

Colossians 3:1-4
Godward Relationship with Christ

Introduction: This section begins to describe the transformed Christian life. (MBC) You don't need to follow manmade rules because you are in Christ. In this section Paul shifts from focusing on the false teacher to what true teaching really is. This passage is similar in function to Romans 12:1-2.

As Warren Wiersbe said: After all, it does little good if Christians *declare* and *defend* the truth, but fail to *demonstrate* it in their lives.

The battle against sin begins in the heart and mind.

1) We are to follow the logical conclusion: ¹ *Therefore* [οὖν], ...

a) Probably pointing back to 2:12-13

2) We are to assume the reality of THE PAST: *if* (assumed true) *you have been raised up* (co-resurrected by God) *with* [aor. pass. ind.] *Christ*,

a) This completes the thought of “died with Christ” in 2:20.

3) We are to be reoriented in THE PRESENT—3:1b-3

a) The what—3:1b-2

i) Passionate pursuit: *keep seeking* [pres. act. impv. ζητέω] *the things above*,

- It is not enough to simply think about heaven or heavenly things. We must deliberately focus on Christ Himself. Christian growth does not happen accidentally.
- This is parallel (though not identical) to what Jesus said in Matt. 6:33.
- This is where Peter failed in Mark 8:33.

(1) His resurrection: *where Christ is* [pres. act. ind.],

(a) The ascension and session of Christ are assumed.

(b) We are to seek a Person, not merely a place.

(2) His enthronement/session: *seated* [pres. mid. ptc.] *at the right hand of God*. (Ps. 110:1)

- Daniel saw something similar in Dan. 7:9-14
- Jesus Himself refers to this in Mark 12:35-37 (Tuesday of Passion Week) and 14:61-62 (Friday of Passion Week).
- No less than five NT authors record this: (Luke) Acts 2:33-35; 5:31; 7:55-56; (Paul) Rom. 8:34; Eph. 1:20; (anonymous) Heb. 1:3, 13; 8:1; 10:12-13; 12:2; (Peter) 1 Pet. 3:22; (John) Rev. 3:21
- This is not to be confused with sitting on His throne in the Millennial Kingdom.

- (a) The place of unrivaled prestige and honor. He is the Father's "righthand man."
- (b) The place of unparalleled authority and responsibility.
 - (i) Jesus participates in the exercise of divine sovereignty over all things.
- ii) Preoccupied interests: ² *Set your mind on* [pres. act. impv. φρονέω] ...
 - You must not only seek heaven, you must also think heaven. (Lightfoot)
 - It DOES matter what we think and we ARE responsible for our thoughts.
 - But it involves more than just our thoughts. It involves our will. It is a settled (concentrated) mindset and attitude.
- (1) The **positive** orientation: *the things above*,
 - (a)
- (2) The **negative** alternative: *not on the things that are on earth*.
 - (a) Like the false teacher would like you to do.
- iii) Paul is not saying that we must ignore earthly matters. He is saying that we must reject an earthly mindset. We must learn to look at earthly things in light of eternity.
- iv) Or as John Kitchen states it: the reality upon earth is defined by the reality of heaven, not the other way around. Scripture truth defines tangible reality. We are on dangerous ground when we weigh spiritual matters by what appears to be the facts based on limited, earthly evidence. He who sees only the earthly sees only partial reality; he misses the most vital pieces of evidence for interpreting reality in its fullness.
- b) The Why—3:3
 - i) ³ *For* [γάρ] *you died* [aor. act. ind.] (echo of 2:12-13 & 20)
 - (1) We are identified with Christ, but we are also liberated by His work.
 - ii) *and your life has been* (and remains) *hidden* [pf. pass. ind. κρύπτω] with Christ in God.
 - (1) Emphasizes close association, absolute security and concealment.
 - (2) Paul taught this to the Thessalonian believers as well. (1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1)
- 4) **We have hope for our completion in THE FUTURE—3:4**
 - a) ⁴ **When** *Christ, who is our life, is manifested* / made visible [aor. pass. subj. φανερώω], ...
 - i) Jesus is not peripheral to your life; He is absolutely essential.

