's instruction does not minimize any of that. It simply points to a larger reality: the Lord forgave you. He forgave you for more than you are being asked to forgive. He forgave you at greater cost than any forgiveness you will ever be asked to extend. He forgave you when you were not yet sorry. He forgave you before you knew what you had done. This does not make forgiveness easy. But it makes it coherent. And for the person who has truly received the forgiveness of the cross, it makes the refusal to forgive a kind of theological contradiction — an insistence that the account is too large to write off, in the life of someone whose own account was written off at infinite cost.

#### HOW THIS RELATES TO TODAY

The five virtues of verse 12 — compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience — read like a direct antidote to the five most visible characteristics of contemporary public discourse. Compassion opposes the contempt that has become the default register of online and political communication. Kindness opposes the cruelty that is increasingly treated as authenticity. Humility opposes the performative confidence that social media rewards and that masks the most profound insecurity. Gentleness opposes the aggression that masquerades as strength in every arena from corporate culture to social media comment sections. And patience — the willingness to endure with others, to bear with their slowness and failure and difference — opposes the instant, unforgiving judgment that a culture of zero-tolerance and permanent public record has made into a way of life. The clothing Paul describes in verse 12 is not just the wardrobe of the new self. It is a direct challenge to the spirit of the age.

The instruction to forgive as the Lord forgave you in verse 13 also confronts one of the most destructive dynamics in the contemporary church: the culture of unresolved grievance that simmers beneath the surface of many Christian communities, occasionally erupting in church splits, leadership crises, and public accusations, but more often simply draining the life out of the community in ways that are hard to name but impossible to miss. A church that talks about grace but practices the informal accounting of offenses — where wounds are catalogued, wrongs are remembered, and people are permanently defined by their worst moments — has put on the language of the gospel without putting on its clothing. Forgiveness as the Lord forgives is not the occasional dramatic act of releasing a great offense. It is the daily, habitual, unglamorous practice of a community that has decided to be defined by what it has been given rather than by what has been done to it.

**Key Lesson:** *The wardrobe of the new humanity — compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, forgiveness, and love — is not a moral achievement list for people trying to earn God's approval; it is the daily clothing choice of people who have already been chosen, already declared holy, already loved without condition, and who put on what they put on not to become something but to express what, in Christ, they already are.*

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## Colossians 3:15–17

### The Peace of Christ, the Word of Christ, and the Name of Christ: Three Governing Realities

*(15) Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.*  
*(16) Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.*  
*(17) And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*

#### THE CONTEXT

Three verses that cover the interior life of the believer, the communal life of the church, and the total scope of everyday existence — and do it with an economy of language that is breathtaking. Paul is moving toward the practical application of all that has come before, and he does it by laying down three governing realities that are meant to saturate the whole of Christian life: the peace of Christ ruling the heart, the word of Christ dwelling richly in the community, and the name of Christ covering every word and deed. Each of these is communal as well as personal. Paul is not describing a private spirituality. He is describing a community shaped from within by the presence and the word and the name of its Lord.

The peace of Christ ruling in the heart is not a description of an emotional state — a pleasant sense of calm that descends in favorable circumstances. The word 'rule' — 'brabeuō' in Greek — is drawn from the athletic arena and refers to the arbiter, the umpire, the one who calls the plays and settles disputes. The peace of Christ is meant to function as the umpire of the interior life: when competing desires, competing loyalties, competing voices contest for the governing center of the heart, the peace of Christ makes the call. Not the loudest voice. Not the most urgent feeling. Not the most pressured circumstance. The peace that was made by the blood of the cross, and that now rules in the hearts of people who have received that reconciliation, settles what nothing else can settle.

The dwelling of the word of Christ richly in the community is one of the most important descriptions of healthy church life in the entire New Testament. The word of Christ — the whole counsel of the gospel, the teaching of Jesus and the apostles, the living word that the Spirit uses to shape and renew the people of God — is meant to dwell in the community 'richly' — not sparsely, not minimally, not as a weekly institutional formality, but richly, generously, pervasively. And the vehicle for this rich dwelling is community: teaching and admonishing one another, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs together, saturating the gathered life of the church in the living substance of God's word. This is not the work of one professional pastor. It is the responsibility of the whole body.

