

# Pursuing Heavenly Things

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[ 0 : 00 ] Good morning, church. The scripture lesson this morning is taken from Colossians chapter 3, verses 1 through 17. If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.

Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

Put to death, therefore, what is earthly in you, sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

On account of these, the wrath of God is coming. In these you too once walked, when you were living in them, but now you must put them all away.

Anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, saying that you have put off the old self with its practices, and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.

[ 1 : 31 ] Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free, but Christ is all and in all.

Put on then as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another, and if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other, as the Lord has forgiven you.

So you also must forgive, and above all these, put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body.

And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you, richly teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs.

And thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

[ 2 : 50 ] Amen. Thank you very much, Michelle.

I want to begin by asking you a question, not to be answered out loud, but just in the quietness of your own heart. What are some of the desires that you have for 2025?

What are some of the things that are to the forefront of your mind, to the forefront of your heart, for yourself, maybe for your family, for this new year?

And I'm sure we all have them, even if you've not written them out, or really given a lot of thought to them. They're in our minds. We're in our minds. In one way or another.

And I suspect that whatever those desires are, we can put them in one of five categories. Each one of them we can put in one of five categories.

[ 4 : 08 ] Which is spiritual, or financial, or relational, or health, or what we can call personal achievement.

Things like maybe some career goals or desires, education, those kinds of personal achievements.

But I have another question for you. Of all those desires, what do you desire most? What is the desire that makes your heart beat fast?

What is the desire that is close to your heart, and that you deeply want to see happen more than anything else? What is that?

As we stand on this first Lord's Day of 2025, I pray that what all of us desire, more than anything else, would find itself in these words of the Apostle Paul in Colossians chapter 3, what we are called to pursue as those who belong to Christ, and that is things that are above.

[ 5 : 40 ] Things which belong to Christ and his purposes, and that we are called to pursue.

And this is not to say that the other things that you may desire should be abandoned, not worth pursuing, not saying that at all. But my appeal to us this morning is that above all those other things, I pray that our desire, first and foremost, would be in these words that we find in Colossians chapter 3, verses 1 to 17, which is this call to pursue heavenly things.

And brothers and sisters, I don't know of any better desire that we could have than these words that are before us, these words that have just been read in our hearing.

We need to, by the grace of God, give ourselves to pursuing heavenly things. And this morning, I want us to consider from this passage how we are called to do that.

But first, let me pray for us. Lord, thank you for bringing us together on this first Lord's Day. Would you speak to our hearts from your word?

[ 7 : 08 ] Lord, I pray that this word would truly shape us as a congregation. I pray that it would shape us individually.

It would shape us in our families. And Lord, may it color and affect everything else. May it affect those other desires that we have.

Would you give us all grace to hear your word this morning? Give me grace to proclaim it. And Lord, will you use it to transform our lives for your glory and honor, we pray.

Amen. One of the biggest mistakes that we could make coming to this passage in Colossians chapter 3 is to approach it in isolation from the first two chapters.

It's one of the biggest mistakes that we can make. And the reason is that it would be a recipe for discouragement and frustration if we come to these verses and we set about to try to live out what it calls us to.

[ 8 : 30 ] Things we are to do, things we are not to do, but we do it in isolation from what Paul said in the first two chapters. And let me try to explain why this is so important.

Notice how verse 1 of Colossians 3 begins. It begins with these two key words, if, then. It sets us up for a condition.

And the condition is, if, then, you have been raised with Christ. And what Paul is doing is, Paul is referring to the new life that believers have in Christ that he addressed in chapters 1 and 2.

For example, in chapter 2, he tells us how water baptism is a picture of those who died to sin and have now come up to the newness of life.

Those who are dead in sin have now been resurrected in Christ to serve Christ in the newness of life. And so it's important when we come to Colossians chapter 3 that we understand that the things that we are being called to do and not do, the things we're being called to pursue are things that are based on a new life in Christ that belongs to the people of God.

[ 10 : 01 ] And this is the general pattern that we see in the New Testament letters. In the New Testament letters, we would see the writers in particular, especially the Apostle Paul, first of all, laying out for us the gospel and how the gospel has changed our lives.

And it is only after doing that that we are instructed to do particular things and not do particular things. And so what we see is this pattern of reminding us that God has given us new birth in Christ. And because of that new birth in Christ, we're called to live in a particular way. And one of the things that should be very obvious to us is that coming to Christ does not automatically cause us to live like Christ.