- b) ***then*** *you also will be manifested* [fut. pass. ind. φανερώω] ***with Him*** *in glory*.
- i) Note how we are associated with Christ in His death (3:3a), His resurrection (3:1a), His life (3:3b, 4a), and His glory (3:4b).
 - ii) Christ will not be revealed in humility, suffering, and shame. He will be revealed in all His awesome splendor and glory.
 - iii) As someone has said, isn't it amazing what God will do for these insignificant pagans from an insignificant town? (Cf. Phil. 3:21; 2 Thess. 1:12)
 - iv) John Kitchen writes: The world won't understand who you really are until they behold Jesus in His glory.

5) Things we need to remember:

- a) Let us passionately seek to pursue this line of thinking for ourselves.
- b) Let us passionately encourage others to pursue this line of thinking.

Colossians 3:5-11 Godward Holiness Stated Negatively

Introduction: Here we find a series of negative commands. For those who think we should always be positive in our teaching, what do we do with this passage? These sins must be stopped because they do not reflect the heavenly mindset of 3:1-4.

1) **The command regarding SEXUAL sins—3:5**

- a) Do what is necessary to prevent sexual sin: ⁵ *Therefore* (cf. 3:1-4), **consider** *the members* (faculties) *of your earthly body as dead* (aor. act. impv. νεκρώω “put to death”, take extreme measures to stop such things) *to ...*
 - i) This is not merely a matter of suppressing or controlling these sins. We are to wipe them out, completely exterminating the old way of life. (Curtis Vaughan)
 - ii) Ultimately, then, the imperative “put to death” in this verse must be viewed as a call to respond to, and cooperate with, the transformative power that is already operative within us. (Douglas Moo)
 - iii) But remember, sin does not reside in a particular body part. It is in our spiritual heart. This aligns with Rom. 8:13.
- b) Concerning any sexual activity or desire for such sexual activity outside the bonds of marriage. The shift is from external actions to internal desires.
 - i) The sinful sexual **ACTIVITIES** outside of God’s design
 - (1) Emphasis on **perversion** among the unmarried: *sexual immorality*, [πορνεία]
 - (2) Emphasis on moral **contamination**: *impurity*, [ἀκαθαρσία]
 - ii) The sinful sexual **DESIRES** outside of God’s design
 - (1) Emphasis on unrestrained **intensity**: *passion*, [πάθος]
 - (a) Cf. Rom. 1:26; 1 Thess. 4:5
 - (2) Emphasis on wicked **harmfulness**: *evil desire*, [κακός ἐπιθυμία]
 - (3) Emphasis on **insatiable sinfulness**: *and greed*, [πλεονεξία] *which is idolatry*. [εἰδωλολατρία]
 - (a) Because it puts self-interest and sex in place of God.
 - iii) Cf. John Kitchen’s *Sexual Idolatry* charts (pp. 451-454)
 - c) **The Point:** Paul, by God’s Spirit, is calling us to terminate immoral, self-centered use and abuse of the body God has given to us.
 - i) Throughout the years, sadly, I have dealt with a great deal of sexual sin committed by professing Christians.

- ii) Sexual sins arise because people have an uncontrolled desire for more and more “experiences” and “pleasures”; and such a desire is nothing less than a form of idolatry. (Douglas Moo)

2) The contrast with your life before Christ—3:6-7

- a) These sexual sins deserve God’s wrath: ⁶ *On account of these things (3:5), the wrath [ὀργή] of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience [ἀπειθεία],*
- i) We cannot look upon these sins with indifference or carelessness.
- ii) God’s wrath:
- (1) Is present: John 3:36; Rom. 1:18; 1 Thess. 2:16
- (2) Is future: Rom. 2:5; 1 Thess. 1:10
- b) These sexual sins were characteristic of our unsaved days: ⁷ *and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them.*

