

BIBLE STUDY GUIDE WEEK 43

• RIGHTEOUSNESS

# Righteousness

## THE WAY TO RIGHTEOUSNESS

Focal Verses • COLOSSIANS 3:1–3, 5–17

### Aim for Change

By the end of the lesson we will: **EVALUATE** how to be Christ's representative in our daily lives; **DESIRE** to represent Christ well; and **PURSUE** lives of righteousness that honor the Lord.

### In Focus

Brandon and Breana were in charge of leading the adult Sunday School class. Breana started the class by saying, "Today, let's talk about righteousness and what it means to

live a new life in Christ.” Brandon said, “Let me share with you an example. Most creatures in the animal kingdom shed something periodically. The most commonly known creatures that experience shedding are snakes. Snakes shed their skin because it doesn’t fit anymore. Most science museums have a display of a snakeskin abandoned by a snake after it was shed. It is usually a hard outer layer of skin shaped like a snake. If the snake decided to return to the outer skin, it would have difficulty getting its body back into the dead shell because it’s old and worn out.”



Breana continued, “We can imagine a similar situation with a butterfly trying to return to its cocoon. It would



no doubt damage its beautiful wings, trying to get back into the hole of the cocoon. The butterfly no longer fits the old form.”

“Even dogs and cats,” Brandon continued, “usually shed their hair all over the place. It would be odd and foolish for a pet owner to gather up the hair and then attempt to paste it back on the dog or cat. That hair is dead and old; it no longer belongs on the animal. Right?” As the group nodded in agreement with Brandon, Breana said, “What is God calling you to leave behind for the sake of righteousness?”

*In our lesson today, Paul is exhorting the church at Colossae to take off the old life and put on the new one in Christ. Just like in the above examples, our old life before Christ should no longer appeal to us or fit our new life in Christ. What aspects of your old life before Christ is God calling you to leave behind for the sake of righteousness?*

## Keep in Mind

“And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.”  
(Colossians 3:14, KJV).





“Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony.”  
(Colossians 3:14, NLT).



**KJV Colossians 3:1** If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

**2** Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

**3** For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

**5** Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:

**6** For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience:

**7** In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them.

**8** But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.



**9** Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;

**10** And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:

**11** Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.

**12** Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long suffering;

**13** Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.

**14** And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.

**15** And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.

**16** Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one

**NLT** **Colossians 3:1** Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, set your sights on the realities of heaven, where Christ sits in the place of honor at God's right hand.

**2** Think about the things of heaven, not the things of earth.

**3** For you died to this life, and your real life is hidden with Christ in God.

**5** So put to death the sinful, earthly things lurking within you. Have nothing to do with sexual immorality, impurity, lust, and evil desires. Don't be greedy, for a greedy person is an idolater, worshiping the things of this world.

**6** Because of these sins, the anger of God is coming.

**7** You used to do these things when your life was still part of this world. **8**



**But now is the time to get rid of anger, rage, malicious behavior, slander, and dirty language.**

**9 Don't lie to each other, for you have stripped off your old sinful nature and all its wicked deeds.**

**10 Put on your new nature, and be renewed as you learn to know your Creator and become like him.**

**11 In this new life, it doesn't matter if you are a Jew or a Gentile, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbaric, uncivilized, slave, or free. Christ is all that matters, and he lives in all of us.**

**12 Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.**

**13 Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others.**

**14** Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony.

**15** And let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

**17** And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him. one body you are called to live in peace. And always be thankful.

**16** Let the message about Christ, in all its richness, fill your lives. Teach and counsel each other with all the wisdom he gives. Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to God with thankful hearts.

**17** And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father.



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## **The People, Places, and Times**

**Barbarians.** The word inhabited (earth) was used for the world inhabited by Greeks in contrast to what Greeks and Romans perceived as “unsettled” lands. In the Old Testament, the word indicated the cities and towns in contrast to the wilderness where the nomads roam. It also set apart those who could not speak the Greek language. The term “barbarian” is very problematic, as it was used by Greeks and Romans to marginalize people. Here, Paul is stating that this former way of marginalizing people outside of the Greco-Roman world is now done away with in Christ.

**Scythian.** A native of Scythia. The Greeks despised the Jews; a barbarian scorned a Scythian. They were seen as the lowest of the low.



