

Weekly Scripture and Sermon Study: History & Context Guide  
Colossians 3:1-17

History, Culture, & Context

As we begin this new series on “Core Values”, we start with the Book of Colossians 3:1-17. In this section, Paul explains what Christians should be doing as they live a “new life” in Christ.

In vv. 1-2, we read that since we “...have been raised to new life with Christ, set your sights on the realities of heaven...” In other words, do not dwell on this life but instead focus on “the things of heaven” and on Christ.



In vv. 3-4, Paul explains why we should focus on the things of heaven: (1) Christ is our new source of life and will sustain us; (2) our life is hidden in Christ, and with the advent of His Second Coming, we will “share in all His glory.”

In vv. 5-11, Paul teaches us to “put to death the sinful, earthly things lurking within you.” These include things like sexual immorality, impurity, lust and evil desires, and greed. Failure to do so brings forth “the anger (or wrath) of God” and were a part of our previous life of sinful desire and behavior.

In vv. 12-17, Paul offers a way to help us live as God’s people: (1) through a compassionate and forgiving attitude in life (vv. 12-13); (2) by love being in our guide in all things (v. 14); (3) letting the peace of Christ rule over our hearts and showing gratitude (v. 15); (4) Living by God’s Word and the message of Christ (v. 16); and (5) live as a representative of Jesus Christ.

The NRSV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible explains (regarding v. 14): “Although many ancient thinkers, especially among Jewish teachers, regarded love as an important virtue, Christians were the only movement where it was the chief virtue (following Jesus’ teaching, MK 12:30-31). Many thinkers urged unity, i.e., harmony with one another; in Greek this may refer to the believers.”

Questions to Consider

1. In what ways can we allow Christ to dwell within us and shape us into what we should be?
2. In verse 3 we read “...your real life is hidden with Christ in God.” What does this mean?
3. Think of ways that you can commit yourself to living in a new nature given by Christ. How can you rid yourself of evil practices and immorality?
4. Read verse 10. How can we “learn to know our Creator and become like Him”?
5. What changes would you make in your life in order to honor Christ?