3) The command regarding SOCIAL sins—3:8-11

- a) Rid yourselves of these sins: ⁸ *But now (in contrast to your pre-Christian days) you also, lay them all aside:* [aor. mid. impv. ἀποτίθημι]
- i) Sinful **attitude** issues
- (1) Chronic, settled anger: *wrath*, [ὀργή]
- (2) Passionate outburst: *anger*, [θυμός]
- (3) Active ill will, viciousness toward others: *malice*, [κακία]
- ii) Sinful **speech** issues: ... *from your mouth.*
- (1) Deliberately insulting and defamatory: *slander*, [βλασφημία]
- (2) Verbally obscene and abusive: *and abusive speech* [αἰσχρολογία]
- (3) Words change situations and relationships, sometimes irrevocably.
(Ben Witherington)
- iii) We need to address the sins in the right order. Mastery of our mouth begins with master of our heart. (John Kitchen)
- b) Tell the truth to others: ⁹ *Do not lie* (in word or action, “live a lie”) [pres. mid. impv. ψεύδομαι] *to one another, since ...*
- We are not merely new **individuals**, but we also live in a new **community** with others. Cf. Eph. 4:25
 - BTW, this does NOT mean it is okay to lie to unbelievers
 - At salvation, these two things occurred.
- i) **Negatively:** *you put off* [aor. mid. ptc. ἀπεκδύομαι] (used in 2:15) *the old* [παλαιός] *man with its evil practices / habits, functions* [πράξεις],
- This is the whole person ruled by sin, existing in the sphere of the lordship of Adam.

- ii) **Positively:** ¹⁰ *and have put on [aor. mid. ptc. ἐνδύω] the new [νέος] man who is being renewed [ἀνακαινόω] to a full knowledge [ἐπίγνωσις] according to the image of the One who created him (the new man)—*
- This is the whole person reborn by Christ, existing in the sphere of the lordship of Christ.
 - This renewal is also referred to in 2 Cor. 3:18; 4:16.
- (1) **Negatively:** ¹¹ *a renewal in which (lit. “where”) there is no distinction between ...*
- These are the things social and cultural Marxism cannot accept. They need distinctions in order to cause division within a society. Biblical Christianity stands in its way.
- (a) Opposites # 1
- (i) Ethnicity: *Greek and Jew,*
- (b) Opposites # 2
- (i) Religion: *circumcised (Jew) and uncircumcised (Greek/Gentile),*
- (c) Opposites # 3:
- (i) Culture, or notoriously unccultured: *barbarian* (βάρβαρος any non-Greek speakers who stutter “bar-bar” with the Greek language), *Scythian* (the wildest of the barbarians, just north of the Black Sea, southern Russia),
- (d) Opposites # 4:
- (i) Social: *slave* [δοῦλος], *and freeman* [ἐλεύθερος],
- (e) NB: you don't stop being a Jew or a Gentile, nor is your circumcision or culture reversed. But these differences are no longer the most important way we identify or determine how we relate to one another.
- (2) **Positive contrast:** *but Christ is all* (that matters, not pantheism) *and in all* (without distinction).
- (a) Christ can transform ANY person and indwells ALL believers equally.

4) Things we need to remember:

- a) We need to deliberately kill self-orientation in our life.
- b) We need to deliberately attack the root sins of greed and anger.

Colossians 3:12-17
Godward Holiness Stated Positively

Introduction: Avoiding sin is not enough. We must replace sinful behavior with righteous behavior.

1) Things we need to do WITH INDIVIDUALS —3:12-14 ¹² So, ... *put on* ...