## Background

In the final two chapters of Colossians, Paul challenged the Colossians to make practical application of the doctrines he had been preaching. Paul believed Christians should not just know the truth and be able to defend it, but that truth must also be lived out in their daily lives. The pagan religions of Paul's day said little or nothing about personal morality. A worshiper could bow before an idol, put his offering on the altar, and go back to live the same old life of sin. What a person believed had no direct relationship with how he behaved. No one would attempt to correct the person for his behavior. The Christian faith brought a whole new concept into pagan society. Faith in Christ meant being united with Him. If Christians share His life, they must follow His example. If Christ lives in the believer, he or she cannot continue in



sin. Thus, Paul concluded his letter to the Colossians with specific instructions about Christian conduct.

At-A-Glance

1. Seek Things Above (Colossians 3:1–3)

2. New Life in Christ (vv. 5–9)

3. Renewal Procedures (vv. 10–11)

4. Walking New (vv. 12–17)

## In Depth

### 1. Seek Things Above (Colossians 3:1–3)

The first thing Paul encouraged the Colossians to do was to seek heavenly things continually. “To set their heart on things above” meant to set their interest on Christ-centered things. One’s attitudes, ambitions, and whole outlook on life are molded by Christ’s relation to the believer, and that allegiance to Him takes precedence over all other allegiances.

The description of Christ as “seated at the right hand of God” is another

implied reminder to those seeking to diminish Christ's role as mediator. The right hand of God is a place of supreme privilege and divine authority.

In other words, Paul said the Christian should not just seek to go to heaven but set his mind on the things above. Give God, and the things of God, a large central place in one's thought life. One cannot withdraw from daily activities. But everything a believer does should be seen from the backdrop of eternity.

## **2. New Life in Christ (vv. 5–9)**

Paul speaks forthrightly about the demands of the new life and our urgent need to curb all the degrading tendencies of the old nature. The old life is dead. The believer has to let it die. We are not simply to suppress or control evil acts and attitudes but to wipe them out completely. Exterminate the old way of life. The action is to



be undertaken decisively, with a sense of urgency. It suggests a vigorous, painful act of personal determination. Paul is calling for a slaying of evil passions, desires, and practices that root themselves in our lives. Paul goes on to list sins. In the New International Version of Colossians 3:5, “impurity” is not just physical impurity but uncleanness in thought, word, and act. “Lust” essentially means a feeling or experience from an uncontrolled desire. “Greed” suggests a ruthless desire in pursuit of material things. This attitude is identified with idolatry because it puts self-interest and material things in the place of God.

Paul warned that God’s judgment would fall on the disobedient. He reminded the Colossians that this is the way they used to live. He said this ungodly life belongs to the past and that the Christian should be done with it. Paul firmly encourages getting



“rid” of this past life (from v. 8, NIV). The phrase “but now” marks a new beginning. The Christian is to take off the filth of the past. Paul specifically names anger, rage (a sudden and passionate outburst of displeasure), malice, and slander (insulting talk against one’s fellow man or woman). Filthy language is “bad or abusive speech.”

The sin of falsehood is singled out. Lying is given separate treatment and a strong exhortation: “Do not lie” (from v. 9, NIV). The Christian is to have a totally new life change in which he or she has put off the old self with its practices, habits, or characteristics and put on the new. This is like the resurrection of Christ, who pulled off the grave clothes and then left them behind in the tomb. Christians now have a new life in Christ; the old deeds and desires must be put off.



### **3. Renewal Procedures (vv. 10–11)**

Paul talked about becoming a new creature in Christ and taking off the old self, but how can that be done? Bad habits and ungodly conduct are not simply going to fall away like dirty clothes. Paul used the word “knowledge” to explain how a person changes (v. 10, KJV)—not through the knowledge of more rules and laws, but the knowledge of Christ. Our minds must be renewed. As believers grow in knowledge of the Word of God, when we learn, read, and study His Word, God’s Spirit changes us. God transforms Christians by washing old thoughts, desires, and intentions out of our minds and replacing them with new ones.

In verse 11, Paul gives examples of this kind of mind change when he speaks about human distinctions and differences. In Christ, there are no nationalities (neither Greek nor Jew), religious differences (circumcised



or uncircumcised), and no cultural differences (Barbarian or Scythian). The Greeks considered all non-Greeks to be barbarians and the Scythians to be the lowest barbarians of all. Yet, in Jesus Christ, a person's cultural status has no advantage or disadvantage. Nor is economic or political status helpful ("bond nor free"). Slaves should try to get their freedom, but if they do not, that does not make them any less in Christ's sight. All of these kinds of distinctions belong to the old person and the old way of thinking.