## PLAIN AMERICAN ENGLISH

*Let the peace that Christ gives be the one that settles every contest in your heart — you were called to this peace as one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ live richly inside your community — teach each other, challenge each other, build each other up with all the wisdom you have, through psalms and hymns and Spirit-inspired songs, singing to God with grateful hearts. And whatever you are doing — with your words or your actions — do all of it in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.*

## KEY OBSERVATIONS

**"Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts":** This signifies **The Gospel Creates an Interior Umpire That No Earthly Pressure Can Replicate.**

The peace that rules in the heart of the believer is specifically identified as the peace of Christ — not a general sense of well-being, not the peace that circumstances can produce, but the shalom that was accomplished at the cross and confirmed by the resurrection. This is the peace that Paul describes in Philippians 4:7 as surpassing all understanding — a peace that guards the heart and mind in Christ Jesus even in circumstances that would, by any earthly logic, preclude peace entirely. When this peace functions as umpire — when it is genuinely allowed to rule — it settles the anxious heart, quiets the competitive ego, resolves the ambiguous decision, and produces a stability of interior life that no external circumstance can either manufacture or destroy.

**"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly":** This signifies **The Health of a Church Is Directly Proportional to How Richly the Word of Christ Lives in It.**

The word 'richly' — 'plousiōs' — is the same root Paul uses in verse 2 of this chapter for 'the full riches of complete understanding.' It is the word of abundance, of generosity, of more than enough. The word of Christ is not meant to inhabit the community at the minimum necessary level for institutional functioning. It is meant to dwell richly — shaping conversation, informing relationships, governing decisions, feeding worship, fueling the teaching and admonishing that happens not just on Sunday morning but through the whole texture of communal life. A church in which the word of Christ dwells richly looks different from a church in which it is present but thin: the conversations are different, the conflict resolution is different, the worship is different, the capacity to bear with one another is different. The word is the lifeblood of the community.

**"Psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit":** This signifies **Worship Is One of the Primary Vehicles Through Which the Word Dwells in the Community.**

Paul's inclusion of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs within the context of letting the word dwell richly is a profound statement about the function of worship in the formation of the community. Music is not merely the emotional warm-up before the real spiritual content. It is itself a vehicle of truth — the word of Christ embedded in melody, carried by beauty, absorbed by the affections in ways that purely propositional instruction cannot always reach. The psalms that Israel sang for a thousand years shaped their theology as surely as the teaching of the priests. The hymns of the early church carried the doctrines of the incarnation and the resurrection into the

bloodstream of ordinary believers. What a community sings together, it will eventually believe and live together.

**"Whatever you do, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus": This signifies There Is No Category of Human Activity That Falls Outside the Lordship of Christ.**

The sweep of verse 17 is total and intentional. Whatever you do — not 'whatever religious activity you perform,' not 'whatever happens within the walls of the church building,' not 'whatever you choose to designate as sacred.' Whatever. Word or deed. Public or private. Professional or domestic. Joyful or mundane. Do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus. The name of Jesus is not a closing formula for prayers. It is the governing authority under which all of life is meant to be lived. To do something in the name of Christ is to do it as His representative, accountable to His character, expressing His priorities, and offering it to His glory. This leaves nothing secular. Everything is sacred when it is done in His name.

#### **WHAT THIS MEANS FOR US TODAY**

**1. Let Peace Make the Call:** When you face a significant decision — a relationship choice, a vocational crossroads, a financial commitment, a ministry direction — and the competing voices inside you are loud and the circumstances are ambiguous, Paul gives you an umpire: the peace of Christ. Not the option that produces the most excitement, or the most financial security, or the most social approval. The option in which the peace of Christ settles and rules. This does not make decision-making mechanical, and it requires a heart sufficiently saturated in the word and the Spirit to recognize genuine peace from mere comfort. But it is a real and reliable guide — the interior stillness that follows when a decision is genuinely aligned with the Lord.

**2. Feed the Word into the Community, Not Just the Sermon Slot:** If the word of Christ is meant to dwell richly in the community — through teaching, admonishing, singing, and the whole texture of shared life — then the primary responsibility for the health of the community's relationship to the word does not rest on the shoulders of the senior pastor alone. It rests on every member. What do you talk about with other believers outside of Sunday? Do the conversations that happen in the parking lot and around the dinner table and in the text message threads carry the word of Christ? Are you teaching and admonishing one another — gently, wisely, lovingly — in the ordinary exchanges of daily community life? The word dwells richly when the whole community carries it, not just when it is proclaimed from a platform.