- a) Recognize who God says we as Gentiles really are—3:12a
 - i) God has chosen you by His grace: *as the elect* [ἐκλεκτός] of God,
(1) Cf. Rom. 8:33; Titus 1:1
 - ii) God has set you apart for His purpose: *holy* [ἅγιος]
 - iii) God loves you with delight: *and beloved*, [pf. pass. ptc. ἀγαπάω]
- b) What appropriate relationships will look like—3:12b
 - Some would argue that these five traits counter the five sins of 3:5.
 - These five traits are used elsewhere in the NT to describe Christ.
 - i) Sensitive mercy: *a heart* [σπλάγχνον] of *compassion*, [οἰκτιρισμός]
 - ii) Generous helpfulness: *kindness*, [χρηστότης]
 - iii) Genuine self-sacrifice: *humility*, [ταπεινοφροσύνη]
(1) Both the ancient and modern worlds condemn this concept
 - iv) Selflessness: *gentleness*, [πραΰτης]
 - v) Calm non-retaliation: *and patience*; [μακροθυμία]
(1) It means willingness to do things by God's timetable. (Jay Adams)
- c) What these things look like in real life?—3:13
 - i) Put up with unpleasantness: ¹³ *bearing with* [pres. mid. ptc. ἀνέχομαι] *one another*,
(1) Even while defending the church in the face of spiritual attacks from outside.
(2) James Dunn explains: This acceptance requires an effort of will because the actions or attitudes in question are immature and tiresome.
(3) Experienced counselor & pastor Jay Adams writes: Probably somewhere near 85 to 90 percent of the counseling situations that you face involve failure to put up with someone.
 - ii) Gracious goodwill: *and graciously forgiving* [pres. mid. ptc. χαρίζομαι] *each other*,
(1) Probable event: *whoever has a complaint* [μομφή] *against anyone*,
(a) There will always be something or someone who may offend or hurt others. We must be careful how we respond in such situations.

- (b) There will always be someone who may be offended or take offense or be hurt by others. We must be careful how we respond in such situations.
- (2) Perfect example: *just as the Lord graciously forgave [χαρίζομαι] you, so also should you.*
- (a) Perhaps blending the ideas of “because” and “according to the standard of.”
- d) One more thing to put on that will tie everything together—3:14 ¹⁴ *Above [ἐπί] (in addition to) all these things put on love [ἀγάπη],*
- i) *which is the perfect [τελειότης] bond of unity [σύνδεσμος].*
- (1) Love is the bond that unifies the five traits of 3:12 into maturity/completeness.

2) Additional commands to obey WITH THE CONGREGATION—3:15-17

- a) Corporate wholeness: ¹⁵ *And let the peace of Christ rule* (as an umpire or arbitrator) [pres. act. impv. βραβεύω] *in your hearts, to which indeed you were called* (summoned) *in one body,*
- i) Let the peace of Christ be the deciding factor when we differ.
- ii) Nothing should be allowed to interfere with the well-being of the body of Christ. Peace must be the ruling principle. In an agonistic culture where rivalry and competition for honor was a part of everyday life, the audience must be reminded they are called to peace. (Ben Witherington)
- b) Corporate gratitude: *and be* [pres. mid. impv.] *thankful* [εὐχάριστος].
- i) When we, by God’s grace, develop an attitude of Godward gratitude, it becomes easier to deal with others in love and forgiveness. (Moo)
- c) Corporate beneficence: ¹⁶ *Let the word of Christ dwell* [pres. act. impv.] *in you* (individually and corporately) *richly, with all wisdom* (skillfully)
- What are some ways in which we can do this? Three participles
- i) Positively: *teaching* [pres. act. ptc. διδάσκω] (one another)
- ii) Negatively: *and admonishing* [pres. act. ptc. νουθετέω] *one another*
- Like Paul described earlier in 1:28.
 - With what resources? Cf. Eph. 5:19
- (1) *with* (OT) *psalms* [ψαλμος]
- (2) *and* (Godward) *hymns* [ῥυμος]
- (3) *and spiritual songs*, [πνευματικός ᾠδη]
- iii) Positively: *singing* [pres. act. ptc. ᾄδω]
- (1) *with gratefulness* [χάρις] *in your hearts*
- (2) *to God.*

- d) Corporate doxology: ¹⁷ *And whatever you do in word or deed* (the totality of life), *do* [assumed command) *all in the name* (in alignment with the nature and character) *of the Lord Jesus*,
 - i) How? *giving thanks* [pres. act. ptc. εὐχαριστέω] *to God the Father through Him* (Christ).

3) Things we need to remember:

- a) We must live our lives individually and corporately in such a way that people notice Christ.
- b) We must live our lives individually and corporately in such a way that people around us receive the most spiritual benefit.

Colossians 3:18-21
A Godward Home Environment

Introduction: Note how Paul addresses the culturally inferior (lesser position) person first and then the culturally superior (greater position) person.