#### **4. Walking New (vv. 12–17)**

Christians are chosen, set apart, and loved by God. These are privileges God gave to His people in the Old Testament that are made available to Christians as well. Because God gave these blessings to His people, Paul encourages them to walk in compassion (a tenderness expressed toward those suffering),



kindness, goodness, graciousness (a sweet disposition), humility (thinking humbly of oneself), gentleness (delicate consideration for the rights and feelings of others), and patience (self-restraint that allows one to bear injury and insult without resorting to retaliation). It also means bearing with and forgiving one another (“putting up” with things we don’t like). The final word is “love” (from v. 14, NIV). Love is unconditional giving and caring that goes beyond the call of duty.

Peace is another characteristic that Paul exhorts the believer to put on. Not just peace with each other but peace of mind, unruffled by difficulties and confusion. As usual, Paul weaves an attitude of thanksgiving in this section of the letter. Thankfulness to God and to our brothers and sisters promotes inward and outward peace. The Colossians are told to allow the word of God, the Gospel, and



the messages about Christ to be a rich treasure for them that becomes so deeply implanted that it controls thinking, attitudes, and actions. When God's Word is deep down in our hearts, Christ's presence causes us to conduct ourselves in a wise manner, influenced by God's insight and instruction. Paul writes that God's Word dwelling in our hearts will also cause us to sing psalms from the Old Testament and hymns and spiritual songs based on the New Testament truths. Paul concludes with "Do all in the name of the Lord Jesus" (from v. 17, KJV). We are to always act as Christ's representatives. Christ is to live through God's children, those who have trusted in Him for their salvation and are eternally thankful.

## **Search the Scriptures**

1. \_\_\_\_\_ those things which are \_\_\_\_\_ (Colossians 3:1).



2. Mortify ... your \_\_\_\_\_ ...,  
fornication, \_\_\_\_\_, inordinate  
affection, evil \_\_\_\_\_, and  
covetousness, which is \_\_\_\_\_ (3:5).

3. \_\_\_\_\_ not to one another  
(3:9).

4. \_\_\_\_\_ one another, and \_\_\_\_\_  
one another, ... even as \_\_\_\_\_  
forgave you (3:13)

5. And whatsoever ye do in word  
or deed, do all in the \_\_\_\_\_ of the  
\_\_\_\_\_ Jesus (3:17)

## Discuss the Meaning

1. How do we constantly “seek  
things above” when we have to live and  
participate in daily activities here on  
Earth?

2. How do we get rid of old habits  
and lifestyles and put on new ones?

3. Why are forgiveness and love two  
key elements in a life that pleases God?



**4. How can an attitude of thanksgiving help us in our relationship with God and with people?**

## **Liberating Lesson**

**In our society today, for many people, lying is common. Some people believe that if the truth is going to hurt, make you uncomfortable, ruin your reputation, get you in trouble, or cause you to pay money, then lying is OK. We justify lying or find creative ways to do it by calling it something else. In popular culture—TV, movies, politics, etc.—how does lying manifest itself, and how do we participate? In the midst of this kind of society, the Christian is exhorted to tell the truth. Lying in any form is considered part of our old life and needs to be discarded.**

## **Application for Activation**



**Complete two lists with characteristics, each from your old life and from the new, as described in Colossians 3:5–17. Remember, you cannot change yourself or your ways. Pray and ask God to change you in His own timing and in His own way to see positive changes in your life.**

**Follow the Spirit**

**What God wants me to do:**

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**Remember Your Thoughts**

**Special insights I have learned:**

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## **More Light on the Text**

### **Colossians 3:1–3, 5–17**

In the last section of the last chapter (2:20 ff.), Paul challenges the Colossians to live as liberated people. Using a rhetorical question, Paul speaks to their conscience and questions their stability in Christ. He reasons with them by asking why they, who have been liberated from the rudiments of the world and ordinances of the Mosaic law through their relationship with Christ, should get themselves entangled again in the same process from which they had been liberated. Indulgence in such rigidity, although may appear good, is profitless and of no value because they are only fleshy indulgence, and not spiritual.

