

The Heart of Worship

Session 5

February 16, 2025

The Lifestyle of Worship

**Session Passage:** Colossians 3:1-5,12-17

### **Colossians 3:1-5**

**Connection to the Point.** A lifestyle of worship is a mindset focused on Christ.

**Background.** Paul did not plant the church at Colossae (Col. 2:1). During the three years around AD 53 to 56 that Paul spent in Ephesus on his third missionary journey, the gospel spread throughout the Roman province of Asia and up the whole region of the Lycus Valley (in modern-day Turkey; Acts 19:10). Some years later, Epaphras brought word of what was happening in the young congregation to Paul, who was in prison (Col. 4:3). False teachers were disturbing the young congregation (2:8-23). After countering the false teaching, beginning in 3:1 Paul instructed the congregation in practical matters related to living Christian lives in the world.

**So if you have been raised with Christ Since, then, you have been raised with Christ If ye then be risen with Christ** (v. 1). *So if* does not raise doubts about the Colossian believers' status. The grammatical construction assumes the statement to be true, thus "since." From Colossians 2:12 it is clear Paul was talking in a baptismal context when he referred to them as being *raised with Christ*.

**Seek the things above Set your hearts on things above Seek those things which are above** (v. 1). *Above* is a spatial reference referring to heaven. *Seek* recalls Jesus's command in Matthew 6:33. The exhortation refers to a willfully chosen life-orientation toward heavenly realities. Believers' values, thoughts, and actions are to be based on a different orientation from that of non-believers. By putting the command in the present tense, Paul urged the Colossian believers to be in a continuous habit, not something that comes naturally.

**Where Christ is, seated at Where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God** (v. 1). A reminder of who is "above" and why that should be the focus of their lives. Sitting at *the right hand of God* reflects Psalm 110:1. *Right hand* indicates the place of honor, privilege, power, co-rule, and universal presence. *Seated* indicates Christ's work is finished.

**Set your minds affections on things above** (v. 2). Or "think on," is an important verb for Paul—he used it twenty-three of the twenty-six times it is found in the New Testament. The word does not merely refer to a cognitive process but rather to an inner disposition involving an act of the will—hence some render it "set your affections on." *set your affections on*. It is a present tense command, meaning this is to be an on-going life-orientation.

**Not on earthly things things on the earth** (v. 2). This contrasts with *things above*, a significant orientation difference between believers and unbelievers (see Phil. 3:19).

**For you died For ye are dead** (v. 3). *For* indicates the basis for Paul's two commands in verses 1-2. *You died* *Ye are dead* is a statement of fact without stating how or when. Paul referred to their spiritual status in Christ, as in 2:20.

**Your life is now hidden with Christ in God** (v. 3). This is the present status of believers. An implication of this relates to security (Ps. 31:20; Isa. 49:2).

**When Christ . . . appears, then you also will appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory** (v. 4). *Appears* refers to the return of Christ. Paul used the same word in reference to believers as he did for Christ—*appear*. Believers' appearing is linked to Christ's appearing. *In glory* could refer to Christ's glory in which believers share, to the state of glory believers will have entered, or to God's glory.

**Put to death . . . your earthly nature** **Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth** (v. 5). Colossian believers had died with Christ (v. 3). Now Paul commanded they *put to death* *mortify* all that was not in keeping with their Christian faith—their *earthly nature* earthly nature. Paul used a tense of the verb indicating a decisive action and thus moved from doctrine to practice. *Earthly nature* *Members which are upon the earth* refers to that which formerly caused believers to be dominated by sin. He had just told them not to set their minds on *earthly things* *things on the earth* (v. 2). Paul then proceeded to list a number of vices that formerly characterized the Colossians, vices God will judge (v. 6), and which probably characterized the false teachers' lives.

**Sexual immorality** **Fornication** (v. 5) refers to any kind of sexual sin, especially illicit sexual intercourse. The Greek word is *porneia*, from which we get our English word *pornography*. In 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, using a related noun, Paul stated that no one whose life is characterized by sexual immorality will inherit God's kingdom. Thus in 6:18 Paul instructed the believers to "flee from sexual immorality/fornication" (see also 1 Thess. 4:3).