Coming to Christ does not automatically result in a Christ-like life exuding from our lives. And this is why we have these particular instructions in the letters, and we have them in the way that we have them.

First, we are told about the gospel and what the gospel has done in our lives. And then what the writers would say to us is now live as people of whom that is true.

[ 11 : 25 ] And what theologians call this is, they call it the indicatives and the imperatives. The indicatives are just the way things are. And when we are told how Christ has saved us, how he's given us new birth, that is the fact, that is how things are.

And then when we are given these imperatives, these commands to say, do this and don't do that, those are the things that we are called to do in light of who we are in Jesus Christ.

And so it's important to see that what Paul is laying out here in Colossians chapter 3 is not just moralism. It's not just some instructions to live what people say are clean life.

No, this is consistent with who we are as people of God. This is who we really are. And here's the thing. And some of you may have heard your parents say things like this.

They may say, hey, you know, remember you are a Miller. Remember you are whatever your last name is. And what they're saying to you is, I want you to live consistent with the values that you know we raised you to have and the values of the family that you belong to.

[12:48] And that's what Paul is really doing as he gives us these particular instructions. He's saying, you are people of God. And he is a bit tentative in the sense that the church is a mixed congregation.

And so what he's saying is, if this is true about you, this is the way you will live. If you have been raised with Christ, this is the way that you are supposed to live.

And so this morning, I want us to consider what Paul says to us in Colossians 3, in light of who he said we are in the earlier two chapters.

And I have three simple points that I want us to consider this morning. The first point is our heavenly life in Christ.

Look again at Paul's appeal in verses 1 to 4. If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.

[14:03] Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. for you have died. And your life is hidden with Christ in God.

When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. Notice that in verse 1, Paul captures an important truth of the Christian life that's based on the foundation that he laid in the first two chapters of Colossians.

And it's the truth that those who belong to Christ, those whom God has saved, are united to Christ. This is one of the most precious truths to hold on to in the Christian faith.

those whom God saves, are united to Christ. They don't just kind of like walk alongside him at a distance, but he unites them to himself.

And this is what theologians call our union with Christ. And this is where a lot of the truths of the Bible and our salvation are wrapped up in.

[15:24] See, this is why our salvation is eternally secure. because we have union with Christ. And those who are united to Christ are always united to Christ.

This is the basis for us believing that nothing separates us from the love of God in Jesus Christ. Paul is addressing this union that we have with Christ.

And it's on this basis that he's going to tell us to live in a particular way. And this union with Christ is not a literal union. It's a spiritual union.

It's very much how we would say that a husband and wife are one, but they're two separate people, but yet they are one. And the Bible talks about God joining them together.

And so, though we are not physically joined to Christ in that way, we are spiritually joined to Christ if we have been born again, if we belong to him.

[16:29] And it's in light of that that we are called to pursue heavenly things. We are called to pursue heavenly things. We are called to pursue those things that pertain to this life that we have that is united to the Lord Jesus Christ.

And notice the key two words that Paul uses. he uses these words seek and set. Seek and set. Seek in verse 1, set in verse 2. And they are verbs. They are things that we are called to do. He says, this is a command, seek the things that are above.

Set your minds on the things that are above. This is what we are supposed to do because we belong to Christ and we are in union with Christ.

And one of the things we should consider immediately when we hear these commands is that none of us, none of us can do or desire desire to do these two commands in a natural way, in and of ourselves.

[17:54] None of us can do it. None of us desire to do it. No human being, no one in Adam's race has the ability in and of himself, herself to seek the things that are above or to set their minds on the things that are above.

the only reason that these commands are given to us is because God has done something in us. He has transformed our lives. He has enabled us to desire to seek, to desire to set, to be able to seek the things that are above and to be able to set our minds on the things that are above.

all because of the new birth. All because we are no longer the people we used to be. God has transformed our lives. He has reordered our affections by the grace of God.

And we shouldn't miss that. The only people who can do this is a transformed people. And in these instructions of Paul, we see the amazing grace of God that he calls us to do this.

Because unregenerate people can't do this. Unregenerate people don't want to do this. But one of the realities of the Christian life is that we have dual citizenship.

[ 19 : 28 ] We have a citizenship that is earthly, a citizenship that is on this earth. And we have a citizenship that is in heaven. Paul tells us this in Philippians chapter 3, 20 to 21.