**3:1 If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. 2 Set your affection on things**



**above, not on things on the earth. 3 For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.**

In the third chapter, Paul calls on the believers to be consistent in their lifestyle and in conformity with the truth that they have been raised with Christ, and therefore, they should live accordingly. The paragraph is both a parallel to and a continuation of the thought in the last section. Both of them are introduced with the “if” clause. The first, “if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world” (2:20), is linked with the second, “If ye then be risen with Christ” (3:1). In the former section, the thought is expressed negatively, while here the emphasis is positively expressed. Both are a continuation of the thought Paul has expressed earlier in Colossians 2:12–13. It is important to note the contrast between the preceding section (2:20 ff.) and this. In Colossians 2:20



ff., Paul says if you are dead from the rudiments of the world, then act like one who is dead. The idea is obvious. A dead man is no longer conscious of his surroundings, and the things around him have no influence on him; he is not tied to the world around him.

**5 Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: 6 For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience:**

Paul calls the Colossians to “mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth.” The word “mortify” is the Greek verb *nekroo* (nek-RO-o), which means “put to death,” “to slay,” or “to kill.” “Mortify” is used metaphorically. It suggests that action be taken to end sinful habits. There is a paradox between verse 3, “Ye are



dead,” and verse 5 (NKJV), “Therefore put to death your members.” On one hand, Paul is saying that the Colossians are already dead. On the other hand, he is asking them to put their members to death. Reconciling the two seemingly contradictory statements has never been an easy task among believers. We can best explain this by understanding the concepts of grace and working faith. The moment we confess our sins, we are forgiven. At that moment, we are dead to sin. All of the baggage is still there and needs to be dealt with. That is the beginning. A transformative process of the inner person begins through the Spirit.

However, the Holy Spirit does not work in a vacuum, and neither does He force Himself on anyone. He works in a heart totally yielded to the Lord and solicits our cooperation. As He works in us and we start to obey Him, we begin to unload all of the baggage of sin that



easily besets us. We begin to live Christ-like lives and all the worldly rudiments begin to dissipate. Our attitudes change, and new ways of life and behaviors begin. A change in character becomes noticeable. Our desires, passions, and aspirations change. We begin to “seek... [and] set [our] affection on things above, not on things on the earth” (vv. 1–2). This process is called sanctification and is the work of the Holy Spirit. However, conscious and deliberate self involvement is needed—and this is working faith. Paul says to the Philippians, “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” (Philippians 2:12). Paul calls it putting to death “your members which are upon the earth” (Colossians 3:5). What members of our bodies, or sinful characteristics, need to be slaughtered? “Fornication” (Gk. *porneia*, por-NI-ah) includes all manner of illicit sexual relationships outside of



marriage. It embraces all types of sexual immorality, including adultery (Matthew 5:32; 19:9; 1 Corinthians 7:2; 10:8) and incest (1 Corinthians 5:1). Fornication does not apply only to single people, but to all sorts of sexual perversion. “Uncleanness” (Gk. *akatharsia*, ak-ath-ar-SEE-ah) is used to describe whatever is the opposite of purity, including thoughts and motives. The emphasis is on sexual immorality of all kinds (Matthew 23:27; Romans 1:26–27; 6:19; 2 Corinthians 12:21; Ephesians 4:19; 5:3; 1 Thessalonians 2:3; 4:7; 2 Peter 2; Jude 4). In Colossians 3:5, the phrase “inordinate affection” (Gk. *pathos*, PATH-os) describes the unnatural, unrestrained, and out of control passion and lust for anything (1 Thessalonians 4:5). This is called “vile affections” in Romans 1:26. Paul writes concerning the practice and result of apostasy: “For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for



even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature.” This refers to sexual relationships between women. “Evil concupiscence” (Gk. *kakos epithumia*, kak-OS ep-ee-thoo-MEE-ah) is any strong desire associated mainly with lust (John 8:44; Ephesians 2:3). Here again, it has the connotation of illicit sexual immorality. “Covetousness” (Gk. *pleonexia*, pleh-on-ex-EE-ah) is a greedy desire to have more or have what belongs to someone else.

The first four sins mentioned in Colossians 3:5 (also listed in Romans 1:24–29 and 1 Thessalonians 4:3–7) can be related to sex outside of its proper context, which is marriage. The fifth sin mentioned is covetousness. This is the underlying evil that summarizes the rest of the vices. It is based on the worship of self rather than God and eventually replaces the Lordship of Christ. For this reason, it is idolatry.