**Impurity** **Uncleanness** (v. 5). Refers to all kinds of moral and sexual corruption and frequently, as here, occurs with *porneia* (2 Cor. 12:21; Gal. 5:19; Eph. 5:3; 1 Thess. 4:3,7).

**Lust** **Inordinate affection** (v. 5). From the Greek *pathos*, from which comes our English *passion*. In this context the word refers to dishonorable passions. Paul also used this word of homosexual sins (Rom. 1:26) and in reference to Gentiles "who don't do not know God/which know not God" (1 Thess. 4:5).

**Evil desires** **concupiscence** (v. 5). This is what Paul called "the desires/lust of the flesh" in Galatians 5:16. James, too, made it clear such evil desires or evil impulses lead to sin and death (Jas. 1:14-15).

**Greed** **Covetousness** (v. 5). Sometimes translated "covetousness/greed," this refers to an inappropriate desire to acquire something—especially that which belongs to others. In that sense, it usually is used of the inordinate desire for money or power (Luke 12:15; 2 Pet. 2:3,14). The Old Testament condemns greed (Jer. 22:17; Ezek. 22:27; Hab. 2:9). Jesus condemned greed (Mark 7:22). In this list of sexual sins, however, Paul may have been referring to those who had an uncontrollable lust for a greater variety of sexual experiences, for in 1 Corinthians 5:10-11 and 6:9-10 Paul linked this term closely with that of sexual immorality, and in Ephesians 4:19 and 5:3 with impurity.

**Which is idolatry** (v. 5). *Greed/Covetousness* becomes *idolatry* because it sets something or someone in the place of or before God. Paul made the same statement in Ephesians 5:5; and in Galatians 5:20 he identified it as one of the sinful "works/acts of the flesh." *Idolatry* is often connected with sexual sins (Num. 25:1-3; Hos. 4:12-18; Rom. 1:18-32).

### **Colossians 3:12-15**

**Connection to the Point.** A lifestyle of worship seeks to live and act like Christ.

**As God's chosen ones/people As the elect of God** (v. 12). Paul used three terms for the church that previously were applied to Israel in the Old Testament (Deut. 7:6-8). First, Israel was God's *chosen*, or *elect* or chosen. Now believers from Jews, Greeks/Gentiles, Scythians, and barbarians (v. 11) are designated as such.

**Holy** (v. 12). This second term means "to be set apart." It does not refer to moral perfection but to status: they were set apart from the world. Peter also used these two words together to describe the church (1 Pet. 2:9-10, "chosen").

**Dearly Beloved** (v. 12). The Old Testament based God's choosing of Israel on His love (Deut. 4:37; Jer. 31:3). So it is now for New Testament believers. Paul used the same three ideas again when he addressed the church in Rome (Rom. 1:7, "saints" are holy people).

**Put on Clothe** (v. 12), or "clothe yourselves," picks up the clothing image in verse 10. Paul also used this language in Romans 13:14. As in verses 5 and 8, the verb is a command in a tense that indicates a decisive act. The five virtues Paul listed in verse 12 counter the five vices of verses 5 and 8.

**Compassion/Bowels of mercies** (v. 12) literally is "bowels of compassion" or "bowels of mercy." In Hebrew thinking the bowels, or intestines, were identified with the deepest seat of emotion. *Compassion* Mercy or compassion characterizes God (Rom. 12:1) and Jesus (Mark 1:41; 6:34), and is to do the same for God's people.

**Kindness** (v. 12). This word describes benevolent acts. Sometimes this word is translated "goodness." Christian *kindness* is part of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22, "gentleness").

**Humility/Humbleness of mind** (v. 12) was not considered a virtue in the ancient world. Rather, it was perceived as weakness or cowardliness. Old Testament saints, however, were told to "walk humbly with your God" (Mic. 6:8) and that God dwells with those who are of "lowly of/inhumble spirit" (Isa. 57:15). Believers' example of perfect humility is Jesus Himself (Matt. 11:29; Phil. 2:5-8). This humility directly contrast the false humility of the false teachers (Col. 2:18,23).