But our citizenship is in heaven. And from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body by the power that enables him to be subject, even to subject all things to himself.

That's our citizenship that is in heaven. And you know what? That is the predominant citizenship that is supposed to mark our lives. Our allegiance, our unchanging allegiance, is to the citizenship that we have in heaven.

not to the country that we belong. Sometimes the country that we belong would run contrary and be in conflict to our citizenship in heaven.

And this is why God is able to unite a people who have many different earthly citizenships into the one citizenship of heaven and call us all to the same ideals, seeking the things that are above, setting our minds on the things that are above.

[ 21 : 03 ] That's supposed to mark us more than anything else because we are a new people in Christ. And so consistent with our union with Christ, consistent with our citizenship that is in heaven, here in these opening verses the Apostle Paul is calling us first and foremost to seek the things that are above, to set our minds on them.

So what are these things? Are they literally up in heaven? Are they literally there? Are we to speculate about what is there?

No, that's not what he is talking about. He is using language that's figurative. And these things in heaven are the things that pertain to the Christian life.

They are the things that pertain to this new life that God has given to us in Jesus Christ. That's what the heavenly things are. Those are the things we're called to pursue.

Those are the things we're called to set our minds upon. And there are things like desiring to know and do the will of God. Loving and glorifying God.

[ 22 : 17 ] Knowing God's word. Praying to God. Loving brothers and sisters in Christ. Doing the good works that God has ordained for us to do. Sanctification. And the list goes on.

We find these things in scripture. It's the normal Christian life. These are the things we're called to pursue and set our minds upon. And they are heavenly things. They're not things of this earth. they're all a part of the normal Christian life.

And we're called to seek them. Why are we called to seek them? The answer is in verse three.

Here's why we are called to seek them. Here's why we are called to set our minds on them.

For you have died. For, because, because you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God, this is what defines us. Seeking those things that are a part of our new life in Christ and setting our minds on them is consistent with our new life in Christ.

We've died. The old person is dead. The old person we used to be, that person is dead. And there's a new person now. And these are the words of the Apostle Paul.

[ 23 : 36 ] If anyone's in Christ, it's a new creation. Behold, the old is past and the new has come. Our life is hidden in Christ.

We are in union with Christ forever. And in verse four, Paul tells us, and when Christ, who is our life, appears, then we also will appear with him in glory.

And brothers and sisters, this is a reminder that we are to endeavor to live closely to the Lord. We are to be anticipating his return and being with him in glory.

And so on this first Lord's Day of 2025, I want to appeal to us. I want to encourage us. Let's recommit ourselves, first and foremost, to pursuing heavenly things.

Let's recommit ourselves to seeking those things that pertain to our spiritual life in Christ and setting our minds on them. Let's set our minds on them.

[ 24 : 50 ] And we all know there are many competing things to set our minds upon, a lot of them on our phones. things. But let us, by the grace of God, let's set our minds on the things that pertain to our relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

And as it relates to all those other plans that we have, they have a better opportunity to be fulfilled if we will do this.

Remember what Jesus said? Jesus said, Matthew 6, 33, seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and what happens? All these other things that the world runs after will be added to you.

So, brothers and sisters, this year, let's prioritize our heavenly life. Let's prioritize the things that pertain to our citizenship in heaven. Paul then goes on and he tells us that there are practical implications to seeking the things that are above and setting our minds on them.

The first thing he tells us are things that we must do in relation to our old life of sin. And this is my second point.

[ 26 : 19 ] Our old life of sin. Paul speaks about our old life of sin in verses 5 to 11. Beginning in verse 5, he tells us we are to put to death or we are to mortify what is earthly in us.

So we get this doctrine of mortification. It is a lifelong endeavor of believers where in an ongoing way we fight sin. And the reason we fight sin in an ongoing way is that sin is an ongoing reality for us as long as we live in these bodies on this earth.

And by the grace of God we are called to fight sin. We're called to mortify it. We're called to kill it, not tame it. We're called to kill it.

That's what we are called to do with our old life. When Paul refers to what is earthly in us, he's referring to life on this earth and the sins associated with life on this earth.

And he goes on to list some of them, not exhaustive, but he lists sexual immorality and impurity and passion and evil desire and covetousness.

[ 27 : 40 ] And if anyone doesn't know some of the meanings of exactly what he's getting at, that's a good Bible study for you. Just take some time and try to understand what he is saying.