Why does Paul use the phrase “your members” to describe these vices? John Calvin stated that these vices are called “members since they adhere so closely to us” (*Exposition of Colossians and Philemon*, 145). “Member” is a translation of the Greek word *melos* (MEL-os) which means “limb or a member of the human body.” It is used figuratively here to describe some of the sins that have become attached to us, as limbs are attached. They have become such a part of our bodily experiences that we have become used to them as inherent parts of our being. Paul calls on the Colossians, not only to mutilate the vices, but to kill them. Having listed the evils, Paul reminds and warns the Colossians of the consequences of indulging in them. These sins invoke the wrath of God against those who indulge in them. God’s “wrath” (Gk. *orge*, or-GAY) refers to the coming judgment day



(see Romans 2:5–11; Ephesians 5:6; 2 Thessalonians 1:8–10; Ephesians 2:2–3).

**7 In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them. 8 But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. 9 Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;**

In verses 7 and 8, Paul compares the Colossians' former lifestyle with their present status as those who have been raised with Christ. In their state without Christ, they walked and lived in those vices. But now they have been regenerated through the death of Christ. Therefore, those vices should be done away with. Paul now uses a different metaphor from the one used in verse 5. Instead of putting the sins to death, he urges them to put off the vices as one would do with worn out



garments. “Put off ” is from the Greek *apotithemi* (say ap-ot-**EETH**-ay-mee), which means “to put away,” or “to cast off.” This concept is more serious than the language seems to convey. It is “to discard,” something never to be worn again.

The phrase in verse 8, “but now ye also put off all these,” means that the believers need to discard the vices listed in verse 8: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, and filthy communication. Here is a list of five vices related to attitudes toward others that the Colossians were to discard. “Anger” is sometimes translated “wrath,” and the words are used interchangeably. The New Unger’s Bible Dictionary describes “anger” as, “the emotion of instant displeasure and indignation arising from the feeling of injury done or intended” (Unger, 62). Additionally, “wrath” is defined as “more of an abiding and settled habit of the



mind . . . with the purpose of revenge” (Unger, 1373). Paul also includes “malice” (Gk. *kakia*, kak-EE-ah—“evil” or “wickedness”) in the list of things Colossians ought to discard. It is interesting how these sins are related. Extended anger develops into wrath. When wrath is not dealt with, it develops into malice. When anger is allowed to develop into a grudge, and a grudge becomes hatred, it is sin. That is why Paul says in Ephesians, “Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Neither give place to the devil” (Ephesians 4:26–27).

There are two additional vices that relate to the use of the tongue: blasphemy and filthy communication. These vices start from the inside the heart and manifest themselves outwardly through the mouth through blasphemy and foul language. The word “blasphemy” is from the Greek *blasphemia* (blas-fay-ME-ah), which



means “evil speaking.” Although it is typically used exclusively in reference to evil words against God (Matthew 12:31), it also refers to speaking evil or slander against people (Ephesians 4:31). By “filthy communication” (Gk. *aischrologia*, ahee-skhrol-og-EE-ah), Paul refers to the use of foul language or vile conversation, the same idea Paul expressed in Ephesians 4:29 and 5:4.

Lying must also be discarded. Paul imperatively says: “Lie not one to another” (Colossians 3:9). This is the same idea as the preceding verse and is included in the things they needed to put off. In Ephesians 4:25, Paul says, “Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another.” The same reason is implicit here: Because you are members of the same body, do not “lie” (Gk. *pseudomai*, PSYOO-dom-ahee).



**10 And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:**

Continuing the clothing motif, Paul instructs the Colossians to “put on the new person” (v. 10). To “put on the new person” is to clothe oneself with the new nature, which results from our spiritual union with Christ through His death and resurrection (2 Corinthians 5:17). The “new human,” Paul continues, “is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him” (Colossians 3:10). The phrase “renewed” (Gk. *anakainoo*, an-ak-ahee-NO-o) indicates growth and changing from the former corrupt state into a new kind of life. This is comparable to earthly relationships. When a Christian receives Christ, they begin a new relationship. As that relationship with Christ deepens, the believer’s life changes. Thought processes change and new choices are patterned



according to Christ's. Therefore, the standard of the renewal of the new human is God's image.

