

# Colossians 2:18 - 3:10

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## Day 1

Warning against Deceptive Mysticism. Read Colossians 2:18,19

1. What is the next warning Paul gave? 2:18a (Add this to the chart.)

- Although their salvation was secure, what were these Christians in danger of losing? (See also 2 John 1:8)
- In what way do you think *false humility/self-abasement* and *the worship of angels* could be linked?

**Food for Thought:** "Although humility is a great virtue, Christians have to be careful that they are not taken in by a false humility...False humility can lead to the idea that because we are sinners, we are not good enough to approach the holy God directly...Because of what [Christ] underwent on our behalf we are holy in God's sight, without blemish and free from accusation. Thus 'in Christ and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence' (Ephesians 3:12)." - Michael Penny (27-28)

2. On what were these people basing their understanding/teaching? 2:18b (Compare Jeremiah 23:26)

- Ironically, to what attitude did these practices lead? 2:18c

**FYI: Taking his stand/goes into great detail/dwelling in** *embateuo* NT:1687, primarily, 'to step in, or 'on'...to frequent, dwell in'(b) alternatively, 'to invade, to enter o''; perhaps used in this passage as a technical term of the mystery religions, denoting the entrance of the initiated into the new life." - Vine's Expository Dictionary

"to go into details...to investigate, search into, scrutinize minutely"

- Thayer's Greek Lexicon

"The Gnostic prided himself upon the special visions of secret things which were not open to the eyes of ordinary men and women." (Barclay)

- David Guzik

"These pseudo-visions were evidently related to angels...as being the necessary mediators between God and men ...This led to their worship, the very thing Satan craved, for he was behind these false spiritual powers. Satan desires nothing less than the position of God Himself and the adoration of all creation...when we grasp what was happening there, we can better appreciate Paul's deep concern for the believers who formed the church in that place."

- Stuart Allen (153)

"The gnostic claimed to have special visions, going 'into great detail about what he has seen.' This was a technical phrase used in that day to describe 'someone being admitted to a higher grade in one of the mystery religions.' Through this, they claimed to be on the inside."

- R. Kent Hughes (84)

3. What warnings about angels did Paul give in Galatians 1:6-8?

4. In the following verses, what do you learn about angels and worship?

- Matthew 4:9,10
- 2 Corinthians 11:14,15
- Revelations 19:9,10

5. Who is our mediator? 1 Timothy 2:5

- How confident can we be about approaching God? Ephesians 3:12
- Why can we approach God so freely? Hebrews 10:19-20 (Contrast Leviticus 16:2,34)

6. What connection with truth had these people lost? 2:19a (Cross-ref 2:3)

- How would this affect their spiritual growth? 2:19b; compare 2:7 (*What does the picture of a "body" say about the connection of believers to Christ? To each other?*)

***Digging Deeper***

See another description of the growth of the body in Ephesians 4:11-16.

***FYI: holding/ connection*** Strong's NT:2902 *krateo* ; to use strength, i.e. seize or retain (literally or figuratively)

" is most frequently rendered "to lay or take hold on"

- Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words

**From whom all the body:** When these strange, mystical movements arise in the church, they don't appeal to the *whole body*, but only to a few "elite" Christians. This is not the cause under **the Head**, Jesus – He wants **all the body** to grow together."

- David Guzik

7. How does this relate to what Jesus said in John 15:4-8?

***Applying the Word:*** *What lure do you see behind wanting to focus on angels or a having a special knowledge of the spiritual? What activities can you identify today that have that lure?*

## Day 2

Warnings against Asceticism. Read Colossians 2:20 - 3:4

8. What was the next faulty practice that Paul confronted? 2:20b,21

- Why weren't these practices appropriate for a believer? 2:20a
- Why don't they have any permanent significance? 2:22a
- What are these practices founded on? 2:22b

**FYI: "Do not...do not... do not:** This is a perfect description of legalistic religion, defined more by what we *don't do* than by what we *do*. Christianity is a moral religion; it does have clear moral boundaries. But at its foundation, Christianity is a religion of *positive action*." - David Guzik

9. Why do they these practices of self-denial look so good on the surface? 2:23a (List what these practices involved.)

- What makes them ineffective? 2:23b

### ***Digging Deeper***

How did Paul priorities change when he came to know Christ? Philippians 3:7-8

**FYI: "an appearance of wisdom...but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh:** We might regard this as the greatest indictment against legalism in the Bible. At the bottom line, legalism's rules have no value in restraining the **indulgence of the flesh**... Legalism doesn't restrain the flesh; it *feeds* the flesh in a subtle, powerful way. 'In fact, the most rigorous asceticism can coexist with insufferable spiritual pride, one of the subtlest and most intractable of the 'works of the flesh.' (Bruce)

