

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

COLOSSIANS LESSON 3 (Chapter 3)

Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST. Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, Timothy Sparks and Ben Bailey.

Timothy Sparks:

“If then you are raised with Christ, seek those things that are above, where Christ is sitting at God’s right hand” (Col. 3:1). I’m Timothy Sparks.

Ben Bailey:

And I’m Ben Bailey. Welcome to our study of Colossians 3. Today’s message is being brought to you by loving, caring members and congregations of the churches of Christ. The church of Christ in your area would like for you to stop by and visit. If you would like to study the Bible with them, they would be happy to open the Bible and help you in your study. We, too, would like to assist you. If you would like to have today’s lesson, or any of our other lessons, on CD or DVD, we will be happy to make those available. You can log on to our website at thegospelofchrist.com, fill out the request form you will find there, and we will send you the items you request. Also, we offer a free, four-lesson Bible correspondence course that you can do by mail on your own time. It’s an easy and effective way to study of the Word of God. If you would like to enroll in that, we will be happy to send you the first lesson.

The theme of the Book of Colossians is that Christ is preeminent in all things (Col. 1:18). In Colossians 3, we see that we must focus on what’s really important and preeminent in our own lives. Where is your focus? What is your goal? What things do you look for in life? In Colossians 3:1, we are told to seek those things that are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. We are told **not** to set our hopes and affections on earthly things, but on heavenly things, so we can go to Heaven. It often has been said that wherever we set our goal is where we will go in life. If we make it our goal to be a part of God’s family and to go to Heaven, then we can live with God for all eternity.

Timothy Sparks:

There are a number of passages in the New Testament that stress this message. Notice what Paul says in Colossians 3:2—“Set your mind on the things above, not on the things on the earth.” From this, we learn to be careful where we set our heart, because what we set our heart on, we are most likely going to get. This is one of the most tremendous responsibilities we have—“setting our hearts.” Jesus said that where our treasure is, there our heart will be also (Mt. 6:21). This doesn’t mean that we can’t have secular goals in life. It does mean, however, that our secular goals can’t be on a collision course with our spiritual goals. As long as our spiritual goals and our secular goals are in harmony with the Word of God, then we are seeking to put first things first (Mt. 6:33). We are seeking

to send our treasure on ahead of us. We can't take our treasures with us, but we can send them on ahead. This is why Paul tells us, "Set your mind on the things above, not on the things on the earth." Each of us must be careful where we set our heart, because where we set our heart is where our treasure is. What we set our heart on, we're generally going to get. That doesn't mean we will always get what we wish for. But the truth is that we generally work harder at something we want. If you desire to go to Heaven more than anything else in the world, you'll make it to Heaven because you have decided to conform your life and your will to Christ. You've made a commitment, and have dedicated your life to God and His Word. But if you want other things, if you want anything else more than you want to go to Heaven, you simply will not make it. Jesus tells us that the way to Heaven is narrow. It's difficult, it's restricted, and few people find it (Mt.7:13-14). Many people are going to go the broad way, the wide way, the way that leads to destruction. Many enter in that way. Paul therefore tells Christians who have been baptized into Christ that if they have been buried with Christ, then they were raised with Him (Col. 2:12). Thus, we are resurrected spiritual beings who now live for Jesus. It is at baptism that we became a Christian. If we have been raised with Christ, then we should seek those things that are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. We are to set our minds on the things above. The phrase "set your mind" means "to focus." The writer of the Book of Hebrews tells us something about focusing on Christ so that we never lose sight of Him.

Ben Bailey:

That's right. In Hebrews 12:1, we're clearly told that because we are surrounded by "so great a cloud of witnesses," we must set our focus on Christ. We have to "lay aside every sin, and the weight that does so easily ensnare us, and looking to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy set before Him, endured the cross." Our focal point in everything we do must be Jesus. We must be just like a runner who's running a race. The way to win races is to find a focal point. The runner must find something to look—something he won't take his eyes off of. That's the goal. Paul uses this idea of a runner, and says, "We must be like that." Our focal point has to be Jesus. I've got to put my focus on Him, and never ever take it off. Again, we learn a valuable lesson. If Christ is not preeminent, if He's not my focal point, then I'm not going to make it to Heaven. I must come to realize that I've died to the old world, and now my life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ appears, I'll also appear with Him in glory. If I want to appear in glory with Christ, I have to live for Him. We cannot expect to go to Heaven, yet live like Hell. We cannot expect to live with God, but live like the devil in this life. It's just an absolute impossibility. We must change the way we live. We must die to the world of sin. This is what Paul says in Colossians 3:5, "Therefore, put to death your members which are on the earth, fornication, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry." We must put to death all these things if we are going to live with Christ. Paul tells the Christians in Colossae that these were the former things "in which you once walked" (vs. 7). Paul wants them to know that if they are going to seek **heavenly** things, then they must put to death **worldly** things. We must take away the evil from our lives, and live for God instead. Again, it goes back to the idea of repentance. Repentance is one of the foundational ideas found in New Testament Christianity. I change who I am, and I turn to God. The passage in 1 Thess. 1:7-10 is a perfect example of this. Those in Thessalonica turned from idols to serve the true and living God. That's repentance. I turn **from** sin, and I turn **to** God. I make it my aim to serve Him. Peter said in Acts 3:19, "Repent and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out." Joel assured us it was not just sorrow alone. Joel said, "Rend your heart, and not your garments" (Joel 2:13). In Joel's day,