**3. Sanctify the Ordinary by Doing It in His Name:** The most practically transformative implication of verse 17 is the abolition of the sacred-secular divide in the life of the believer. There is no secular work when it is done in the name of the Lord Jesus. There is no ordinary meal when it is offered with thanksgiving to God the Father through Him. There is no mundane conversation when it is carried out as the representative of Christ. The application is as simple and as demanding as it sounds: before each task, each meeting, each conversation, each act of labor or rest — consciously bring it under the name. Offer it. Do it as His. The mundane becomes sacred

not by changing what you are doing but by changing who you are doing it for and in whose name it is done.

#### HOW THIS RELATES TO TODAY

The peace of Christ as umpire in verse 15 stands in direct contrast to two of the most common interior governing systems of contemporary life. The first is anxiety — the relentless interior monitoring of threats and outcomes that organizes the heart around worst-case scenarios and never reaches a settled place. The second is desire — the allowing of whatever feels most urgent, most pleasurable, or most pressing to make the governing call in the heart. Both anxiety and unchecked desire are poor umpires. Anxiety calls every play toward self-protection. Desire calls every play toward immediate gratification. The peace of Christ, by contrast, calls plays toward the kingdom — toward what is genuinely good, genuinely aligned with God's purposes, and genuinely sustainable over a lifetime of following Christ.

The principle of verse 17 — doing everything in the name of the Lord Jesus — is also one of the most powerful and most consistently underutilized resources for the integration of faith and work in the contemporary world. The division between Sunday faith and Monday work is one of the most damaging features of contemporary Western Christianity: the compartmentalization that treats church as the sphere of genuine spiritual life and the workplace as the sphere of professional identity that happens to be inhabited by a Christian. Paul's instruction dissolves this division entirely. There is no workplace that is outside the name of the Lord Jesus. There is no professional relationship that is exempt from the character of Christ. There is no vocational task that cannot be offered to the Father through Him. To do your work in His name is to bring the full weight of Christian vocation to bear on every ordinary Tuesday.

**Key Lesson:** *The peace that Christ gives was purchased at the cross and is available to rule every interior contest; the word that Christ speaks was breathed out by God and is available to dwell richly in every community that opens itself to it; and the name that Christ carries is available to consecrate every word and deed of the life that belongs to Him — which means that for the person in Christ, nothing is secular, nothing is unsupervised, and nothing is without eternal significance.*

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## Colossians 3:18–25

### The Lord in Every Relationship: The Household of God Reordered Around Christ

- (18) *Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.*
- (19) *Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them.*
- (20) *Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.*
- (21) *Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged.*
- (22) *Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when*

*their eye is on you  
and to win their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord.  
(23) Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord,  
not for human masters,  
(24) since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a  
reward.  
It is the Lord Christ you are serving.  
(25) Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for their wrongs, and there is no  
favoritism.*

## THE CONTEXT

Paul's household codes — the section of his letters addressing the relationships within the ancient household — have generated more controversy than almost any other passage in his writing. They address three pairs of relationships: wives and husbands, children and fathers, and bondservants and masters. The ancient household was the basic social and economic unit of the Roman world, and these relationships were governed by a hierarchy of power that was assumed, legally enforced, and culturally unquestioned. Paul does not abolish that structure by fiat. But he does something far more subversive: he places every relationship within it under the authority of a different Lord — and that placement transforms the meaning of every role from within.

What is revolutionary about Paul's household code is not its structure — similar codes existed in Greek and Roman moral philosophy — but its content. The distinctive element is the repeated phrase 'in the Lord,' 'as is fitting in the Lord,' 'this pleases the Lord,' 'reverence for the Lord,' 'as working for the Lord,' 'it is the Lord Christ you are serving.' Every relationship is addressed not as a social arrangement to be maintained for cultural stability, but as a sphere of lordship — a place where the authority of Christ is the governing reality and the character of Christ is the standard. This is not the baptizing of power structures. It is the radical subordination of every power structure to the one Lord who redefined power as self-giving love.