The next idea we can glean from Scripture is that God's original plan of creating man and woman in His image was for them to have the full knowledge of living according to God's moral and spiritual likeness. Humanity severely damaged the image at the Garden of Eden through sin, which we inherited. Now God renews us after His original pattern and gives us the true knowledge through the new Adam—Christ Jesus (2 Peter 1:3–13).

**11 Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.**

This progressive transformation into the image of God does not distinguish between racial, religious, cultural, and social boundaries. Jews, Greeks, slaves,



and free people are equal. Paul is aware of the divisions in his time. The partition between the Greeks and Jews was practically unbreakable, especially from the Jewish end. The Jews would look down on the Greeks or Gentiles as inferior and would not acknowledge them. The word “barbarian” (Gk. *barbaros*, **BAR**-bar-os) refers to all foreigners who were non-Greeks and unfamiliar with Hellenistic culture. The Greeks regarded them as the lower class of society. “Barbarians” were also regarded as uncultured, crude, and rough. A “Scythian” (Gk. *skuthes*, **SKOO**-thace, meaning “rude or rough,”) was said to be part of the lowest class of barbarians. They were inhabitants of Scythia, north of Palestine. Attitudes have not changed much, have they? Discrimination based on class, race, gender, and other factors remains in society and in the Church. Paul condemns all of these



mindsets and allows no room for such discrimination within the society of his time. The same is true within the community of believers today. How might Paul react if he were to visit our congregations today?

Paul sums it up by saying, “but Christ is all, and in all”—meaning He is all that matters. He lives in all believers, whether Greek or Jew, “barbarian” or Scythian, slave or free person. He does not discriminate based on racial, cultural, or social background. His Spirit works in every heart yielded to Him, renewing and progressively transforming them daily “in knowledge after the image of him that created him” (v. 10).

**12 Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;**



Paul returns to the familiar clothing theme: “Put on therefore, as the elect of God.” Believers should live according to the new humanity. Paul uses a series of phrases to describe who believers become when they receive Christ. First, they are “the elect of God” (Gk. *eklektos*, ek-lek-TOS), or “the chosen ones” of God. Paul clarifies that salvation is based on God’s choice or election. Christians are called “chosen” or “elect” of God. Secondly, they are “holy” (Gk. *hagios*, HAG-ee-os). This means “set apart ones,” “special” or “saints.” All true believers are holy in the sight of God. Paul affirms the Colossians’ position before God, a special place that they and all Christians now share with the ancient covenant people of Israel (see Isaiah 4:2–3; Hosea 2:23; 1 Peter 2:9; Romans 9:25). After affirming who they are because of their relationship with God through Christ, Paul now enumerates



the qualities expected of them— things they are to put on. The list here counters the vices in Colossians 3:8, which they are to put off. While the list in verse 8 consists of sins that harm people, the list here implies a desire to care for the wellbeing of others. While the former is self-oriented, the latter is centered on others. It is interesting to note how these qualities are paired and overlap. The first pair is “bowels of mercies” and “kindness.” “Bowels of mercies” is figuratively used here and describes the spirit of compassion in the heart of God’s elect. The word “bowel” (Gk. *splagchnon*, *splangkh*) refers to the intestines. “Bowel” is another word for stomach or the abdomen. Used here, it means “pity,” “sympathy,” or “an inward affection.” Bowels were regarded as the seat of more violent passions of both anger and love. For the Hebrew, it is the seat of tender affections, kindness,



compassion, and benevolence, which are usually associated with the heart. “Bowels” and “mercies” (Gk. *oiktirmos*, oyk-tir-MOS) go together. This word can be translated as “bowels in which compassion resides.”

The word “kindness” (Gk. *chrestotes*, khray-STOT-ace) is synonymous with bowels of mercies and expresses moral goodness. The next set of qualities the Colossians are asked to wear as garments are “humbleness of mind” (Gk. *tapeinophrosune*, tap-i-nof-ros-OO-nay) and “meekness” (Gk. *praotes*, prah-OT-ace). These qualities convey the spirit of gentleness and modesty. Humility is a virtue that was despised in the heathen world and is in opposition to pride. But to the Christian, humility is an honorable quality to strive for and one Christ exhibited throughout His earthly ministry (Philippians 2:3).



Paul also highlights “longsuffering” (Gk. *makrothumia*, mak-roth-oo-MEE-ah), which is patience or “slowness in avenging wrongs.” It characterizes a person who refuses to yield to rage in the face of wrongs done to them. Patience is almost exclusively associated with our relationships with other people. However, it is applied to self in relation to our attitude to the world system and life as a whole. One needs patience to succeed in life.

