

Colossians 3

Summary

- It is not enough for Christ to be preeminent in the gospel, the cross, creation, and the church; He must also be preeminent in our lives.
- Paul states very specifically how we should “practice the preeminence of Christ.”

Preeminent In Purity (3:1-11)

- The opening verses of chapter 3 sustain a close connection with the closing verses of chapter 2, where the apostle reminded the Colossians that ascetic regulations are of no real value in restraining the flesh. The only remedy for sinful desires is found by our association with Christ.
- To set the heart of things above is to desire and strive for heavenly matters. It is to see to it that one’s interests are constantly centered in Christ, that one’s attitudes, ambitions, and whole outlook on life are molded by Christ’s relationship to the believer, and that one’s allegiance to him takes precedence over all earthly allegiances.
- Deeply committed Christians must see everything against the background of eternity. To make earthly matters the goal of life and the subject of preoccupation is unworthy of those who have been raised with Christ and look forward to sharing in His eternal glory.
- We now know that our lives are laid up or stored away as a treasure with Christ. Every Christian has the hope of future glory. Christ is called our “life” because He is, quite literally, the essence of our lives. “Appears” emphasizes the open display of Christ at His coming.
- Sin must be put away or put to death. We must wipe them out and completely exterminate the old way of life. The verb also suggests that we must do so in a vigorous, possibly painful act of personal determination. These sins incur the wrath of God, which will fall upon the disobedient. But this kind of life belongs in the past.
- The “old man” is like a dirty, worn-out garment that is stripped from the body and thrown away. The “new man” is like a new suit of clothing that one puts on and wears. The “new man” does not decay or grow old but by constant renewal takes on more and more the image of its Creator.

Preeminent In Fellowship (3:12-17)

- Now that Christians have put on the new self, they must “clothe

themselves” with the garments that befit the new self. Paul’s appeal is based on this threefold fact: Christians are chosen of God, holy, and dearly loved by God. The three terms signify essentially the same great fact, but under different aspects. Used in the Old Testament of Israel, they emphasize the favored position now enjoyed by Christians as heirs of God.

- Vss. 12-13 mention many good virtues of a Christian. They point to qualities of life which, if present within Christians, will reduce or eliminate problems. All these virtues are, on the highest level, manifestations of love; but love is larger than any one of them.
- “Rule” in vs. 15 is an expressive term used only here in the New Testament and it originally meant “to act as an umpire.” The main idea here is being grateful for the peace Christ bestows on us. Thankfulness for this peace becomes an incentive for preserving it.
- Christians need to submit to the demands of the gospel and let it become so deeply implanted within us that it controls our thinking. When we sing, psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs must express real emotion of the heart, adoration, and worship in a way that is worthy of our Savior. When we sing, we have the opportunity to teach and warn others in matters that relate to the spiritual realm.
- Everything a Christian does should be done in recognition of the authority of Jesus, always retaining a sense of God’s goodness and thanking Him.

Preeminent In The Home (3:18-21)

- The one duty Paul enjoins on the wife is to submit, an attitude that recognizes the rights of authority. His main thought is that the wife is to defer to her husband. The submission should be voluntary. It is made by a wife who is determined to please her Lord. It is “fit” for her to do so.
- The ancient world was a man’s world, and even among the Jews the wife was often little more than a servant. Husbands in that day often wielded an authority that others were bound to obey. Although Paul does not challenge this assumption, he transforms it by the Christian principle of mutual love and deference.
- “Love” not only denotes affection or romantic attachment; it also denotes caring love, a deliberate attitude of mind that concerns itself with the well-being of the one loved. Self-devotion, not self-satisfaction, is its dominant trait.
- “Obey” implies a readiness to hear and carry out orders; a child’s ongoing responsibility is to listen to and carry out the instructions of his or her parents. The obedience must be complete because this pleases the Lord. The specific mention of fathers suggests that the

father as head of the household has a special responsibility for training the children.

• ***Preeminent In Daily Work (3:22-25)***

- Paul presses one duty upon slaves -- complete obedience. The highest duty every Christian has is to God and all lesser duties must give way to this (Acts 5:29). Servants must see their service as a service rendered not to human beings but to the Lord. This would transform the most menial responsibilities and give dignity to all their work.
- Slaves will receive a reward for faithfully serving their masters. On the other hand, they must understand they have an obligation to act as they should lest they be judged.

Thought Questions

- Discuss the various sins mentioned in vss. 5-9.
- Discuss the various virtues mentioned in vss. 12-13.
- Discuss provoking children to wrath and the subsequent discouragement involved.
- Can you still use guidelines of the servant/master relationship today?