But in verse 6, Paul warns us, very sober warning, he says, on account of these, on account of these, the wrath of God is coming.

And his point is that such conduct is not consistent with and not appropriate for those who have been born again, who are in union with Christ, who have a new life in Christ.

That's the point that he is making. Paul raises these things in the community of believers, in the congregation, in the Colossian church, and by extension in our church, because of the reality of this concern.

And we encounter it regularly as we look at the letters. Again, we've been memorizing 1 Corinthians chapter 6, verses 9 to 10.

[ 29 : 14 ] Paul says, do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Talking to God's people. Do not be deceived.

Do not be deceived. And the reason he says that is because sometimes we can be deceived and believe that somehow we have a different experience.

Paul says, soberly, because of these, the wrath of God is coming. And so this warning comes to those who sit in the congregation of God's people who profess to know the Lord, but our lives are marked by contradictory sins.

And the warning is that if that is us, the wrath of God is coming upon us. Paul makes it clear in verses 7 and 8, he says we once lived that way.

We used to live that way. We don't live that way anymore. We must put all of those things away, he says. Those things are inconsistent with the Christian life.

[ 30 : 33 ] And we give evidence that we have been born again. We give evidence that we belong to Christ by putting those things away.

I mean, at the end of the day, the Lord knows who is his. He sets his seal on those who are his. But we are called to live this way because this is the only way that we will have assurance of our own salvation, and it's the only way that our brothers and sisters around us will have assurance of our salvation.

religion. If I began to live a sexually immoral life, a careless life, a sinful life, you would have no real convicted faith that I belong to Christ.

Because such a life is inconsistent with one who belongs to Christ. Christ. And this is a lifelong endeavor.

It isn't when you get to a certain age, you get to coast and relax. No, we do this until the day that Christ returns. We fight sin. In verse 8, Paul lists some sins that the late Dr.

[ 31 : 53 ] Jerry Bridges classified as respectable sins. They're sins that we Christians commit and we think nothing of it.

Anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene speech. Now to be clear, getting angry or engaging in slander sin.

Those sins are not as weighty as committing adultery or covetousness. And don't let anyone tell you sin is sin. Sin is not sin.

There are weightiest sins than others. When Jesus was standing before Pilate, Jesus said to Pilate, the one who delivered me to you committed the greater sin.

sin. In the teachings of Jesus, in the parables, sorry, in the gospels, Jesus made it very clear that there would be degrees of punishment.

[ 33 : 01 ] Some would be beaten with many stripes, some would be beaten with few stripes. And even our own sense of justice would not seek to punish every single infraction the same.

We recognize that there are some that are far more serious than others. And so, that is not to make light of this, but still, we need to take these other sins, or put them in two kind of different groups, and of course, they're not exhaustive.

There are other kinds of sins that are not as weighty as the ones in the first category, but we need to take them seriously as well. Not, again, simply because they're not as weighty as the other ones, we can ignore them.

No, we need to take them seriously as well. They're all associated with our old life of sin, and with the Spirit's help, we are called to put them to death as well.

And if I may say this to us this morning, and see, this is how crafty the enemy is. Generally speaking, many of us have been serving the Lord a long time.

[ 34 : 17 ] God has been merciful to us. He has worked in our lives. We have grown in sanctification. And so, you know what? The first list of sins that Paul lays out, these weighty sins of sexual immorality and impurity and passion and evil desire and covetousness, covetousness, which really is idolatry, those are not the sins that we, by and large, are wrestling with this morning.

it's the respectable sins. It's those lesser sins that we can easily allow to just fly under our radar and allow to be an ongoing part of our lives.

And brothers and sisters, by the grace of God, I want to encourage us, let us put them off as well. By the grace of God, let us grow in sanctification in these areas of sin that we tolerate in our lives because we don't see them as weighty as the other sins.

There's grace to grow in those areas as well. In verses 9 to 11, Paul addresses two particular sins. You have to read the verses and summarize them to see that he's really getting at two things. He addresses the sins of lying and divisiveness in the community of believers.

[ 35 : 59 ] Look again at how he says it. Do not lie to one another, saying that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.

Here, there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, scythian, slave, free, but Christ is all and in all.

And what is Paul doing in these verses? What he's doing in these verses is he's helping us to see how our old life of sin can affect our new life in Christ in the community of believers.