people had some pretty odd ideas. Sometimes they tore their clothes. Sometimes they pulled the hair out of their head, out of their beards, or out of their eyebrows as a sign of their sorrow. Joel says, “Don’t do those things. Tear your hearts, not your garments.” That reminds me of what John the Immerser said. In Luke 3, certain Jewish leaders came out to be baptized by John. John was very harsh with them. He said, “You brood of vipers. Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?” (Mt. 3:7). John said, in essence, “You bunch of snakes. Who told you to come out here to do this?” What was wrong with them coming to John? John said, “First bring forth fruits worthy of repentance.” They hadn’t genuinely repented. As Christian, we must change. We have to put away those things in our lives that aren’t right. And that’s not always easy.

Timothy Sparks:

In Colossians 3:9-10, Paul says, “Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him.” He says that we are to make sure that we have put off all the ways of the world such as any type of evil speaking, any type of covetous thoughts, or any type of evil deeds. We are to put off anything contrary to the Word and will of God. Then, he tells us that we need to put on gentleness and kindness (Col. 3:14). We need to put on all those things that represent Christian virtues. First and foremost, we are to put on **love**. Love is the bond that unites everything in perfect harmony. In Colossians 3:14, Paul stresses love as the most important thing. He similarly stressed to the Christians in Corinth that, while they could be the most knowledgeable, the most eloquent, or the most sacrificial of all people, without love, they had nothing” (1 Cor. 13). Above all things, we should put on love. It is what will unite everything in complete and perfect harmony. Paul also stresses unity, which comes through love. Without love, what do you get? You get situations like the one that developed at Corinth, where the Christians were divided. Paul pleads for them not to be divided. He tells them that the solution to their problem of division is love. Love will bring unity. In Colossians 3:15-16, Paul tells us that we are to let the peace of Christ rule in our hearts. We learn from Colossians 1:20 that Christ “made peace through the blood of His cross.” Christ made peace possible. Now, we must let the peace of Christ rule in our hearts. Paul wrote in Philippians 4:7 about “the peace of God, which passes understanding.” After all, God is the God of Peace (Phil. 4:9). Jesus is the Prince of Peace (Isa. 9:6). We therefore must allow the peace of Christ rule in our hearts. Then, in Colossians 3:16, Paul tells us about letting the Word of Christ dwell in us richly.

Ben Bailey:

Paul says, “Let the words of Christ dwell in you richly, admonishing one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, teaching one another, singing and making melody in your heart unto the Lord.” How do we let the words of Christ “dwell in us richly”? One of the ways we do that is when we admonish and teach one another by singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. This is an important passage about singing in the New Testament. It is a companion passage to Ephesians 5:19. These two passages teach that singing is a **reciprocal** act—i.e., we teach one another, sing to one another, and admonish one another. The reciprocal idea here is, “I do it unto you, and you do it unto me.” It’s something we do **together**. There are several lessons we can draw from this idea. The first is, there is no place for solos or choirs in New Testament singing. If I’m singing to you, and if you are singing to me, it must be done “back and forth” (it’s “reciprocal”). How, then, can a solo or a choir be part of God’s plan? It cannot. I’m not singing back to