**13 Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.**

In close association with the five virtues listed above is a pair of activities required of all believers. The first virtue, “forbearing” (Gk. *anechomai*, an-EKH-om-ahee), means “to hold oneself up against, to bear with or to



endure.” This word means to tolerate or put up with something negative. Paul adds the second activity, “forgiving one another,” and gives a scenario of what can constitute forgiveness. Paul says that “if any man have a quarrel against any,” we should follow in the supreme example of Christ. Christ taught His disciples to pray thusly: “Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors” (Matthew 6:12). He sets no limit on the number of times we are to forgive one another (Matthew 18:22). All virtues are apparent in Christ’s life—a heart of compassion, humility, meekness, longsuffering, endurance or forbearance, and forgiveness. When a believer manifests these virtues, he has put on Christ (Romans 13:14).

**14 And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. 15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which**



**also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.**

**Love is the cord that binds together all the other virtues: “Love is the lubricant that enables the other virtues to function smoothly (Galatians 5:6, 13)” (Exposition of Colossians and Philemon, 158). Love is the essence of living. This fact is made clear in Colossians 3:14. After putting on the eight virtues above, we are to put on the outer cloak as the bond of perfectness, or as the girdle. “Perfectness” (Gk. *teleiotes*, tel-i-OT-ace) means “completeness.” The word “bond” (Gk. *sundesmos*, SOON-desmos) is like a joint tie, or ligament, by which things are bound together, especially uniting the human body together.**

**Paul clarifies that we are forgiven of our sins and redeemed from slavery. This peace not only brings harmony within individuals, it brings harmony**



and oneness within the corporate body of Christ. “Let the peace of God rule in your hearts” means we should allow the “peace” (Gk. *eirene*, i-RAY-nay) of Christ to “rule” (Gk. *brabeuo*, brab-YOO-o) in our hearts (v. 15). The “peace of God” means either “the peace that Christ gives” or “the peace that belongs to Christ.” Paul adds that believers should be “thankful,” an expression he used frequently throughout the epistle. A grateful heart produces a peaceful mind. Conversely, an ungrateful heart produces grudges and disharmony within oneself. This also overflows to others, breeding discord and quarreling within the body of Christ.

**16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.**



The word of Christ should “dwell” (Gk. *enoikeo*, en-oy-KEH-o), “inhabit” or “make its residence” within our hearts. The word “dwell” means that the word of Christ should influence one’s life and activities. While the peace of Christ should control our lives, His Word influences our activities; both should make their habitation within our hearts. The Word of Christ dwelling within our hearts will produce all the wisdom we need in life. It will influence and govern our thoughts, deeds, and motivations. It will help us to make good and rational decisions in life. When we are abundantly equipped with all wisdom through the Word of Christ, we will be “teaching and ‘admonishing’ (Gk. *noutheteo*, noo-thet-EH-o),” “warning,” “cautioning,” or “reproving” each other gently through psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.



**17 And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.**

**“Do all in the name of the Lord Jesus” refers to His revealed will in our relationship with Him. It also results in subjection to His authority for His glory. Paul adds, “giving thanks to God and the Father by him.” This is in appreciation for what God has accomplished for us through Christ’s redemptive sacrifice. Sinners receive forgiveness and are accepted by God the Father as sons and daughters. Our lives are to be motivated by the love of Christ in us with the purpose of honoring and glorifying His name. Our lives and activities must be governed by the “peace of Christ” in our hearts (v. 15, NIV), influenced by the Word of Christ dwelling richly in wisdom (v. 16), and motivated by our relationship with Christ— with eternity in view.**



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### Say It Correctly

Concupiscence. kon-KYOO-pi-sens.  
Scythian. SITH-e-en.



# Daily Bible Readings

DAY 295

Acts 13:1–52

Psalm 123

DAY 296

Acts 14:1–28; 15:1–21

Psalm 124

DAY 297

Acts 15:22–41; 16:1–24

Psalm 125

DAY 298

Acts 16:25–40; 17:1–34

Psalm 126

DAY 299

Acts 18:1–28

Psalm 127

DAY 300

Acts 19:1–41

Psalm 128

DAY 301

Acts 20:1–38

Psalm 129

# Notes

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