

## Session 6

February 26, 2023

### DOES IT LEAD YOU TO BE MORE LIKE JESUS?

#### Colossians 3:1-14

According to Romans 1, God speaks to all mankind through both His creation and the “God consciousness” He placed in us (see Rom. 1:18ff). While this *general revelation* is enough to condemn man, it is—unfortunately—not enough to save him. For that, we need *special revelation*. God has indeed revealed Himself to us more specifically in His word (both the written word and the incarnate Word [John 1:1]). But we have yet another advantage! We have the indwelling Holy Spirit who *teaches us all things* (John 14:26) and *leads us into all truth* (John 16:13). For this reason, we who are saved really have no excuse for either ignorance of the things of God, or disobedience to them. In our focal passage, Paul reminds the church that God is speaking to us and working in us to bring about real, tangible change in our lives. Three key directives are mentioned.

**Get ready (vv. 1-4).** In chapter 2 of this letter, Paul scolded the church at Colossae for continuing their previous (and heretical) religious practices. His argument culminates with a pointed question: “If you died with the Messiah to the elemental forces of this world, why do you live as if you still belonged to the world?” (2:20). The clear distinction between this world and our “spiritual” world is pointed out in the New Testament (see 1 John 2:15ff), as well as the subsequent reminders that believers are simply “passing through” (see Heb. 11:8ff; 1 Pet. 1:1, et al). “If you have been raised...” should be understood as “*since* you have been raised....” There is great *emphasis* on the title of Christ, which occurs four times and each time with the definite article. Hence, He is the *one and only* Messiah! But there is *action* commanded as well. To *seek* (v. 1) is to look for with yearning, and to *set your minds* is to attend to with a measure of conviction. In both cases the object of the believer’s yearnings is that which is above; the realm to which Jesus ascended and the realm from which He will return. For reflection: *From these verses, what real and tangible changes did Paul call for? What are the applications for us today?*

**Get rid of (vv. 5-9).** In these verses, we see that it’s not enough to change our *perspective* from earthly to heavenly. There must be some radical changes to our *behavior* as well. Here, the apostle uses two strong verbs to emphasize the kinds of changes that must take place. First, he tells believers there are some things so worldly and so vile they must not be allowed to live within us. Those listed are generally associated with immoral lust. As such, they belong to our old sinful nature. They must be *put to death* (v. 5). Second, there are those vile sins that proceed from our mouths. Since what flows out of us is a reflection of what is in us, these practices are to be *put off* (v. 8); that is, *stripped away* and discarded like filthy clothing. For reflection: *Verse 7 seems out of place. Why would Paul say such a thing in the midst of listing these sins?*

**Get right (vv. 10-15).** “Nature abhors a vacuum,” and so does human character. Removing the bad is insufficient; we must fill it with something good before something equally awful—or even worse—fills the void (see Matt. 12:44-45). In these verses, Paul reminds believers to take off the old and put on the new, replacing that which was *vile* with that which is *virtuous*. The examples he gives reflect sanctification through knowledge (v. 10), equality (v. 11), kindness and

compassion (v. 12), and forgiveness (v. 13). These expressions of fresh “godly garments” are then pulled together with love, the perfect bond that keeps us as individuals and as a body of believers, in unity (v. 14). For reflection: *To liken God’s work in us to changing clothes may seem a bit strange. Why do you think Paul chose this metaphor to illustrate his point?*