The most striking feature of Paul's code, read against its cultural background, is not what it asks of wives, children, and bondservants — those were the culturally expected obligations. It is what it asks of husbands, fathers, and masters — the people with power. The husband is not told to rule. He is told to love, and not to be harsh. The father is not told to command. He is told not to embitter or discourage his children. The master is not told to demand. He is reminded that he himself has a Master in heaven who shows no favoritism. In each case, the person with cultural power is brought under the same Lord who governs the person without it. The playing field is not leveled by removing the hierarchy. It is leveled by placing both sides of every hierarchy under a single, non-partial authority who will judge both equally.

## PLAIN AMERICAN ENGLISH

*Wives, place yourself under your husband's leadership — in the way that is right and fitting for those who belong to the Lord. Husbands, love your wives. Don't be bitter or harsh toward them. Children, obey your parents in everything — this is what pleases the Lord. Fathers, don't push your children until they break — don't crush their spirit. Bondservants, obey your earthly masters in everything — and not just when they are watching, not just to look good in their*

*eyes, but with a sincere heart and a genuine reverence for the Lord. Whatever work you do, pour yourself into it wholeheartedly — do it as if you were working directly for the Lord rather than for a human being. Because you know that the Lord will give you the inheritance as your reward. The one you are really serving is the Lord Christ. And anyone — whoever they are, whatever position they hold — who does wrong will face the consequences of that wrong. God does not play favorites.*

## KEY OBSERVATIONS

**"As is fitting in the Lord":** This signifies **Every Human Relationship Is Reframed by Its Relationship to Christ.**

The phrase 'in the Lord' — repeated in various forms throughout this passage — is the interpretive key to the entire household code. Paul is not simply reinforcing the social norms of the Greco-Roman household. He is placing every relationship within the household under a new authority and a new standard. 'Fitting in the Lord' does not mean 'whatever is culturally conventional.' It means 'whatever reflects the character and the priorities of the Lord who governs this relationship.' This is a standard that looks very different from the Roman paterfamilias who exercised absolute power over wife, children, and slaves. It looks like the Lord who washed feet, who said the greatest among you shall be your servant, and who gave His life as a ransom for many.

**"Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them":** This signifies **The Instruction to the Powerful Is Always More Demanding Than the Instruction to the Powerless.**

The brevity of the instruction to husbands in verse 19 conceals its revolutionary depth. In the Roman world, the husband's authority over his wife was legally absolute and culturally unquestioned. Paul does not challenge the structure — but he fills it with entirely different content. The husband is not told to lead. He is told to love — 'agapaō,' the self-giving, cost-bearing, unconditional love that is always defined in the New Testament by the cross. And the negative command is just as pointed: do not be harsh. The Greek word suggests bitterness, resentment, the kind of cutting emotional cruelty that is technically legal but spiritually destructive. In the world Paul is addressing, telling a husband to love his wife and not be harsh was not reinforcing power. It was subverting it — replacing domination with Christlike self-giving as the definition of headship.

**"Do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged":** This signifies **Authority Over Children Is a Stewardship, Not a Privilege.**

The word 'embitter' — 'erethizō' — means to provoke, to exasperate, to stir to anger through unreasonable or excessive demands. The result Paul identifies is equally telling: they will become discouraged — 'athumeō,' literally 'to be without spirit,' deflated, disheartened, the life taken out of them by an authority that was supposed to nurture it. Every person entrusted with authority over children — parents, teachers, coaches, pastors, mentors — carries this warning. The authority given is not for the benefit of the authority-holder. It is for the flourishing of the child. Authority that crushes the spirit of the one entrusted to it has inverted its purpose and violated its charter. The Father who

is the model of all fatherhood does not embitter His children. He disciplines them with love toward life.

**"Work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord":** This signifies **The Presence of Christ in the Workplace Transforms the Meaning of Every Task.**

The instruction to bondservants in verses 22-25 contains one of the most practically powerful statements in all of Paul's writing: whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters. This transforms the nature of work itself. No longer is the quality of work determined by the quality of the employer, the pleasure of the task, or the likelihood of recognition. It is determined by the identity of the audience: the Lord. And because the Lord is always watching, always evaluating, always the real recipient of the work — the work is always worth doing well. The bondservant who works in an agricultural field for a Roman master who has forgotten his name is, according to Paul, working directly for the Lord Christ, who knows his name, values his labor, and will reward him with an inheritance that no Roman master can give.

