

# THE RADICAL EFFECTS OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

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*By the Book*™ A Chapter by  
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## Let's Begin

*The Christian giant, A.W. Tozer once said, "Christianity is so entangled with the world that millions never guess how radically they have missed the New Testament pattern. Compromise is everywhere. The world is whitewashed just enough to pass inspection by blind men posing as believers, and those same believers are everlastingly seeking to gain acceptance with the world."*

*Tozer hit the bull's eye. In fact, he was only following the Apostle Paul's teaching. Paul makes it crystal clear that when Christ enters a person's life, radical things happen.*

*Colossians 3 is going to take us through the radical changes Christ makes when He enters a person's life, making him or her a new creation. Hence, as we begin our study of chapter 3, let's follow the outline below:*

- I. Our Personal Hearts are Radically Affected (vv. 1-4)**
- II. Our Principled Habits are Radically Affected (vv. 5-14)**
- III. Our Particular Homes are Radically Affected (vv. 15-4:1)**

## I. Our Personal Hearts are Radically Affected (vv. 1-4)

Whatever the subject at hand, the Apostle Paul was ready to place Christ ahead of all. For him, to think of life was to think of Christ (cp. Phil. 1:21). Were we asked, could we unequivocally say, Christ is our life? The reason why Paul could do so is the same reason believers today can do so: when Jesus Christ came into his life, radical changes took place. Therefore, we begin by understanding how radically affected are our hearts. Paul writes, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, *who is our life*, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory" (vv. 1-4).

Paul views our new life in Christ as a *resurrected life* (vv. 1-2). The root-principle of the Christian life is resurrection. Neither regulation nor reformation can usurp the resurrection dynamic required to explain the radical changes which Jesus Christ brings. Indeed the *spiritual fact* of the resurrection life is incontrovertible.

Given such a resurrection, our call is to "seek those things which are above." Why? Because though we were dead in sin, we are now alive! Our identity is in Him.

In addition, recall the resurrection life is not only a *spiritual fact*, it is also a *practical force*. We live out the resurrection every single day. That is what Paul means by "seek." We are to "seek those things which are above." The verb tense Paul uses calls for a continuous search to take place. Our resurrection life in Jesus Christ pushes us to seek only those things which are approved in heaven, those things "which are above."

Observe as well, Paul views life as a *protected life* (v. 3). When the Holy Spirit invades our lives and radically changes our hearts, He seals us to the Father eternally (Eph. 1:13). Living in protection is something with which everyone may identify. People are interested in security. Especially is security important in the volatile world in which we live. In Christ, we are doubly safe. Moreover, in Christ, we are fully sufficient. Paul indicates our life is "hid with Christ in God." We may draw on His resources, and His resources are never-ending.

### Reflection Connection

*Since we are called upon to seek only those things above, does such a goal conflict with our pursuit of life on earth? Explain.*



Finally, Paul views life as an *exalted life* (v. 4). Our life in Him will not always be hidden. There is coming a day when He “appears” our lives in Him will be gloriously open. We long for the day when what is so radical about the change in our hearts is realized on the entire earth when Jesus rules and reigns during the millennium (Rev. 20:1-6). A glorious day we anticipate when Jesus Christ returns.

## II. Our Principled Habits are Radically Affected (vv. 5-14)

Not only does Christ radically change our hearts, He also radically changes our moral habits, the principles by which we live out the Christian life. Paul puts this truth in perspective for us. He writes, “Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: For which things’ sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them. But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds” (vv. 5-9). Paul’s creative imagery is superb. He likens the radical change the Christian life makes to changing clothes—*rags to robes*.

*First, Christians take off the vices of the old life* (vv. 5-9). Paul’s image refers to the sinful rags of a life without Christ, a life lived in the sinful flesh. Before one is saved, old habits forged us in our wicked ways, setting us on course toward an eternal disaster. Now that we are in Christ, placing our trust in Him, we take off the sinful rags of the old life. Paul’s term to call for shedding our old clothing is “mortify.” The term “mortify” refers not to an embarrassing state (i.e. without clothes). Instead, it refers to putting to death, a killing. Elsewhere Paul talks about dying to ourselves as did our Lord (cp. 1 Cor. 15:31; Mark 8:34). To “mortify” our old life is to cast it aside as dead and live a life toward God.

