

## Lesson 10 – Colossians 3:10-14

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### Review/Introduction

The apostle Paul is writing a letter to the church at Colossae – a church he does not know and one that is facing heretical attacks on the supremacy and sufficiency of Christ. Remember that chapters one and two laid the foundation for the supremacy of Christ over all things and the believer's sufficiency in Christ for salvation and sanctification. Philosophy, human wisdom, legalism, mysticism, or asceticism by themselves or if added to Christ are useless in regards to salvation or sanctification. Salvation and sanctification are only found in Christ.

Last time, we started the second half of the letter in chapter three which address how the believer is to walk in light of Christ's supremacy and sufficiency. Here is where Paul exhorts the Colossian (and us) to strive in the power of the Spirit to walk in our position; to live out in practice what we already are in Christ.

Colossians 3:1-9 tells us that we have been given a complete salvation having been raised up with Christ. Therefore, we should continually devote ourselves to serious effort and earnestly strive to glorify God, being a doer of His word (will), having all our affections, will, and reason set on that. We are in union with Christ and our life is supernatural because we have access to the Spirit. One day, the world will see the great work Christ has done in us by seeing His righteousness. The believer's heart should be to progress in sanctification by putting to death heart level sin motives.

### Life in the all-sufficient Christ – Putting on the new self (3:10-14)

#### 1. Positional sanctification (3:9-10)

<sup>9</sup>Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its *evil* practices, <sup>10</sup>and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him—

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<sup>9</sup>Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices <sup>10</sup>and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. (ESV)

You have been made new through spiritual circumcision (2:11), spiritual baptism (2:12), spiritual crucifixion (Gal 2:20; 5:24). You have been united with Christ. As part of that union you have been sanctified. Sanctification is God's one-time work where He positionally sets the believer apart from sin and eternal death for Himself (2 Thess 2:13; Heb 10:10). The believer is declared to be holy and identified as a saint (set apart one).

<sup>13</sup>But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because **God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth.** (2 Thess 2:13)

<sup>11</sup>For both He **who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one *Father***; for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, (Heb 2:11)

<sup>10</sup>By this will we **have been sanctified** through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. (Heb 10:10)

This setting apart occurs at conversion, but sanctification is also God's work where the believer cooperates in the process of dying more and more to sin and living unto righteousness. This "practical" or "experiential" or "progressive" sanctification comes as the Spirit does His transforming work within us day by day (2 Cor 3:18).

<sup>18</sup>But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are **being transformed into the same image from glory to glory**, just as from the Lord, the Spirit. (2 Cor 3:18)

Both the "**laid aside** the old self with its *evil* practices" and the "**have put on** the new self" occurred at the moment of salvation. "Being renewed" means to make new. It is to cause something to become new and better or superior. The believer is continually being changed into a new quality or kind of life in opposition to the corrupt, depraved state of the unregenerate person. It is in the present tense indicating we are "constantly being renewed". This is the progressive aspect of sanctification. It is in the passive voice indicating we are being acted upon by an outside power (i.e., the Holy Spirit).

We are being renewed "to a true knowledge" or "unto a true knowledge". We are being changed into the full, complete, experiential knowledge of God. It is not some secret we can pursue, but it is wrought in our hearts by God.

❖ **Are you experiencing the constant renewal? If not, what do you need to do?**

2. The body result of union with Christ (3:11)

<sup>11</sup>*a renewal* in which there is no *distinction between* Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all.

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<sup>11</sup>Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all. (ESV)

Paul will now move to how the body is impacted by the individual renewal. This renewal changes the relationships within the body of Christ.

The body metaphor shows that the church is not an organization, but a living organism. It illustrates the diverse-unity and interdependence that is present in the church. The body is made up of unique individuals who are united by the indwelling Holy Spirit. The many are one body in Christ and individually members of one another (Rom 12:4-5; 1 Cor 12:12-27). Some thoughts on the body figure:

– The members of the body are united in Christ.