**Gentleness/Meekness** (v. 12). Meekness/Gentleness like a wild stallion that has been tamed but hasn't lost its spirit, also part of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:23). Once again, the supreme model is Jesus (Matt. 11:29; 2 Cor. 10:1).

**Patience/Longsuffering** (v. 12). Enduring a wrong without responding in anger—even when there is no change of behavior on the other person's part. As with the other virtues, *patience/longsuffering* is a characteristic of how God the Father and Jesus Christ react toward sinners (Rom. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:15).

**Bearing with one another/Bear with each other/Forbearing one another** (v. 13). Hints at a difficulty or grudge one person has against another and thus needs to be tolerated or "put up with." The present tense in this phrase and the next stresses these are to be ongoing reactions. *One another/Each other* stresses the mutual, reciprocal responsibility of those involved.

**Forgiving one another** (v. 13). *Forgiving* comes from the word for "grace." It could be rendered "show grace" or "be gracious." Thus to forgive is an act of grace, something undeserved. Believers forgive in this way because God graciously forgave them (Eph. 4:32). The word is in present tense, stressing this is to be a normal and continuous response.

**If anyone has a grievance against another****If any of you has a grievance against someone****If any man have a quarrel against any** (v. 13). *If* begins a conditional sentence that recognizes this as a real possibility. *Grievance**Quarrel* refers to “a complaint” or “reason to blame.” Paul’s instruction leaves it up to the person who feels wronged to initiate the process of forgiveness, not the person accused of the offense.

**Just as the Lord has forgiven you****As the Lord forgave you****Even as Christ forgave you** (v. 13). *Just as**As**Even as* sets the standard and marks the manner by which believers are to forgive each other.

**So you are also to forgive****So also do ye** (v. 13). Paul echoed Jesus’s teaching of Matthew 6:14-15; 18:35. The grace received from the Lord is the grace we are to extend to others.

**Above all, put on love****Over all these virtues put on love****Above all these things put on charity** (v. 14). *Put on* carries forward the clothing imagery (vv. 9,10,12). *Love**Charity* is *agape*, the distinctive love that comes only from God, not based either on emotion or the response of the recipient. Again, *love**charity* is part of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22). It is *above**over all* because love is the highest virtue (1 Cor. 13:13).

**Which is the perfect bond of unity****Which binds them all together in perfect unity****Which is the bond of perfectness** (v. 14). In 2:19 Paul used the word rendered *bond**binds* to refer to the tendons of the body. Love is a binding, unifying force both among believers and for all the other virtues—it is *perfectness*, doing what other virtues by themselves cannot.

**The peace of Christ****God** (v. 15). The expression occurs only here and Philippians 4:7 in the New Testament. Paul previously referred to the means by which Christ<sup>God</sup> made peace in 1:20.

**To which you were also called****Since . . . you were called to peace****To the which also ye are called** (v. 15). Paul often reminded believers they not only were called, but called *to* something—peace (1 Cor. 7:15); freedom (Gal. 5:13); hope (Eph. 4:4); holiness (1 Thess. 4:7); a holy calling (2 Tim. 1:9).

**Rule in your hearts** (v. 15). The verb occurs only here in the New Testament but elsewhere refers to an umpire’s binding decision, hence it came to be used in the sense of “preside” or “control,” and thus by extension “be the deciding factor.” *Your hearts* is plural, and thus refers to all members of the congregation.

**And be ye thankful** (v. 15). Sometimes it is hard to forgive and act in peace toward others, so Paul added *and be ye thankful* to remind the believers that, no matter what, they were to maintain a thankful attitude and disposition, a significant emphasis in this letter (1:12; 2:7; 3:16,17; 4:2).

### **Colossians 3:16-17**

**Connection to the Point.** A lifestyle of worship flows with thankfulness and honor to Christ.

**The word****message of Christ** (v. 16). An expression found in the New Testament only here and in Hebrews 6:1 (translated “teachings<sup>doctrine</sup> about<sup>of</sup> Christ”). It could refer to the word Christ proclaimed, His teachings, but probably means the word about Christ—the gospel, as in 1:5, or as the hymn in 1:15-20.