#### WHAT THIS MEANS FOR US TODAY

**1. Every Relationship You Have Is a Place Where the Lordship of Christ Is Tested:** The household codes of Colossians 3 are not limited in their application to the ancient family structure they directly address. They establish a principle that covers every relationship: the Lord is the governing authority and the defining standard in all of them. Marriage, parenting, work, friendship, church membership — in every relationship, the question is the same: am I relating to this person in a way that reflects the character of the Lord who governs this relationship? Not: am I doing what is legally permissible? Not: am I doing what is culturally expected? But: am I doing what the Lord, who is watching, would recognize as consistent with His own character and command?

**2. The Person with Power Bears the Greater Accountability:** The consistent pattern of the household codes is that the person with cultural and structural power — the husband, the father, the master — is addressed with the more demanding instruction. Not 'use your power wisely' but 'love, do not be harsh, do not embitter, remember you have a Master too.' This is the consistent logic of the gospel applied to power: the greater the authority, the greater the accountability. God shows no favoritism (verse 25) — which means the person at the top of every human hierarchy will give an account to the same Lord as the person at the bottom. Power in the kingdom of God is not a privilege to be enjoyed but a stewardship to be answered for, measured by the degree to which it served and protected those entrusted to it.

**3. Do Your Work as for the Lord — Not for the Audience That Is Currently Watching:** The practical transformation Paul offers to bondservants who labor under indifferent or unjust masters is available to every believer who works in any structure where their effort goes unrecognized, their contribution is undervalued, or their dignity is disregarded. Work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord. The Lord is your real employer. The Lord is your real audience. The Lord is the one who will give the inheritance that no human employer has the power to provide or withhold. This does

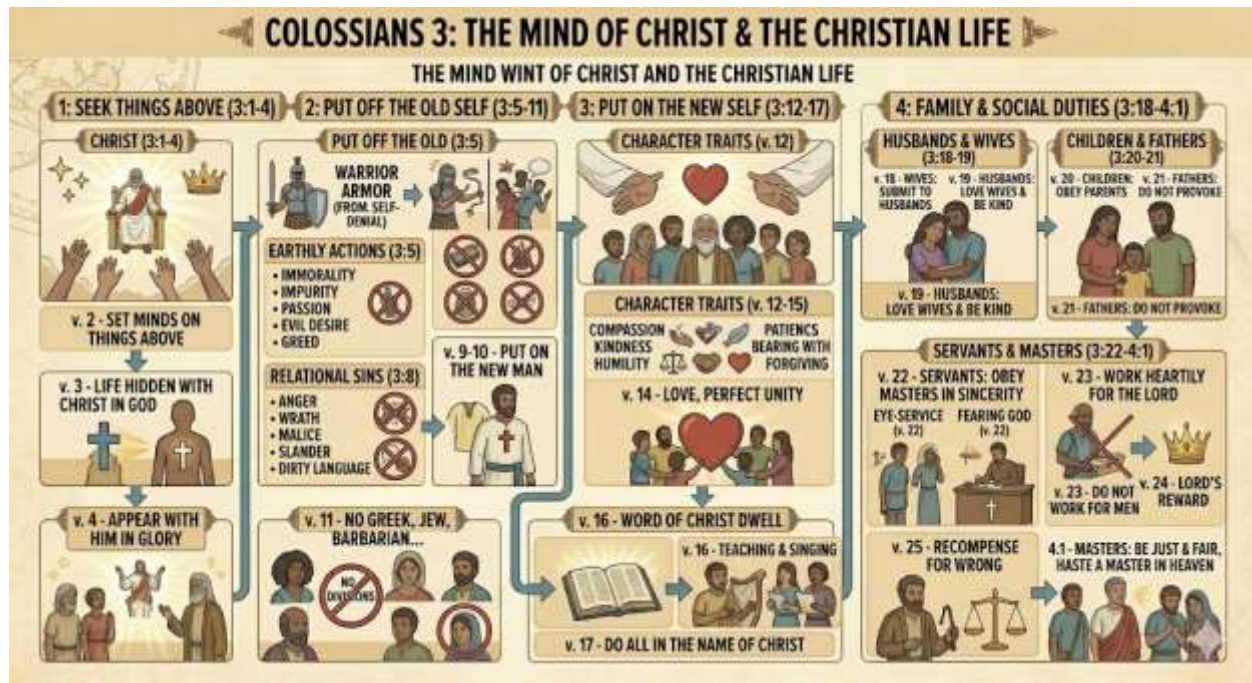
not make injustice in the workplace acceptable. But it does make excellent, whole-hearted work possible even inside an unjust structure — because the worker's motive and the worker's hope are anchored in a reality that the structure cannot reach.