<sup>4</sup>For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, <sup>5</sup>**so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.** (Rom 12:4-5)

– Christ is the head of the church

<sup>18</sup>**He is also head of the body, the church;** and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything. (Col 1:18)

- Christ is the nourisher of the church.

<sup>18</sup>Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on *visions* he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind, <sup>19</sup>**and not holding fast to the head, from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God.** (Col 2:18-9)

- The members of the body are united, interdependent, diverse, and care for and serve one another (1 Cor 12:12-27)

The formulation of “there is no” indicates there is continually, absolutely no distinction within the body of Christ. There is no possibility of distinction.

“Greek and Jew” indicates there are no cultural distinctions within the body of Christ. “Circumcised and uncircumcised” indicates there are no past religious experience distinctions within the body of Christ. “Barbarian” and “Scythian” indicate cultural fringes of society are not a reason for distinctions. And finally, “slave” and “freeman” indicate social barriers do not exist in the body of Christ.

Regeneration by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone removes distinctions and makes those who were once separated by the sin of bigotry or discrimination (distinction), brethren in Christ.

There is no place for discrimination within the body of Christ since each member of the body of Christ is united through spiritual baptism with Christ and one another.

<sup>12</sup>For even as the body is one and *yet* has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. <sup>13</sup>**For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.** (1 Cor 12:12-13)

The Spirit through Paul adds male/female distinctions in Galatians. A note here is that equal in Christ in worth does not equate to equal in roles within the body of Christ.

<sup>26</sup>For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. <sup>27</sup>For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. <sup>28</sup>There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is **neither male nor female**; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. (Gal 3:26-28)

<sup>11</sup>**A woman must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness.** <sup>12</sup>**But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet.** <sup>13</sup>For it was Adam who was first created, *and* then Eve. <sup>14</sup>*And it was* not Adam *who* was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression. (1 Tim 2:11-14)

The reason that there should not be any distinctives within the body is, again, that Christ is everything for the believer, the head of the body, and therefore we desire to honor and glorify Him. He is also in all believers through the indwelling Holy Spirit.

- ❖ **How do you think about and treat your brethren who are different than you?**

### 3. Body life due to union with Christ (3:12-15)

<sup>12</sup>So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; <sup>13</sup>bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. <sup>14</sup>Beyond all these things *put on* love, which is the perfect bond of unity.

<sup>12</sup>Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, <sup>13</sup>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. <sup>14</sup>And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. (ESV)

There is structure to this passage starting in 3:5 that gives a sense of the “already accomplished and yet still striving” thought.

3:5,8 Command → Put to death/put aside sin

3:9 Since already accomplished → laid aside the old self

3:10 Happening now → RENEWING unto a true knowledge

3:10 Since already accomplished → have put on the new self

3:12 Command → Put on righteousness

The Greek has the verb “put on” first for emphasis. It means to put on a garment. It is an imperative and calls for immediate, urgent, effective action. Remember that “put aside” (3:8) means to strip off soiled clothes and to throw them away. “Put on” is like taking the most comfortable clothes you have and snuggling into them. “Put aside” is making a choice to repent from sin. “Put on” is making a choice to obey, to do righteousness, to replace the sin that you “put off” with obedience.

❖ **Do you through off sin with the intent to never pick it up again? Do you put on righteousness with the intent to never take off again?**

We see here the “put off / renew your mind / put on” dynamic of sanctification. The same concept is taught by the Spirit in Ephesians 4:20-24.

<sup>22</sup>that, in reference to your former manner of life, you **lay aside the old self**, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, <sup>23</sup>and that you **be renewed in the spirit of your mind**, <sup>24</sup>and **put on the new self**, which in *the likeness of* God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth. (Eph 4:20-24)

“Be renewed in the spirit of your mind” points to the believer’s mind being made new as it is filled with the Word of God. It is not about covering up sin with something that smells good. It is about being transformed so that the sin is no longer a part of you. God’s Word is the tool that God’s Spirit uses to produce God honoring change in God’s child.