Before we look at our new clothing we are to wear as we live toward God, note Paul’s detailed explanation of just what our old clothes were. In two different categories covering a broad scope of everyday life, Paul lists specific vices we are to “mortify”:

### Sinful Actions (vv. 5-7):

- ✦ *Fornication*—Refers to pre-marital sexual relations.
- ✦ *Uncleanness*—Impure thoughts primarily motivated by sexual desires.
- ✦ *Inordinate Affection*—Unchecked passionate sexual fantasies.
- ✦ *Evil Concupiscence*—Enslaved to sexual thirsts.
- ✦ *Covetousness*—Greedy desire for more.
- ✦ *Idolatry*—Anything one trusts more than God, applied here toward satisfying one’s dissatisfaction with life through illicit sexual exploitation.

### Reflection Connection

*Take a moment and check your moral closet. Are there garments hanging in there that need to be discarded?*



**Sinful Attitudes** (vv. 8-9):

- ✦ *Anger*—Smoldering ill-will toward others.
- ✦ *Wrath*—Anger raging out of control.
- ✦ *Malice*—Basic mean-spiritedness.
- ✦ *Blasphemy*—slandering others.
- ✦ *Filthy Communication*—Obscene language and course, crude speech.
- ✦ *Lying*—First tendency of the carnal nature.

Paul's list is morally breath-taking. Christians must never make these garments their moral wardrobe. Instead, believers robe themselves with other clothes.

*Second, Christians put on the virtues of the new life* (vv. 12-14). The robes of the well-dressed Christian which Paul includes are also listed in two broad categories. Note the following virtues Paul reveals:

**Christ-like Actions:**

- ✦ *Heart of Compassion*—Refers to mercy ruling the life of the believer. Too often people are seen as a “prospect” for church rather than a human being made in God's image and worthy of love.
- ✦ *Kindness*—Goodness of heart, a sweet disposition. Our neighbor's welfare is as important as our own.

**Christ-like Responses:**

- ✦ *Humility*—Modest appraisal of self. In a day of asserting our fundamental rights, rarely do we hear a focus on giving up our “rights” for the sake of others.
- ✦ *Meekness*—Refers to a quiet yet rock solid strength.
- ✦ *Longsuffering*—Ability to put up with difficult people.
- ✦ *Forbearance*—Putting up with things we find distasteful.
- ✦ *Forgiveness*—Offering to others what our Lord freely and graciously offers to us.
- ✦ *Love*—Love is the moral color which saturates every other garment in the Christian closet. Without love our moral lives are stark naked (1 Cor. 13).

When Christ enters our life, all things become new (2 Cor. 5:17). Hence, we develop an entirely new wardrobe to wear every day we live.

### III. Our Particular Homes are Radically Affected (vv. 15-4:1)

No sphere of our lives is removed from the radical difference Jesus Christ makes when we become believers. Included, of course, is our home.

*First, note's Paul's discussion of home resources.* He writes, “And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye



thankful. 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. 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” (vv. 15-17). At first glance, it appears Paul may be speaking about our personal lives. On second glance, however, we see Paul has a wider reference.

He begins with the “peace of God.” God’s peace is to “rule” in our heart. The term translated “rule” means to act as an umpire. What do umpires do? Umpires settle disputes and make calls. Paul’s concern is for peace to make calls in our homes, to settle disputes. All of us should ask whether particular actions or decisions make peace or conflict in our homes.

Furthermore, Paul says the “word of Christ” should guide decisions in our homes. His term for guiding decisions in the home is “dwell,” which means “to take up residence.” Does the Word of God reside in our homes? Understand what Paul does not say nor need we ask: Do we have a Bible in our home? What home has no Bible?