them; they are just singing to me. Second, this passage also teaches that there is no place in New Testament worship for mechanical instruments. Some might suggest, “Although the New Testament doesn’t mention it, God’s really not going to be displeased with it.” We need to remember, however, that **everything** we do must have God’s authority behind it. In the New Testament, we see clearly that God authorizes **only** vocal singing. Ask yourself, “Can an instrument admonish or teach?” Have you ever been taught or admonished by an instrument? It can’t speak, and it is not intelligent. How can it admonish or teach? Only people, only humans, have the ability to do that. The text of 1 Corinthians 14:15 teaches us, “I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding.” We sing with our spirit, and we do it as our mind is engaged in the words that we are singing. Mechanical instruments of music represent an addition to New Testament worship. They did not exist in the first-century church. History tells us they did not play a part in worship in the church until 600 years later. God told us what He wanted. He doesn’t need our help to “add to” His instructions. Someone asked, “Will a person be lost if he uses an instrument in his worship to God?” Look at the basic principle involved. If I add to God’s Word, is that something that could cause me to be lost? Revelation 22:18-19 says, “If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.” There is a classic example of this in Leviticus 10:1-2. Nadab and Abihu were two young priests who were worshipers of God. They were even workers in the worship of God, offering sacrifices. The Bible tells us that these two young men offered a “strange” [some versions say “unauthorized”] fire to the Lord. Someone might say, “It wasn’t **that** big a deal. The fire still got there. It just got there a different way.” That might seem like a small, insignificant thing to us. But how concerned was **God** with that unauthorized fire? He was so concerned that He struck Nadab and Abihu dead! God doesn’t want **anyone** adding to His Word! Search your New Testament. You won’t find an instrument of music mentioned in worship to God. It is an addition to God’s Word. Colossians 3:17 really impresses upon us that in whatever we do, we must have a “thus saith the Lord.”

Timothy Sparks:

Paul says, “Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him” (Col. 3:17). Immediately afterwards, He tells us what we need to do in praising God in our singing, in which we teach and admonish one another. He tells us that not only must our singing be pleasing to God, but that **whatever** we do—by word or in action—must be authorized. That is to say, it has to be in accordance with God’s Word. Notice, too, how Paul once again stresses the concept of being thankful. We need to thank God that He gives us the opportunity to serve Him. What if we lived in a world where there was no law? What if we lived in a world in which there was no direction or instruction? What if we lived in a world that did not have boundaries and limitations? It would be total chaos. We need to be grateful that God has given us a plan to direct us in life, so we don’t live out of control, and so we aren’t Hell bound. Much is said in God’s Word about how grateful and thankful we should be. The psalmist wrote, “It is a good thing to give thanks to the Lord” (Ps. 92:1). As Paul continues, he is going to address husbands, wives, children, and servants. First, Paul tells us about wives needing to be in subjection to their husbands, and second, how husbands should love their wives. Third, he tells children to be obedient to their parents.

Ben Bailey:

This idea of submission on the part of the wife, Paul tells us, is pleasing to the Lord. The Lord would not expect me to do something that is harmful to my body. Nor would He expect me to live under a dictatorship. That's not what submission is. The original word "submission" really means "to place one's self under." In marriage, the two are equal, yet the woman "places herself under" the husband because that's the way God has designed things. In 1 Timothy 2 and 1 Corinthians 11, we find passages which teach that the husband is to be the head of the home. Ephesians 5:22 teaches the same idea. The lesson here is that wives must be submissive to their husbands, "as is fitting to the Lord." When a husband is a godly man who is leading his family in a proper manner, then that is fitting to the Lord, and wives ought to submit to their husbands. Husbands are to love their wives in every way. They are to love their children, and must train them in a godly way. Husbands have a great responsibility to love the wife, to love the children, to provide for their spiritual and physical needs, and to make sure the children are disciplined properly. One of the things we see today that is so terribly sad is a lack of parents disciplining their children. The writer of Proverbs said, "Do not withhold correction from a child, for if you beat him with a rod, he will not die. You shall beat him with a rod, and deliver his soul from Hell" (Prov. 23:13-14). Discipline is something that God tells us we must do. We are not advocating child abuse, or suggesting that is something God condones. The idea of "beating" carries with it just the idea of spanking. If you spank children to discipline them, you're not going to cause them to be lost. You're not going to destroy them. In fact, you will do something to save their souls. Parents have the responsibility to discipline their children. But children also have a responsibility to their parents, and servants have a responsibility to their masters.

Timothy Sparks:

Paul tells the children that their proper role is to be obedient to their parents. This was a principle that is taught in the Old Testament as well. We learn from Deuteronomy 6 and 11 that parents were to teach their children. But children have the obligation to be faithful and obedient to their parents. In writing to the Christians at Ephesus, Paul stressed that children are to "obey their parents in the Lord, for this is right" (Eph. 6:1). He says that this is well pleasing to God, Who has assigned various roles for proper living. The husband has a responsibility to his wife. The wife has a responsibility to her husband. Children have a responsibility to their parents. We also learn that servants are supposed to be obedient to their masters in all things. We need to apply this to an employer-employee relationship. Employees are to do as the employer asks. Notice that Paul says, "not with eye service, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God" (Col. 3:22). This means that employees shouldn't take extra-long coffee breaks when the boss isn't looking. "Not with eye service" means that an employee will be busy even when the boss isn't looking. Employees shouldn't work just to please their boss, but also to please the Lord. Notice Colossians 3:23, in which Paul says, "Whatever you do, do heartily, as to the Lord and not to people." This means that we are supposed to "put our hearts" into our work. Enthusiasm is something that is often lacking today. Whatever we do, we must do it heartily because we are serving the Lord. Paul went on to say in Colossians 3:24, "Knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ." Enthusiasm can be as contagious as measles and as powerful as dynamite! When you get enthusiastic about your job, spreading the Gospel, or whatever you're doing, other people will get enthusiastic, too. But if you aren't enthusiastic, they won't be enthusiastic either. So we need to be people who, in everything we do, are

-serving the Lord first and foremost. If we are pleasing to the Lord, we should be pleasing to our employer as well.