<sup>2</sup>And do not be conformed to this world, but be **transformed by the renewing of your mind**, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. (Rom 12:2)

❖ **Are you striving to renew your mind with God’s word?**

This is expected of God's "chosen out ones" or His "elect". It is expected of His "holy" ones or those set apart for Him. It is expected of His "beloved" ones or those who were agape-loved in the past and who now enjoy the ongoing benefits of that love.

God's choice, or election, of His people is His unconditioned choice before the foundation of the world (from eternity past) of those individuals whom He would save (Matt 22:1-14; Rom 3:10-13; 8:27-30; 9:6-24; 1 Cor 1:18-19; Eph 1:3-11; 2:8-9; Acts 13:48; 1 Thess 1:4; 2 Thess 2:13; 2 Tim 2:10; 1 Pet 1:1-2; 2 Pet 1:10; 2:13). All whom the Father appoints to eternal life (Acts 13:48) He will call to Himself (Rom 8:30) and sovereignly cause the gospel to be told to them (Acts 10; Rom 10:8-17). God's choice is required because all people are dead in their trespasses and sins (Eph 2:1) – dead people cannot choose to come alive.

### ❖ **What is your reaction to the doctrine of election?**

Because we have been chosen, set apart, and beloved, we must "put on" certain characteristics that benefit body life. The Spirit through Paul begins with those things that characterize relationship peace and unity in the body. He then provides the overall means by which the "putting on" of the relationship building characteristics occur. Then gives the binding, capstone principle.

"Compassion" denotes the inward feeling of compassion or pity aroused by another's suffering. It is a sense of sympathy, of empathy with someone.

"Kindness" is the friendly and helpful spirit which seeks to meet the needs of others. This is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22).

"Humility" speaks of lowliness of mind, lowly thinking. The word indicates the esteeming one's self as small or recognizing one's insufficiency. It is the attitude of Christ in thinking of others before yourself.

<sup>3</sup>Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but **with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves;** <sup>4</sup>**do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.** <sup>5</sup>Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup>who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, <sup>7</sup>but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, *and* being made in the likeness of men. <sup>8</sup>Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. (Phil 2:3-8)

"Gentleness" is a quality of gentle friendliness - gentleness, meekness, consideration, restrained patience, patient trust in the midst of difficult circumstances. It is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:23).

"Patience" is literally long-temper, a long holding out of the mind before it gives room to action or passion; a state of emotional calm or quietness and forbearance in the face of provocation, misfortune, or unfavorable circumstances. It is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22).

These traits are characteristics of walking in the Spirit (being filled with the Spirit). But they are also characteristics that must be decisively, urgently, effectively put on. Again, showing the God-work/people-work of sanctification.

<sup>12</sup>So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, **work out your salvation with fear and trembling;**  
<sup>13</sup>**for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for *His* good pleasure.** (Phil 2:12-13)

#### ❖ **Do you put on these characteristics?**

The five characteristics describe, in general terms, God honoring relationships within the body of Christ. The next two participle phrases (bearing and forgiving) describe the overall means by which the “putting on” of the relationship building characteristics occur. Believers must bear with one another and forgive one another.

“Bearing with one another” has the sense of continually making allowance for each other’s faults. It means to be patient with, to endure, to hold out in spite of persecution, threats, injury, indifference, or complaints and not retaliate.

<sup>4</sup>therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you **endure.** (2 Thess 1:4)

#### ❖ **Do you bear with one another’s faults?**

Within the body of Christ there are always going to be people who have “complaints against others”. Believers will sin against each other. The Scriptures tell us that, ultimately, all sin is against God (Psa 51:4). But the Scriptures also tell us that while missing the mark of God’s perfect righteousness (Matt 5:48) people can sin against other people (Matt 18:21).