**Dwell richly among you****Dwell among in you richly** (v. 16). *Among**In you* is a collective reference referring to the whole congregation. *Dwell . . . richly*, or “abundantly” (see 1 Tim. 6:17; Titus 3:6; 2 Pet. 1:11),

emphasizes that the word of Christ needs to penetrate deeply into a Christian community so that it pervades, transforms, and characterizes them.

**InWith all wisdom** (v. 16). These words could go with the preceding, describing how Christ's word is to dwell among God's people, or they could go with what follows, describing how the believers were to teach and admonish one another. Thus whatever teaching or admonishing was done, it was to be done in appropriate ways to the situation and people involved.

**Teaching and admonishing** (v. 16). The words offer two ways through which the word of Christ can become more deeply rooted in a Christian community (see 1:28). *Teaching* refers to communicating Christian truth—knowledge, content, information—that will help believers better know and understand their faith. It has a positive emphasis. *Admonishing* often has a negative tone and has to do with practical warnings of moral dangers, rebukes, and offering correctives (see Rom. 15:14; 1 Cor. 4:14; 1 Thess. 5:12,14; 2 Thess. 3:15).

**Psalms, and hymns** (v. 16). Paul listed three terms here and in Ephesians 5:19 that give an insight into the important role of worship in the early church. *Psalms* were songs sung to a tune, and perhaps accompanied by a string instrument. In the New Testament the word *psalms* primarily refers to the psalms of the Old Testament (Luke 20:42; Acts 1:20). The word *hymns* is only used here and in Ephesians 5:19 in the New Testament. It refers to religious worship songs.

**Spiritual songsSongs from the Spirit** (v. 16). *Songs* is the most general term of the three words. Possibly the modifier *spiritualfrom the Spirit* refers to spontaneous songs prompted by the Spirit—Spirit-inspired songs. The qualifier limits the types of songs to be used in Christian teaching and admonishing. Music as used in the church has a didactic role as well as an emotive function.

**Singing to God. . . to the Lord** (v. 16). *Singing* summarizes the three terms Paul just used. After telling the believers they were to teach and admonish one another through psalms, hymns, and songs, Paul reminded them their *singing* actually was *to Godthe Lord*.

**With gratitudegrace in your hearts** (v. 16). *Gratitude* translates the Greek word for “grace.” Thanks, or gratitude, is a response to God's *gracegrace* (2 Cor. 4:15). *In your hearts* does not refer to inaudible or silent singing. Paul was referring to heartfelt singing from the core of the believers' beings, their *hearts*.

**And whatever you do . . . do everythingit allAnd whatsoever ye do . . . do all** (v. 17). *Whatsoever* is comprehensive and encompasses every area of life. It relates to *everythingall*. *Do* involves both believers' words and actions. Paul virtually repeated this exhortation in verse 23 and emphasized it in 1 Corinthians 10:31.

**In word or in deed** (v. 17). This combination was used to refer to a person's total behavior (Luke 24:19; Acts 7:22; Rom. 15:18; 2 Thess. 2:17). *Deed* reflects back on the behaviors Paul previously listed in verses 5-14.

**In the name of the Lord Jesus** (v. 17). *The name of* stands for all that is in keeping with the character and reputation of the person. *The Lord Jesus* identifies the sovereign Lord, Yahweh of the Old Testament, with *Jesus* (“Yahweh is salvation”) stressing His deity. Verse 17 provides a comprehensive ethical guide for believers when there is no explicit commandment to guide one's actions. Nothing in a believer's life escapes the Lordship of Christ.

**Giving thanks to God and the Father throughby him** (v. 17). As in 1:3 and 1:12, *thanks* is to be rendered *to God . . . the Father* for planning salvation and sending Christ as Redeemer. Such *thanks to God* is to be made *throughby* Jesus Christ (Rom. 1:8; 7:25). *ThroughBy him*, Jesus Christ, involves both the means by which our thanks reaches God the Father and the basis upon which our thanks to God is made possible (see 1 Cor. 15:57).