

Lesson 13

Nov. 30, 2025

Live With Christ

Every Christian should live to please God.

THE LESSON OVERVIEW

Putting our faith in Christ changes us. In his letter to the Colossian church, Paul outlines these changes, beginning with the death of our old sinful nature, making it possible to receive a new Christ-like nature. This is the work of God's grace, but Paul also stresses that Christ's work in us requires our submission and participation with God throughout the process. As followers of Jesus, we must "put off" sinful attitudes and habits (Colossians 3:8) and then "put on" those things that reveal Christlike attitudes (v. 12). Finally, this lesson emphasizes the need to maintain this walk through faithfulness and prayer to God, who is always faithful to us.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Greek word 'enduo,' translated as "put on" in Colossians 3:12, means "to put on clothing." Paul used this word as a command, meaning he was telling the Colossian Christians that just as they must put on their clothing each day, they must also consciously choose to clothe themselves in the character of Christ. Through faith in Jesus, the necessary Christian attributes are made available and through the Holy Spirit, the power to adorn them is also supplied. The only requirement of us as Christians is the will to put them on. Likewise, putting off the former attitudes and habits of life before Christ (v. 8) is a decision empowered by God's grace at work in us.

THE LESSON OUTLINE

1. LIVEW BY A NEW AFFECTION: Colossians 3:1-7.

- A. Christ, Our Life (1-4)
- B. Death to the Earthly Nature (5-7)

2. PUT ON YOUR NEW NATURE: Colossians 3:8-14.

- A. Put Off the Old (8-11)
- B. Be Clothed With the New (12-14)

3. IMITATE CHRIST: Colossians 3:15-17; 4:2-6.

- A. Living in Jesus's Name (3:15-17)
- B. Pray Always and Show Grace (4:2-6)

DISCUSSING THE LESSON

1. LIVE BY A NEW AFFECTION: Colossians 3:1-7.

A. Christ, Our Life Colossians 3:1-4

Paul encouraged the Christians in Colosse to recognize what was happening in their lives through Christ and to conduct themselves accordingly. Paul used the imagery of Christians dying and being raised with Christ (Col. 3:3) as the basis for his urging them to “set [their] hearts on things above, not on earthly things” (v. 1 NIV). Since they had, through Christ, died to their old way of living and were raised with Christ to a new lifestyle, they should “set [their] minds on things above, not on earthly things” (v. 2 NIV). They were to look above the earthly realm from which they had been delivered to the realm where Christ is exalted and is seated at the Father’s right hand (v. 1).

Paul then explained the result of Christians maintaining their focus on heavenly things. Ultimately, when Christ comes again, those who have kept their focus on Him will appear with Him in His glory (v. 4). They will share in His glorious appearance and participate in establishing His kingdom on the earth. Jude 14 declared, “Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints.”

Henri Nouwen wrote, “Although we tend to think about saints as holy and pious, and picture them with halos above their heads and ecstatic gazes, true saints are much more accessible. They are men and women like us, who live ordinary lives and struggle with ordinary problems. What makes them saints is their clear and unwavering focus on God and God’s people.”

B. Death to the Earthly Nature Colossians 3:1-4

Paul had already acknowledged the Colossians were ‘dead’ to their old life (v. 3). However, he still encourages them to “mortify” (“put to death,” NKJV) those things related to their earthly nature (v. 5). Putting to death something that has already died would appear to be contradictory. However, there is an important truth here. Paul consistently affirmed the present reality of what has taken place spiritually within the lives of Jesus’ followers. This reality must be worked out in day-to-day living. We must learn and choose daily to live, in practical ways, that which has already been accomplished spiritually. Through faith in Jesus Christ, we are spiritually dead to the old life we once “lived” (v. 7). We can now lead the new life, with ongoing efforts to crucify the old earthly nature that stubbornly tries to resurrect.

Like many cultures throughout history, Roman culture was rife with sins of all kinds. Given the radical transformation in the lives of the Christians in Colosse, they needed to recognize the need to put away anything and everything that reflected the values of the old earthly nature. Regardless of the surrounding culture, these Christians needed to abandon the old values and practices and replace them with a new spiritual nature made alive within them through Christ. To ensure the Colossians understood the seriousness of this matter, Paul said failure to put our earthly nature to death would result in “the wrath of God” (v. 6).