<sup>21</sup>Then Peter came and said to Him, “Lord, **how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him?** Up to seven times?” <sup>22</sup>Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven. (Matt 18:21)

The solution for being sinned against is “forgiving just as the Lord forgave you”. “Forgiving” [charizomai] comes from the word for “grace” meaning “unmerited favor” and means to give freely and unconditionally or to bestow as a gift of grace and then to pay for or cancel a debt. The idea of unconditionally and completely are conveyed. It is in the present tense which calls for forgiveness to be the believer's continual practice; it is to be unceasing. The word usage also pictures the offended believer as those who are to initiate the action of forgiving.

The phrase, “just as,” conveys the sense of “in the same way as” or “just like” and designates the model for forgiveness. The phrase, “just as the Lord forgave you” and in the parallel passage in Ephesians 4:32 “just as God in Christ also has forgiven you” indicate that there is a perspective from which to look at God’s forgiveness to be the example of our forgiveness. That perspective is from God’s viewpoint. So, if we are commanded to “forgive each other, just as God in Christ has forgiven you”, the question is, “How has God in Christ forgiven us?”

The answer is clear; God has forgiven us **unconditionally**. Before Christ, you were dead in your trespasses and sins (Eph 2:1). In eternity past, God chose you for His own glory and according to His own purpose to be His (Eph 1). At some point in time, God called (Rom 8:30) and drew you to Himself, brought the gospel to you (Acts 10; Rom 10:8-17), and gave you the gift of grace and faith. In fact, the true saving faith that you exercise, which includes repenting (Mark 1:14-15; Acts 20:20-21) and surrendering your life to Christ (Luke 9:23-26), is a gift from God (Eph 2:8-9). You did nothing to deserve, earn, or obtain forgiveness. It is **unconditional**.

### ❖ Do you forgive unconditionally or conditionally?

The other word primarily translated “to forgive” in the NT is “aphiemi” which is most often used by the gospel writers (Matt 6:12, 14-15; 9:6; 12:31-32; 18:21-35; Mark 2:5-10; 3:28; 4:12; 11:25-26; Luke 5:20-24; 7:47-49; 11:4; 12:10; 17:3-4; 23:34; John 20:23; Acts 8:22; Rom 4:7; James 5:15; 1 John 1:9; 2:12). It literally means to “hurl away” or “let go” or “give up a debt.” This paints a vivid word picture of forgiveness as sending the offense/sin away. This word was also used in secular Greek to mean “canceling a debt”. This is sending or hurling away a debt of sin.

There are several other passages that describe God’s forgiveness.

When God forgives sin, He does not deal with us according to our sin (i.e. the way we deserve) and He removes the sin far from us.

<sup>10</sup>**He has not dealt with us according to our sins**, Nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. <sup>11</sup>For as high as the heavens are above the earth, So great is His lovingkindness toward those who fear Him. <sup>12</sup>**As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us.** (Psa 103:10-12)

Forgiveness is for God’s sake, not ours; for His own glory. God is God and he cannot “forget” sin. In forgiveness, God makes a conscious choice to not bring our sin to memory or judgment.

<sup>25</sup>**“I, even I, am the one who wipes out your transgressions for My own sake, And I will not remember your sins.** (Isa 43:25 see also Jer 31:33-34)

In forgiveness, God chooses to not count our sins against us.

<sup>18</sup>Now all *these* things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, <sup>19</sup>namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, **not counting their trespasses against them**, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. (2 Cor 5:18-20)

Love is the basis for forgiveness. Someone who is loved by God in a saving relationship through Jesus Christ is able to love other people. This love “covers” a multitude of sins because it forgives.

<sup>19</sup>We love, because He first loved us. (1 John 4:19)

<sup>8</sup>Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because **love covers a multitude of sins.** (1 Pet 4:8)

The great passage in 1 Corinthians 13 that describes the believer's outworking of God's agape love makes it clear that "love does not take into account a wrong suffered".

<sup>4</sup>Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, <sup>5</sup>does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, **does not take into account a wrong suffered**, <sup>6</sup>does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; <sup>7</sup>bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. (1 Cor 13:4-7)

The one who loves does not hold on to a sin committed against them. Since love is a choice, you can choose to love even when you do not "feel" like. In the same way, you can choose to forgive even when you do not feel like it.