**Self-imposed religion** is man reaching to God, trying to justify himself by keeping a list of rules. Christianity is God reaching down to man in love through Christ." - David Guzik

"This 'self-made 'religion doesn't do any good. In fact, it can heighten fleshly temptation and along with it produce a joyless, defensive approach to life...Seen for what it really is, this is an expression in independence from God which says, 'I'm going to get to God on my own terms, by my own might.' Asceticism [*severe self-discipline and avoidance of all forms of indulgence, typically for religious reasons*]. feeds the flesh by starving it."

- R. Kent Hughes (86)

10. What did Jesus criticize about the Pharisees' rigid rules and practices? Matthew 23:25-28

### **Set Your Mind**

11. What kind of mindset did Paul urge the Colossians to have instead? 3:1,2 (Compare 1 John 2:15-17)

12. It's been said: *"Don't fight negative thoughts, replace them with positive ones."* Although we can't stop evil thoughts from coming into our minds, what does this say about the power of not letting them be our focus?

**FYI:** "This heavenly seeking is to be foremost through prayer, as we ask, seek and knock for the things above (Matt 7:7...). This seeking ought to pervade our conversations, friendship, studies, work - even our play. And when it does, it will enhance our fullness in Christ."  
- R. Kent Hughes (90)

13. List the phrases that describe what happens to us *"with Christ"* or *"with Him"* in Colossians 3:1-4.  
*"raised with Christ"*

**Digging Deeper**  
Ephesians 1:1-13 expands on the idea of "things above" and all the blessings we have in or through Christ.

14. What does the following say about Christ being *"seated at the right hand of God"*?

- Romans 8:34
- 1 Peter 3:22

15. Why should we seek things above? 3:3 (See Philippians 3:20)

- How should this heavenly mindset determine earthly priorities? See 1 John 2:15-17

16. What does the word "hidden" (3:3) say about our security?

**hidden** - Strong's NT:2928 *krupto* to hide, conceal (properly, by covering)

17. Underline how our security is expressed in the following:

- John 10:27-28 My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand.
- 2 Corinthians 1:22-23 Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God, who also sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge.
- 2 Timothy 1:12 I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him [h]until that day

18. What future hope/reality are we promised? 3:4

- What does it mean to say that Christ is *"our life"* (3:4)? Galatians 2:20

19. Underline what we look forward to when Christ *appears/is revealed*.

- 1 Corinthians 13:12 For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known. NAS
- Ephesians 2:6-7 And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, 7 in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. NIV
- Philippians 3:21 who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body. NIV
- 1 John 3:2 We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. NAS
- Jude 24 To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy- NIV
- Revelation 21:4 and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; NAS

**Applying the Word:** Do you embrace any legalistic or ascetic practices as a way of gaining God's favor? Is there anything that keeps your heart from believing that you are "complete" in Christ?

## Day 3

Putting off the Old Nature. Read Colossians 3:5-7

20. Why are we to "consider as dead" or "put to death" certain behaviors? 3:5 i.e. What does the "therefore" refer back to? See also 2:6

- How would you categorize these behaviors? What power do you see in Paul's listing and naming each one?

**Put to death/consider as dead/mortify** Strong's NT:3499 nekroō; to deaden, i.e. (figuratively) to subdue:

"Used metaphorically meaning to deaden, to deprive of force and vigor." - The Complete Word Dictionary NT

**"Immorality/fornication"** (*proneian*) from which we get the word pornographic. It means every kind of immoral sexual relation...

**Impurity/uncleanness** "This is wider and subtler than physical immorality, for it embraces the lurid imagination, speech and deed of a sensual heart or filthy mind..."