Too often, the radical transformation described in the Bible when referring to those who have decided to follow Christ is taken too lightly. Words like death and life are powerful terms, and we must make sure we do not become desensitized to the profound differences that exist between the old life in sin and the new life in Christ. We must, as Paul urged the Colossians, continue to put to death anything that has to do with the old life of sin.

2. PUT ON YOUR NEW NATURE: Colossians 3:8-14

A. Put Off the Old Colossians 3:8-11

Paul addressed additional sins that the Colossians must remove from their lives, including internal and external attitudes and actions contrary to the values of a new life in Christ. It was important for them to understand there was no room for any part of the old earthly nature. Even things that might have been considered insignificant sins, such as unjustified anger, were to be understood for what they were: part of a life that aligned with worldly values rather than God's kingdom values (v. 8).

Paul characterized the transformation that takes place at conversion as putting off "the old man" and putting on "the new man" (vv. 9-10). Switching metaphors from dying and being raised, Paul presented the difference between the old and new life like taking off one garment and putting on another. The difference is that the new garment (the 'new man') is "renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him" (v. 10). Paul had previously criticized the false teachers for promoting knowledge and ideas that originated within their minds. Therefore, in verse 10, he may have intentionally contrasted the so-called knowledge of false teachers with knowledge from the Lord. In this way, divine wisdom, not human wisdom, is confirmed as the foundation of the believer's life.

Verse 11 shows why Christians were not to practice the sins listed in verses 5-9: God's people are called to embrace the unity that exists among all redeemed people. The divisions between groups who were often at odds with one another – Greeks and Jews, circumcised and uncircumcised, Barbarians and Scythians, slave and free – are erased through faith in Christ, who "is all, and in all." At the heart of many sins committed against others is the belief by one group that it is superior to another, and therefore the "others" are treated with less respect and dignity than they should be. Such an attitude is inconsistent with a new life in Christ.

B. Be Clothed With the New Colossians 3:12-14.

Having described some things that were part of our old nature that should be removed, Paul then explained things we should put on as part of our new nature. At first, it might seem the new life is primarily about what we should not do, but it is really a balance of what we should and should not do. Paul did not want the Colossian church to focus so intently on what they should not do that they neglected what they should be doing. The qualities listed are the very traits demonstrated by Jesus Christ during His earthly life (vv. 12-13). Therefore, as followers of Jesus Christ, we should demonstrate these qualities.

Love ("charity") should be the one quality that overshadows all the others (v.14). The importance of love cannot be overstated when it comes to our new life in Christ. After all, love led the Father to send His Son, and love led Jesus to sacrifice His life on behalf of humanity. Love binds all of the other qualities of the Christian life together in "perfect unity" (NIV), allowing different groups of believers to unite in Christ. Therefore, when it comes to putting on the new self, in Paul's view, the greatest of all virtues to be demonstrated is love, which is something Christ said would reveal those who were His disciples (John 13:35).

When it comes to living the new life in Christ, it can be easy to focus on the things that should not be done and fail to see what should be done. As determined as we must be to put off the sins that were part of our old nature, we should be equally determined to put on those qualities that are part of the new life provided through faith in Christ. Furthermore, we must remember the greatest of all virtues we are to practice is love for others in all circumstances and situations. Paul powerfully makes this point in 1 Corinthians 13.

3. IMITATE CHRIST Colossians 3:15-17; 4:2-6

A. Living in Jesus' Name Colossians 3:15-17

Having explained some of the specific things that should be set aside and others that should be embraced as part of their new life in Christ. Paul next encouraged the Colossian church to “let the peace of God rule in your hearts” (v. 15). Peace is one of the most important aspects of a relationship with God. The result of justification is that Christians have “peace with God” (Romans 5:1). Paul had already explained to the Colossian Christians that before their new life in Christ, they were “enemies” of God but had been reconciled to God through faith in Christ (Colossians 1:21). As a result of this transformation, they were encouraged to allow the peace of Christ to rule their hearts (3:15). Their lives were also to be marked by gratitude, and to be people in whom the words of Christ would richly dwell, which should be the natural outcome for those who had found a place of peace with God (vv. 15-16).

Finally, Paul concluded this portion of his exhortation by summarizing what he had said. Whatever the Colossians said or did, they were to “do all in the name of the Lord Jesus” (v. 7). This was far more than merely attaching Jesus’ name to their actions or deeds. To do something in the name of another is to faithfully represent that person, much like an ambassador to a foreign country represents the ruler of the nation from which they come. Just as Jesus came in the name of the Father to reveal the Father to the world, so we are to reveal Jesus to the world through our words and deeds.