❖ **Do you love? Note, that if you love, you will forgive.**

So, bringing all these passages together to define forgiveness: Forgiveness is the unconditional, gracious act of not holding personal sins (relationship breaking acts) against a person. It freely and unconditionally cancels a debt of sin, sending it away. It must be unceasingly initiated by the one sinned against. It is a conscious choice to not bring a sin to memory or judgment and to not take into account a wrong suffered.

❖ **Does your definition of forgiveness differ from the Bible's definition?**

It is worth noting that personal forgiveness does not necessarily release the offender from the consequences of his/her sin (see Rom 13:1-4; 1 Pet 2:13-14; Matt 19:9 for examples).

Forgiveness is often viewed as part of what heals relationships between people. However, forgiveness is really centered around the relationship between the offended person and God. Withholding forgiveness is a sin which interrupts your intimate fellowship with God. Holding on to any sin in your heart causes a break in your fellowship with God (Psa 66:18; Eph 4:30).

When we look at the passages on forgiveness, primarily in the gospels, we see something interesting. You are called to forgive "anyone" and "everyone" who has sinned against you (Matt 6:9-15; 18:21-35; Mark 11:24-26; Luke 11:2-4; 17:3-4); regardless if they have repented or not. The reason is clear, unforgiveness is a sin which breaks your fellowship with God. You are called to put off sin and put on righteousness (Eph 4:22-24), therefore, you must put off unforgiveness and put on forgiveness.

❖ **Do you view unforgiveness as a sin?**

You can put on all the relationship building characteristics and bear and forgive one another, but the characteristic that is "beyond all" or "above all (ESV)" could also be translated "upon" all these things. The capstone characteristic is love.

"Love" is the sacrificial commitment of my will to another's needs and best interests regardless of the cost to myself. Love seeks another's highest good, even if it costs a great deal; even if there is no response of love or gratitude. Love is not an impulse from the feelings. It does not always run with the natural inclinations nor does it spend itself only upon those whom we like or deem worthy to receive love. It is an act of the will, so we can choose to love even if we do not feel like doing it.

<sup>11</sup>Beloved, **if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.** <sup>12</sup>No one has seen God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us. (1 John 4:11-12)

<sup>16</sup>“**For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.** (John 3:16)

<sup>4</sup>Love is patient, love is kind *and* is not jealous; love does not brag *and* is not arrogant, <sup>5</sup>does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong *suffered*, <sup>6</sup>does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; <sup>7</sup>bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. (1 Cor 13:4-7)

### ❖ **Whom do you sacrificially love? Whom do you intentionally choose not to love?**

Love is significant in the body life in that it demonstrates tangibly that we belong to Jesus.

<sup>34</sup>“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. <sup>35</sup>“**By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.**” (John 13:34-35)

Love is the “perfect bond of unity” is literally “the uniting bond of perfection”. It is not the same word that is used to speak of unity in the body (Phil 2:2).

<sup>1</sup>Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, <sup>2</sup>make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, **united** in spirit, intent on one purpose. (Phil 2:1-2)

Love brings all the other “put-ons”, bearing, and forgiving together in perfect harmony. Without love the other characteristics can become cold legalism. But love flowing from a walk in the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23) causes all the other characteristics to work perfectly.

### ❖ **Do you walk in love (in the Spirit)?**

## Conclusion

Because we have been united with Christ, the old man has been laid aside and the new self has been put on. Therefore, we should strive to put off the sins that cause division within the body and put on the characteristics that promote unity and harmony. Within the body of Christ, there is no place for making distinctions between people based on physical appearance, cultural background, religions background, gender, etc.

## Additional Study

Read Ephesians 4:20-24. Then take each of these sins below that believers are called to put off, determine what is the righteousness that needs to be put on, and look up Scripture that you can memorize to renew your mind.

Anger, outbursts of anger, wrath, malice, strife, slander, gossip, abusive speech, unwholesome words, lying, stealing, coveting, sexual immorality, lust, jealousy, envying, and drunkenness.