Paul is helping us to see how the old life of sin that we need to put off can affect the quality of relationship that we enjoy among brothers and sisters and how we need to put them away from us. He says, don't lie to one another. Why? Because it is associated with our old life. It is associated with who we were.

[ 37 : 26 ] He says, put those practices away and put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after its creator.

the new self is one who puts on the belt of truth and commit to be people of the truth. You know that the things that we lie about are generally things we're fearful about for whatever reason.

And brothers and sisters, we need not fear anything to that degree that would cause us to lie. in verse 11, Paul calls us away from the sin of division.

And he lists some common divisions in his day, racial divisions, Jew and Greek, and religious divisions, circumcised and uncircumcised, and cultural divisions, those who are barbarians and those who are Scythians.

Scythians. The Scythians were those who the Jews considered to be very uncivilized people, uncouth people.

[ 38 : 44 ] No social and economic divisions, slave and free. See, the world makes much of these statuses. The world makes much of what we have and who we are and where we're from and what we've accomplished.

And those define people and so many people, it defines them so much that when they lose it, they have no more reason for living. They end their lives because their identity is wrapped up in all these things that the world esteems.

But Paul says to us, not so for God's people. Notice how he says it again in verse 11. Here, there is not Greek and Jew circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free, but Christ is all and in all.

What does Paul mean by here? It means here in the community of believers, here in the local church, here among God's people. Those things have no place, he says.

Here among God's people, one thing matters and that is Christ. And what matters is that whatever our distinctions are, whatever our statuses are in the world, in the community of believers, the only thing that matters is Christ.

[ 40 : 21 ] Christ. It doesn't matter who we are in the world, it doesn't matter what we have or don't have, in the community of believers, our status in the world is no advantage or disadvantage.

We leave them at the door. We leave them at the door. door. And one of the most beautiful things about the community of believers that God sovereignly builds is he brings people from all of these statuses in the world, where they are divided and separated and esteemed and not esteemed, and he brings them together and he melts them into one people of God where those things don't matter. Where our brothers and sisters are, our brothers and sisters, because of Christ, not because of some status that they have. But brothers and sisters, recognize that this is all a part of the sinful life that we are to put off.

We are to put away from us. These things are not to define us. But this is an aspect of the old self that we sometimes are not as diligent to put off, but we need to put them off as well.

lying, divisions, and prejudices, and differences, and esteeming, and lack of esteem. All those things are related to our old life, and we need to put them off.

[ 42 : 03 ] The reason that we're told to put these off is they are obstacles to pursuing the heavenly life, the heavenly things that we are called to pursue.

And so, brothers and sisters, I want to encourage us to let's do some reflection. And we never do reflection by ourselves. We do reflection with the help of the Holy Spirit. Because the Holy Spirit is far more kind and far more gentle than we would be with ourselves.

And he will show us things, and he will convict us of things, and he won't dump everything on us all at once and overwhelm us. But let's do what the psalmist says. Let's pray and say, Lord, would you search me?

Would you show me if there's any wicked way in me, if there's any way in me that I need to change? Help me to see areas that I may be overlooking. Help me to be serious with things I have seen, but I've been careless with, and I've just been delinquent to address in my life.

life. Let's have an eye for patterns of sin in our lives that we are allowing to just be there, especially patterns of sin that we associate with, that's how I am, that's my personality, that's right in my family.

[ 43 : 21 ] No, those are things we need to mortify by the grace of God. God. And as we do this, let's confess sin where we need to confess sin.

Let's confess sin where we need to confess sin. In our broad relationships, in our homes, in our workplaces, here in the local church, wherever, let us confess sin.

And if we really desire to grow, we want to invite someone in. Invite a brother or sister to say, hey, I want to grow in this area.

Would you pray for me? Maybe it's somebody who is in a position to observe you, and they can give you feedback and say, hey, I notice you're growing. I notice that you're not living up to what you said here.

They can provide us accountability. And that's something, in many cases, husbands and wives could do for each other because we live so close together.

[ 44 : 29 ] forever. But in pursuing heavenly things, not only are we called to put off our old life of sin, but we're also called to put on our new life of holiness.

And this is my third and final point. This is what we're called to do in verses 12 to 17. Notice in verse 12 how Paul refers to God's people.

He calls us God's chosen ones, holy and beloved. God's chosen ones, holy and beloved. And here in this description, again, we see the amazing grace of God.