But having the Word of God in our home is not the same as the Word of God *residing* there. When the Bible resides in our home, our home is a haven for “wisdom,” godly wisdom seeking after God’s will. Hence, the “name of the Lord Jesus” will make a stand in our homes, among our children and in our marriage.

We are now in a position to see precisely how radical the Christian’s home is, for the Apostle says, “whatsoever ye do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus.” Every action, every decision, every movement is to honor the Lord Jesus. Just how radical are our homes? The answer to that question depends upon the use of the resources God gives us.

*Second, note’s Paul’s discussion of home relationships* (vv. 18-21). He makes very clear the radical changes Christ makes in our relationships. Tragically, the American home is facing severe breakdown. Half of all marriages end in divorce, while the rise of “live-in” couples threatens the marriage institution. Even more tragically, professing Christians’ homes fare little, if any, better. Our testimony jeopardizes the very Gospel we preach.

Paul speaks to the marital relationship, “Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord. Husbands, love *your* wives, and be not bitter against them” (vv. 18-19). The marital bond remains crucial to the well-being of the home. Paul focuses on submission in this passage, submission meaning to give one’s self to the Lord’s assignment. He does not mean to suggest women are inferior to men. Rather, that women have different roles and functions.

*The term translated “rule” means to act as an umpire. What do umpires do? Umpires settle disputes and make calls.*



Also, Paul throws his lens on men, demanding of them that they love their wives without the least trace of bitterness. Love is absolutely essential if the home is a Christian home. In fact, love is never absent from the home where radical commitment to Christ is healthy.

And, before Paul concludes, he makes sure the parental relationship is thoroughly intact (vv. 20-21). Fathers must always discipline only as God disciplines—through radical love—while children are to revere and respect parental authority.

Finally, note Paul's discussion of home revenue (3:22-4:1). While this subject item bleeds over into chapter 4, the thrust is fully within the scope of our study today. Paul writes, "Servants, obey in all things *your* masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as men pleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God: And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ. But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons" (vv. 22-25).

No discussion of the home is complete without considering the revenue to sustain the home. Therefore, the Apostle pulls the workplace in view, considering the same radical difference made at home is carried to the workplace every day. Christ makes a radical difference on the job.

Calling workers to responsibility first (vv. 22-25), he summons them to not only *obedience* but also *reverence*. Workers never turn to "eye service" as means to satisfaction. Such value placed on working only when others are watching is a subtle form of hypocrisy about which the Apostle Paul would warn. "In all things" obedience is expected. "All things" to which Paul refers obviously is non-inclusive of things illegal or immoral which the believer must always guard against. Nevertheless, "all things" carries with it the profound reverence and tacit willingness to discipline one's self toward giving an honest day's work for the pay received.

In fact, workers are to be enthusiastic about their employment, serving as if they are serving "heartily" as "unto the Lord." Only then may dedicated workers win a good inheritance.

Paul does not fail to inform employers and supervisors of their Christian responsibility (4:1). Not only does Christ radically change the worker, He also radically affects the workplace if they will allow Him. Employers must be dedicated to the welfare of every person who commits to their industrious success. Good working conditions, adequate pay, fair benefits, and perks for a job well done can only reflect what the Lord of the Harvest does for His faithful laborers.

### Reflection Connection

*If you are a supervisor or employer, think of ways to reflect radical commitment to Christ in the workplace. If you work for a company, how does your faith alter your dedication to your job and employer?*

### Golden Greek Nugget

Paul's solution to allow Christ to make a visible difference in our lives was to "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth..." (v. 5). The Greek term translated "mortify" is *nekroo*, which literally means "to put to death." Its root is the word from which we get our word, "corpse." Paul's meaning is that we need to die to our old sinful ways—become a corpse—and live wholly unto God.

### Wrap Up

*In this study, we've surveyed how Christ radically changes our hearts, our habits, and our homes. The question we must continually ask ourselves is, does Christ make a radical difference in our lives? If not, why not?*