B. Pray Always and Show Grace Colossians 4:2-6

In Paul’s final instructions, he encouraged the Colossian Christian to be people of prayer. He solicited their prayers for himself and his fellow workers because he desired to continue their mission, which was proclaiming the gospel of Christ, even though he was in prison (Col. 4:2-4). Prayer was not something the apostle mentioned as an afterthought: it was a sincere request. Indeed, in many of his letters, Paul included prayers for his readers. By focusing on his prayer life, he provided an example for the church. They were likewise to be people of prayer, interceding on behalf of one another.

Paul concluded by focusing on the Colossian Christians’ relationships with those not part of the church. He urged them to be wise when it came to how they acted toward non-Christians, making sure they made “the most of any opportunity” they had to interact with those outside the church (v. 5). A key characteristic Paul encouraged the church to demonstrate was “grace” (v. 6) – like the grace modeled for them by Jesus (see Romans 5:8-10). In a culture immersed in sinful practices, and one in which Christians were the recipients of persecution and disdain from many outside the church, Paul encouraged the Christians in Colossae to be people whose words were “always with grace” (v. 6) as they interacted with those who were not Christians.

Above all else, we are called to follow the example of Christ as we live a faithful life. Just as Paul desired to imitate the example of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 11:1), so should all who follow Christ. Indeed, as Paul mentions in Romans 8:29, it was God’s intention for Christians “to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he [Jesus] might be the firstborn among many brethren.” And, just as it was Jesus’ love and grace that most profoundly defined His life on earth, the church must also be a place where these are the defining qualities observed, even by those outside the church.

CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP

The old sinful nature must give way to our new nature in Christ, but this is not something we can do on our own. It can only happen in union with Christ and the empowerment of His Spirit.

MINISTRY IN ACTION

Take inventory of your life: Are there thoughts and actions from your old self that still cling to you? Pray for these to be put to death and for Christ's life to permeate your heart.

WORKSHEET

More About Colossians and Colosse

The Most Important Statements in Colossians Church in Philippi and the Church in Colosse are about who Jesus Christ is and His complete sufficiency for all who believe in Him to live a Christian life and be forever saved by Him. These statements are not only most important in Colossians, they are among the most important statements in the New Testament:

“He [Jesus Christ] is the image [the exact representation] of the invisible God, the first-born [the One having priority] over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities [rulers] or powers [authorities]. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist” (1:15-17 NKJV).

“As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk [live, conduct your life] in Him ... For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him. who is the head of all principality [rule] and power [authority]” (2:6, 9-10 NKJV).

When Paul Wrote His Letter to the Colossians in AD 62, the church in Colosse was only a few years young, but Colosse the city was centuries old, having been founded on the south side of the Lycus River in western Asia Minor. It was a major and prosperous city situated on the chief travel route between Ephesus to the west and the northern Euphrates region to the east. It was visited by the Persian kings Xerxes in 481 BC and Cyrus the younger in 401 BC.

Regarding Onesimus, the Slave of Philemon, in the church at Colosse (Letter to Philemon; Colossians 4:9), it is believed that Philemon granted Onesimus his freedom, as requested by Paul (Philemon 1:10-16). According to early Christian tradition, Onesimus became a bishop (pastor) and suffered martyrdom for Christ.

The Church in Colosse Was Likely Established by people from Colosse who traveled to Ephesus during Paul’s ministry there (AD 54-57; Acts 20:16-17, 31), were converted to faith in Christ by his ministry and returned to their home city and influenced others to become believers in Christ.

Colosse Was Completely Destroyed by the Turks in the twelfth century. The ruins of an ancient church have been found by archaeologists where the city of Colosse once stood.

Encouragement in Christ Colossians 3

1. On what should you “set your mind” (v. 2) and “seek” (v. 1), and why (v. 3)?
2. What do all the sins in verse 5 have in common, and what does Paul warn about them (v. 6)?
3. What is similar about the sins in verse 8 and 9?

-How can we overcome those sins (v. 10)?
4. What is “love” called in verse 14, and why?
5. Where must “the peace of God rule,” and why (v. 15)?
6. How can we as Christians encourage one another in our walk with God (vv. 16-17)?