Ben Bailey:

Paul's point is that we do not work merely for a paycheck. We're not doing just it for the financial reward. Why do I work hard? Why do I live right and do right by my family? Why should I obey my parents? It is because I know that I "will receive from the Lord the reward of my inheritance" (3:24). God has promised us not just a financial reward, but also a reward of an inheritance in Heaven. Live right. Do right. Obey your parents. Work hard at work. Why? Because it's the right thing to do, and because, ultimately, you want to go to Heaven. It all comes back to Colossians 3:1 where we are told to "seek those things that are above." If we are putting first things first, if we are really trying to get to Heaven, then we are going to live right. We are going to act right. We are going to put away anything that's ungodly. And we are going to add to our lives those things that perhaps are lacking, such as tender mercies, love, and humility. The basic lesson of Colossians is that Christ is preeminent. He is Head of the church. It is in Him that we are rooted and built up if we remain faithful. Christ is the One Whom we must put first. We seek His kingdom first. We do it because it is the right thing to do. We don't do it because someone makes us. We don't do it because it is what our parents did. We don't do it because it is "the popular thing to do." We do it just because it is the right thing to do. Matthew 7:13-14 teaches that just because "the majority" is doing something, it does not mean we should follow along. Matthew 7:13-14 teaches that the majority is walking down the path to Hell. It's a wide gate and an easy way to go. But narrow is the gate, and difficult is the way, that leads to eternal life. And there are few who find it. Do right because you want to go to Heaven. Live right because of the eternal inheritance God has promised us as His people.

If you are not a child of God, and if you are not yet seeking that heavenly home, why not? Why are you not trying to live the Christian life? Why are you not trying to go to Heaven? Maybe it is because you really haven't made the decision to do so. Today, we want to encourage you to make that decision. Believe in Jesus as God's only Son, the One Who can give you eternal life. Believe so much that you are willing to repent. Put off the old, and put on the new. Then confess Jesus as the Lord of our Life and be baptized for the remission of your sins. Jesus said in Mark 16:16, "He that believes and is baptized will be saved." We want to thank you again for joining our broadcast. We are making all of our lessons available on CD and DVD. If you would like to have one of those, visit us on our website at thegospelofchrist.com, fill out the request form you'll find there, and we will send you the items you request. As always, we hope you will conform your will to the Gospel of Christ.

Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

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STUDY QUESTIONS FOR COLOSSIANS LESSON 3 (CHAPTER 3)

1. When Paul writes in Colossians 3:2, “Set your mind on the things above, not on the things on the earth,” what is he trying to teach us?
2. What is the relationship between Paul’s instructions in Colossians 3:2 and Jesus’ instructions in Matthew 6:21?
3. Hebrews 12:1 speaks of the fact that we are “surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses.” Who are those witnesses?
4. In Colossians 3:5, Paul tells Christians to “put to death your members....” What are the “members” of which speaks?
5. The people in Thessalonica turned from worshiping idols to worship the one and only living God (1 Thess. 1:7-10). What action did they have to take in order to do that?
6. What is the importance for us today of Joel 2:13?
7. In Matthew 3:7, John harshly chastised the Pharisees who came to him to be baptized. Why did he do such a thing?
8. In Colossians 3:9-10, Paul said, “Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him.” Who does a person “put off the old man with his deeds”?
9. What did Paul tell the Christians in Corinth to do to cure the problems they were experiencing with divisions in the church?
10. According to Paul’s instructions on the Christians in Colossae, what did they need to do to achieve “the bond of perfection” mentioned in Colossians 3:14?
11. What is the common theme of Colossians 3:15 and Ephesians 4:4?
12. Where in the New Testament are musical instruments authorized in worship of God?
13. In Colossians 3:16, Paul specifically mentions an “instrument” that is to be used in “singing and making melody.” What is that instrument?
14. According to Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16, singing is a certain type of act. What type of act is it?
15. Would solos or choirs fit within the confines of the instruction found in Colossians 3:16? If not, why not?
16. Why did God slay Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10:1-2)? What is the message of their deaths for those of us today?