It is important for our society to note that the Spirit's emphasis is upon duties, not rights. (Curtis Vaughan) Salvation in Christ does not *erase* our social relationships, but it does *transform* them for His glory.

1) Wife-Husband relationship—3:18-19

a) ¹⁸ Wives ...—3:18

- Notes from history: (Ben Witherington) From the Jewish papyri we have clear references to various women being married as early as age twelve ... and only one not married by fifteen or sixteen. Non-Jewish papyri also speak of women married at twelve or thirteen ... , and we also find the use of the term *monandros* for women only married to one man in their lifetime Equally telling are epitaphs to girls who die unmarried: only one is over twenty. In terms of general trends the evidence suggests that Jewish and Christian girls tended to get married at fifteen to sixteen, whereas pagan girls were married at twelve or thirteen.
- i) What? *be subject* [pres. mid. impv. ὑποτάσσω] (submit yourselves) *to your husbands*,
 - (1) To voluntarily arrange (line up) one's life in recognition of the God-ordained authority of your husband, doing what you can to help him fulfill his God-given responsibilities.
 - (2) This is NOT demeaning subjugation or mindless slavery.
 - (3) There are times when a wife cannot and should not obey her husband in order to be loyal to Christ.
- ii) How? *as* (with such submission that) *is fitting* [ἀνήκω] (appropriate) *in the Lord*.
 - (1) The Lord Jesus determines what is appropriate, not your husband.

b) ¹⁹ Husbands,—3:19

- i) **Positively:** *love* [pres. act. impv. ἀγαπάω] *your wives*
 - (1) What does this look like?
 - (a) Negative: This is not so much emotional or romantic love.
 - (b) Positive:
 - (i) It is deliberately caring love that desires God's best for your wife.
 - (ii) It often means putting her interests above your own.

- (2) This is an extremely unusual command in their culture. The Greeks and Romans expected a husband to rule his wife, but never to demonstrate self-sacrificing, selfless love.
- ii) **Negatively:** *and do not be embittered* (harsh) [pres. pass. impv. πικραίνω] *against* [πρός] *them*.
- (1) Don't be inwardly bitter or resentful toward your wife.
- (2) Don't be outwardly sharp, harsh, or cynical toward her.
- c) Warren Wiersbe wisely observes: A wife really has little difficulty submitting to a husband who loves her. She knows he seeks the very best for her, and that he will not do anything to harm her. The husband's love for his wife is seen in his sacrifice for her, and the wife's love for her husband is seen in her submission to him. Where there are sacrifice and submission in an atmosphere of love, you will find a happy home.

2) Child-Parent relationship—3:20-21

- a) ²⁰ **Children,—3:20** (Children recognized as part of the congregation)
- i) What? *obey* [pres. act. impv. ὑπακούω] *your parents in all things*,
- (1) A readiness to listen submissively with the goal of obeying them.
- (a) Obedience is a specific form of submission.
- (2) A Christian father or mother should not make unreasonable demands of their children.
- ii) Why? *for* [γάρ] *this is pleasing* [εὐάρεστος] *to* [ἐν] *the Lord*.
- (1) You bring satisfaction and pleasure to Jesus when you obey your parents with the right heart attitude.
- iii) A helpful quote from Douglas Moo. As long as children are living under the protection of their parents, we would suggest, they are expected to obey their parents. (Although even here, of course, exceptions, in the case, for instance, of abusive parents, must be recognized.) But when children are no longer under the protection and care of their parents, we would suggest that, while deference and “honor” are still appropriate, obedience is no longer necessarily to be expected.
- iv) Helpful quote from Warren Wiersbe: Life is not easy for children, especially Christian children. Their problems might seem small to us, but they are quite large to them! Christian parents must listen carefully, share the feelings and frustrations of their children, pray with them, and seek to encourage them. Home ought to be the happiest and best place in all the world!
- b) ²¹ **Fathers,—3:21**
- i) What? # 1 *do not exasperate* [pres. act. impv. ἐρεθίζω] *your children*,

- (1) Don't deliberately irritate or deliberately stimulate resentment in your children.
- (2) Don't challenge, nag, threaten, or continually criticize them.
- (3) Don't be impossible to please. Make obedience easier.
- ii) Why? *so that* [ἵνα] *they will not lose heart* [ἀθυμέω].
 - (1) Become disheartened, despondent, discouraged, or lose motivation.
 - (2) We don't want children who give up trying to please their parents.
(D. Moo)
 - (3) Child suicide and runaways are all too common.