God's chosen to be the amazing grace of God being reminded that God is the one who chose us. We didn't choose ourselves.

We didn't wake up one day and decide that we wanted to serve the Lord. Any of that that was in our mind was because God had already acted and God opened our eyes and made us aware of our need for Christ.

[ 45 : 43 ] He is the one who chose us. We couldn't choose him. We were dead in trespasses and sins. We couldn't help ourselves much less choose the Lord.

But he chose us and he saved us and he called us holy. He declared us to be holy and describes us as holy.

And holy means to be set apart from something to something. God set us apart from the world to himself. And the amazing grace of God is that God called us holy before we did anything and gave any evidence of holiness in our lives.

Holiness is first what God declares over us and then he calls us to live consistent with that declaration. salvation. We're not called holy because we've had some track record of doing holy things.

We're called holy because a gracious sovereign God set his love upon us and saved us and set us apart to himself and said you are holy unto me.

[ 47 : 03 ] before we did anything holy. But then now he calls us to live a life that is consistent with that declaration that he has made about us.

We are called to live a holy life, a lifestyle that is marked by giving evidence that we belong to Christ.

And this means as we've already seen, putting off the old self, it also means putting on the new life of holiness. Paul also tells us that we are beloved.

We are beloved. We are the Lord's beloved. And brothers and sisters, whoever is beloved by God will always be loved by God.

It will never change. never change. God knows no broken loves. All whom he beloveds will always be loved by him.

[ 48 : 16 ] Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ. That's our Redeemer's love that we sang about this morning. He'll keep us through the most tumultuous times.

Yes, he'll keep us even when we go astray. He'll hound us and pursue us and bring us back if we belong to him.

look again at the virtues of a holy life that we are called to put on.

Paul says we are to put on compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, patience. Again, not an exhaustive list, but these are ones that are very relevant for us, especially as we live in community, especially as we live with brothers and sisters in Christ.

This is how our new life in Christ is supposed to affect our life in community. We show compassion. We demonstrate kindness. We walk in humility and meekness towards one another.

[ 49 : 30 ] We bear with one another. We put up with one another. And that's not put up in a sinful way. We truly bear with one another in impatience.

We forgive one another. And we don't forgive in a vacuum. We forgive as Christ has forgiven us. If Paul didn't add those words, as Christ has forgiven you, all of us would have our standard of forgiveness.

But we all know too well how Christ has forgiven us. He's forgiven us again and again and again.

And we are called to do the same to us brothers and sisters. This is our new life in holiness. This is what we're to put on. Now in verses 15 to 17, Paul doesn't use the words put on, but it's clear that he is continuing to call God's people to put on what pertains to this life of holiness.

In verse 15, he calls us to live lives in which the peace of Christ is evident. The peace of Christ is the harmony that Christ brings in our lives when he forgives us when we are reconciled to God.

[ 50 : 58 ] When we are reconciled to God, we have peace with God. When we are reconciled to God, there's no longer wrath, there's no longer enmity between us in God. We have peace with God.

Paul says that peace is to be the same peace that is in our hearts as we interact with brothers and sisters in the local church.

That same relational harmony, that the forgiveness that has made that possible, that same peace is to rule our hearts as we live together in the context of the local church.

And it's to be marked by thankfulness, not complaining, marked by thankfulness. And notice how Paul transitions from the peace of Christ in verse 15 to the word of Christ in verse 16.

And by the word of Christ, he means the message of Christ as Christ really is, who he is and what he has done, and here Paul is addressing, he's continuing to address what he addressed in the first two chapters, there were people in the Colossian church who were teaching false teachings about Christ, and Paul said it straight, and he is saying that is the word of Christ, that is the message of Christ, that is to be in your heart richly, who Christ is, and what he has accomplished on our behalf.

[ 52 : 40 ] Paul said it to them by extension, he's saying it to us as well, we are to, we are to be Christ-centered people, and if we're Christ-centered people, we will be cross-centered people because what was central for Christ was his cross, that was why he came to the earth, and that is what he set his eyes upon, and that is what the focus of the Gospels primarily is all about.

To be Christ-centered is to be cross-centered. And notice how in verse 3, Paul tells us that our lives are hidden in Christ, and here in verse 16, he's telling us how our lives are to be centered on Christ. And as we center on Christ, we are to teach one another and warn one another, that's what it means to admonish, we are to warn one another with wisdom that comes from Christ.