**Lust/passion** "the shameful emotion which leads to sexual excesses... (Used in 1 Thess. 4:5, Romans 1:26)

**Evil desire** "wicked, self-serving, rapacious lust. What a deadly quartet we have here, and Paul said it must be slain outright- executed!"  
- R. Kent Hughes (96)

## 21. Underline why sin shouldn't control us anymore.

- Romans 6:6,7 For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin- 7 because anyone who has died has been freed from sin. NIV
- Galatians 5:24,25 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. NIV

## 22. Underline the instruction (verbs) for dealing with your earthly nature or mind.

- 1 Timothy 6:11,12 But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. NIV
- Matthew 26:41 "Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." NAS
- Romans 6:13 Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. NIV
- Romans 12:2 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is-his good, pleasing and perfect will. NIV
- Philippians 4:8 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable-if anything is excellent or praiseworthy-think about such things. NIV

## 23. What would you say the above verses are saying about feelings versus our thought life?

**Food for Thought:** "As fallen human beings we seem unable to control what comes into our minds. The most terrible thoughts can occur, the most immoral, weird, selfish, lurid ideas come from nowhere and confront us. Over this we seem to have little control...When these evil thoughts and desires occur, what do we do? We can entertain them, dwell on them, roll them around in our mind. Or we can dismiss them, but if we do that, they have a tendency to return, sometime having grown.  
I have found the best way of removing such unchristian intrusions from my mind is to actively set my mind and heart on things above. I consciously force myself to pray or sing a hymn, to read the Bible or a Christian book, to think about what Christ did for me on the Cross or of my place there with Him...With these thoughts occupying my mind, my brain cannot entertain the sensual and sinful. In effect, they are put to death." - Michael Penny (31)

24. Why do you think greed is included in the list given in 3:5? i.e. How do you see greed and idolatry being similar?

**FYI:** "Covetousness/greed *pleonexia* NT:4124, "lit., "a desire to have more"

- Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words

"The Greek word *pleonexia* means the desire to possess more than one ought to have, particularly that which belongs to someone else. This puts some object of desire in the central place which the Lord Jesus should occupy, and so it becomes idolatry. This is indeed dangerous and all the more so because it can assume so many respectable forms."

- Stuart Allen (156)

25. What did Jesus say about greed? Luke 12:15

- What focus does Hebrews 13:5 give?

26. What is God going to do with evil some day? 3:6 See Romans 1:18-22

27. What kind of life had the Colossians been living before knowing Christ? 3:7 (Cross-ref 1:21) How difficult do you think it might have been for them to stop some of these behaviors?

**Applying the Word:** Of the strategies/examples in question #22, which do you find most effective in dealing with sin? Think of an example from your life when using one of these strategies, kept you or would have kept you from sin.

## Day 4

Putting Off and Putting On. Read Colossians 3:8-10

28. How would you categorize the behaviors in 3:8?

- In what ways are these behaviors destructive to one's self and not just to others?

**FYI:** "The 'anger' described here is growing, inner anger, like sap in a tree on a hot day which swells the trunk and branches until they are in danger of bursting. 'Rage' is anger boiling over... 'Malice' bespeaks a viciousness of mind. It is the malignant attitude which plans evil and rejoices when misery falls on the one it hates, like Haman's glee in building the gallows for Mordecai."  
- R Kent Hughes (98)

29. How would you connect putting off anger and malice to the idea of setting your mind on things above (3:2)?

- What reason for getting rid of anger does Ephesians 4:31-32 give?

30. Underline the advice given in the following verses for dealing with anger.

- Proverbs 17:14 The beginning of strife is like letting out water, So abandon the quarrel before it breaks out.
- Proverbs 19:11 A man's wisdom gives him patience; it is to his glory to overlook an offense.
- Ecclesiastes 7:9 Do not be eager in your heart to be angry, For anger resides in the bosom of fools. NAS
- Romans 12:18-19 If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. 19 Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY," says the Lord.
- James 1:19 My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, NIV

31. How does Ephesians 5:3,4,12 expand on the command about *abusive speech* (NIV "filthy language")?

- How powerful are our words according to James 3:4-10?

32. In the following verses, underline the focus/effect our words should have.

- Proverbs 16:21,24 The wise in heart are called discerning, and pleasant words promote instruction...Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.
- Isaiah 50:4 The Sovereign LORD has given me an instructed tongue, to know the word that sustains the weary. NIV
- Ephesians 4:29 Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. NIV

33. Why is lying inappropriate for a believer? 3:9,10a

- What other reason is given in Ephesians 4:25? i.e. *How does lying affect relationships?*

**FYI:** "It is also possible to **lie to one another** without words. 'It is easy to distort the truth; an alteration in the tone of voice or an eloquent look will do it; and there are silences which can be as false and misleading as any words.' (Barclay)"  
- David Guzik

*What helps you keep your words godly and edifying in a world that is accepting of "abusive speech" (NIV "filthy language")? If you struggle with this issue, how has this lesson shed light on the problem and the solution?*