#### HOW THIS RELATES TO TODAY

The question of the household codes and their application to the contemporary church is one of the most actively debated questions in biblical interpretation, and it would be dishonest to pretend that the debates are simple or fully resolved. What is clear in the text itself is the governing principle that applies to every interpretation: the Lord. Not cultural convention, not Roman social structure, not the assumptions of the ancient world, and not the assumptions of the contemporary world. The Lord — whose own relationship to power was defined by the cross, whose definition of greatness was service, and whose exercise of authority over His bride the church looks like laying down His life for her. Any interpretation of these codes that produces relationships characterized by domination, harshness, bitterness, and the crushing of spirits has misread the text by reading it without the Lord who governs every line of it.

The instruction of verses 23-24 — working wholeheartedly as for the Lord — is also one of the most urgently needed correctives to the contemporary crisis of meaning in work. Vast numbers of people in the modern workforce describe their work as meaningless, their labor as disconnected from any larger purpose, their effort as invisible to any audience that matters. Paul's instruction does not require a better employer, a more meaningful job title, or a more appreciative workplace culture to produce transformation. It requires a change of audience. When the Lord Christ is recognized as the genuine recipient of the day's work — when the data entry and the diaper-changing and the truck-driving and the email-answering are offered to Him, in His name, with sincerity of heart — the work does not change, but its meaning does. Completely. And permanently.

**Key Lesson:** *Every relationship — marriage, parenting, work, every structure of authority and accountability in which human beings live — is a place where the lordship of Christ is either honored or denied; and the governing principle that makes every relationship in the new humanity different is not a new social structure but a new Lord, whose own exercise of authority was defined by love that did not spare itself, and who sits above every human hierarchy as the Judge who shows no favoritism to the powerful and no indifference to the powerless.*



## Closing Prayer

*Heavenly Father,*

*Colossians chapter 3 has taken the great declarations of who Christ is and asked the most practical possible question: so what does your Monday look like? And we confess that the gap between what we have declared in chapters 1 and 2 and how we have actually lived in chapter 3 is often wider than we want to admit. We believe in the resurrection — and we set our minds on earthly things. We celebrate the peace of Christ — and we let anxiety make the calls. We sing about love — and we hold the grudges.*

*Forgive us, Father. And do not merely forgive us — transform us. Let the resurrection of Your Son be not just a doctrine we cite but a reality we draw on, daily, as the source of a different kind of mind, a different kind of desire, a different kind of engagement with the people around us.*

*Where the old self is still walking around in us — still dressed in rage and malice and lust and the chronic small deceptions we have made peace with — do the violent grace of mortification. Put it to death. We cooperate. We ask the Spirit to do what we cannot do alone: execute the verdict the cross already rendered.*

*And where the new self is still learning its wardrobe — still reaching for impatience when patience is what is needed, still withholding forgiveness when the cross has made forgiveness the only coherent response — dress*

*us. Put on what we fail to choose. Let compassion become our first impulse, not our last resort. Let forgiveness be as natural to us as it is costly — natural because we know what we have been forgiven, costly because we are honest about what we are being asked to forgive.*

*Let the peace of Christ rule our homes, our marriages, our workplaces, our churches. Let the word of Christ dwell among us richly enough that it shapes the conversations no one is recording, the decisions no one is watching, the words we speak in private to the people who have no audience with us but You. And let everything we do — the smallest task, the most unwitnessed act, the labor that no employer sees and no culture rewards — be done in the name of the Lord Jesus, offered to You, through Him, as an act of worship.*

*For You are the Lord who shows no favoritism — which means the work of the person at the bottom is as visible to You as the work of the person at the top. And we want to live as people who know that, and who work, and love, and speak, and forgive, in the full knowledge that the Lord Christ is watching, and that He is enough of an audience for any life.*

*In the name of the One who is our life, and who will appear in glory —*

*In Jesus' name, Amen.*

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***Soli Deo Gloria***  
*Glory to God Alone*