It's all a part of the new life that we are called to. That new life, also tells us that we are to be a singing people. We are to be people who are singing various kinds of song to the Lord with thankfulness in our hearts.

And it's not singing that only marks our lives when we gather on a Sunday morning. It's being singing people. It is being intentional to sing. And there's so many means to help us to sing.

[ 54 : 21 ] There are wonderful hymnals. There are wonderful YouTube channels with great songs that we can sing and we can be a singing people having the word of Christ in our hearts and then ministering that word of Christ to one another through teaching, through warning, through instruction.

All of these practices are part of our new life of holiness. holiness. And they are evidence that we are pursuing heavenly things.

Paul concludes his appeal to pursue heavenly things by putting on this new life of holiness in verse 17.

Look again at what he says, and whatever you do in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

What an effective summary. Rather than going on and teasing out and teasing out what he says this new life in Christ is, what Paul does is he captures everything else and says whatever you do, whatever you do, fit it all in there, fit in your work, fit in a dispute that you may have with someone.

[ 55 : 50 ] Whatever you do, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Being mindful of him, thanksgiving in our hearts to God.

This verse captures so well what pursuing a heavenly life, what pursuing heavenly things looks like. It is endeavoring to do whatever we do, whatever we say, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to him.

I think he would agree with me that there are some things that we cannot honestly do in the name of the Lord and giving thanks to him. Or we can't do them in a way that maybe we're accustomed to doing it.

We need by the grace of God to be able to do those things in a way that we can do it in the name of the Lord and we can do it giving thanks to God the Father.

By God's grace we can live a life that puts off the things that pertain to our old life and put on the things that pertain to our new life in holiness.

[ 57 : 02 ] I want to close this morning by alerting you to two areas where for many of us we struggle to put off the old life of sin and put on the new life of holiness.

And they are at home and at work. And in both contexts sometimes they're pre-existing struggles.

They are situations that haven't been dealt with or maybe have not sufficiently been dealt with and they are the undercurrent that color so many things that take place.

And it's in these settings that our new life in Christ can be eclipsed and what can be more evident is our old life of sin.

And it's instructive that the Apostle Paul, after calling God's people to put off their old life of sin, to put on the new life of holiness, to be pursuing heavenly things, that he gives us instructions about our roles in the home.

[ 58 : 26 ] That he calls wives to submit to husbands and husbands to love wives children to obey their parents and fathers not to exasperate their children so that they discourage them.

It is as if Paul is saying put off the old life and put on the new life and then live out these roles in the home. Brothers and sisters, that is what would make living out these roles in the home so much easier if we are mindful to put off that old life, to put on the new life, to be pursuing the heavenly things, to be seeking to do whatever we do in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father.

In verse 22, Paul addresses slaves. And yes, there would have been slaves in the church in that day. And when you hear slaves, don't think transatlantic slavery.

That's not what he is addressing. This is a totally different kind of slavery that they had in the Roman Empire. It was based on man stealing. It was based on other kinds of circumstances.

And so there are these slaves in the church, and there are these slaves who have very difficult masters. And Paul is calling them to serve their masters, not as eye-servants.

[ 59 : 58 ] he says, but you to do it is unto the Lord with a sincere heart. And some of their masters were ruthless. Some of their masters mistreated them.

And he still called them to put off the old life and put on the new life. None of us are slaves, even though we may feel like it at times.

We have a boss who treat you as a slave. But in our workplaces, this is applicable. Whereby the grace of God, we are putting off the old self.

Maybe the old self would respond that way. Maybe the old self will exhibit that attitude, but the new self will do it in the name of the Lord and giving thanks to God in a way that honors the Lord.

And so I want to encourage us by the grace of God in these two particular areas that I already said, they're difficult areas. The people we live with, have histories with, work with, have histories with, it's so easy to kind of write them off and not even try, but let us put off the old life of sin.

[ 61 : 19 ] Let us put on the new life of holiness in these relationships as well. And may the Lord grant us all grace to live this way throughout this new year and beyond.

Let's pray. Oh, Father, we bow our hearts this morning and recognize how much we need your grace to do this.

Lord, it is your grace that saved us and it is your grace that enables us to put off the old self and put on the new self. It is only by your grace that we are able to do whatever we do, whether in word or deed.

In the name of the Lord Jesus, I give thanks to the Father. Meet us with much grace, I pray in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. Amen.