3) Things we need to remember:

- a) Following these commands automatically puts you at odds with our culture.
- b) If a home is truly Christian, it is a place of encouragement. In such a home, the child finds refuge from battles, and yet strength to fight the battles and carry the burdens of growing maturity. He finds a loving heart, a watching eye, a listening ear, and a helping hand. He does not want any other place—home meets his needs. In this kind of a home, it is natural for the child to trust Christ and want to live for Him.
(Warren Wiersbe)

A Godward Work Environment
3:22-4:1

Introduction: Note how Paul addresses the culturally inferior (lesser position) person first and then the culturally superior (greater position) person. This shows us more of what the early churches looked like socially.

- 1) ²² **Slaves** [δούλος],—**3:22-25** (Paul addresses them directly and treats them as responsible individuals)
 - a) **DO THE WILL OF ANOTHER COMPREHENSIVELY:** *in all things obey* [pres. act. impv. ὑπακούω] *those who are your masters* [κύριος] *according to the flesh,*
 - i) **Negative:** *not with eyeservice* [ὀφθαλμοδουλία], *as men-pleasers,*
 - (1) Externally: don't obey only to please people or when supervised.
 - (2) The temptation is to work harder when we are watched.
 - ii) **Positive:** *but with integrity* [ἀπλότης] *of heart, fearing* [φοβέω] (being in awe of) *the Lord.*
 - (1) Internally: obey to please the Lord Jesus
 - b) **DO THE WILL OF ANOTHER WHOLEHEARTEDLY:** ²³ *Whatever you do, do your work* [pres. mid. impv. ἐργάζομαι] *heartily,*
 - Slaves were generally viewed as being lazy.
 - i) **Positive # 1:** *as for the Lord rather than for men,*
 - (1) Don't ask, "Is it good enough?"
 - (2) Ask, "Is Jesus pleased with this work and with my attitude?"
 - ii) **Positive # 2:** ²⁴ *knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward* (which consists) *of the inheritance.*
 - iii) This grants the lowest of responsibilities a place of dignity.
Remember the artwork of the Reformation. Honor the mundane.
 - c) **DO THE WILL OF ANOTHER SUBMISSIVELY:** *Serve* [pres. act. impv. δουλεύω] *the Lord Christ.*
 - This could be either a command or a simple statement.
 - i) **Negative:** ²⁵ *For he who does wrong will receive the consequences of the wrong* [ἀδικέω] *which he has done, and that without partiality* (favoritism or exceptions).
 - (1) Christian slaves/employees who disobey will receive the consequences of their actions.
 - d) Rewards in heaven will not be for prominence or apparent successes; they will not be for talents or opportunities; but rather for faithfulness. Thus obscure persons will fare very well in that day if they have carried out their duties faithfully as to the Lord. (William MacDonald)

2) ¹ **Masters** [κύριος],—4:1

- a) **show** [pres. mid. impv. παρέχω] *to your slaves what is right* [δίκαιος] *and fair* [ἰσότης],
 - i) *knowing that you too have a Master* [κύριος] *in heaven.*
 - (1) No earthly master is above the Master.
 - (2) These words must have been shocking to the original listeners.
- b) If employers always did this, there would be no labor problem. (A. T. Robertson)
 - i) An employer should never cheat or take advantage of his employees.
- c) A slave owner was obligated by law only to feed and clothe his slaves, but Paul clearly is demanding much more than this. (Ben Witherington)

3) **Things we need to remember:**

- a) As the slave's motivation is changed by the gospel, so is the master's. (Gerald Peterman)
- b) No matter where you are on the workplace scale, God's grace reaches to YOU.
- c) Paul never hints that he endorses the institution of slavery. He tells slaves and masters how they are to conduct themselves within the institution, but it is a bad misreading of Paul to read into his teaching approval of the institution itself. (Douglas Moo)