

# Colossians 3:5-6

- Paul has finished his theological portion of the letter that focused on attacking the false philosophies that had crept into the Christian teaching in Colossae. Paul had countered this false teaching with his presentation of True Christology and Soteriology (Christ and salvation).
- How does a Christian “seek the things above” and “set the mind on the things above?”
  - Here the answer involves not seeking and not doing the things of the earth by putting to death and putting away the old, sinful practices and putting on the new virtues.
  - Notice “seeking” and “thinking” about things above does NOT involve visions, emotions and mystical experiences! This was the practice of the vain philosophies in Colossae.
- Four key phrases from early Church catechesis begin the following paragraphs of thought:
  - “put to death” (3:5)
  - “put on” (3:12)
  - “be subject” (3:18)
  - “watch and pray” (4:2)(see more in Romans 6:11-7:6 and Romans 8:11-18)
- Vice/Virtue Lists
  - Vices listed in the NT:
    - **Romans 1:28-31** – “And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless.”
    - **Romans 13:13** – “Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy.”
    - **1 Corinthians 5:9-11** – “I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people— not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler—not even to eat with such a one.”
    - **Ephesians 5:3-4** – “And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving.”
    - **1 Timothy 1:9-11** – “understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine, in accordance with the gospel of the glory of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted.
    - **1 Timothy 6:3-5** – “If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with

godliness, he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words, which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, and constant friction among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain.”

- **1 Peter 4:3** – “so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God. For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry.”
- Virtues listed in the NT:
  - **2 Corinthians 6:4-7** – “but as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: by great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, <sup>5</sup>beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; <sup>6</sup>by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, the Holy Spirit, genuine love; <sup>7</sup>by truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left.”
  - **Galatians 5:22-23** – “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.”
  - **Ephesians 4:2-3** – “with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”
  - **Philippians 4:8** – “Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.”
  - **1 Timothy 3:2-5** – “Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church?”
- The best the OT has to compare to this is:
  - **Proverbs 6:16-19** – “There are six things that the Lord hates, seven that are an abomination to him:  
<sup>17</sup>haughty eyes, a lying tongue,  
and hands that shed innocent blood,  
<sup>18</sup>a heart that devises wicked plans,  
feet that make haste to run to evil,  
<sup>19</sup>a false witness who breathes out lies,  
and one who sows discord among brothers.”
  - **Jeremiah 7:9** – “Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, make offerings to Baal, and go after other gods that you have not known...”
  - **Hosea 4:2** – “there is swearing, lying, murder, stealing, and committing adultery; they break all bounds, and bloodshed follows bloodshed.”
  - The Ten Commandments

- In Greek/Roman culture of the NT times the literature and philosophers had developed vice/virtue lists that may have given form to the NT style seen here in Colossians
- The four cardinal virtues of Hellenism (Greek culture) promoted by the Stoic philosophers were:
  - Wisdom
  - manliness
  - self-control
  - righteousness
- The corresponding vices were also four in number:
  - Folly
  - Cowardice
  - Intemperance
  - Injustice
- It is interesting to note that never are the four Hellenistic vices repeated in the NT lists.
- And, Paul's list of the fruit of the Spirit is unique and not duplicated in secular philosophy of his day.
- It may be that Paul and the NT writers develop their list with help from the Old Testament.
- Consider that Leviticus taught sexual morality and addressed anger, wrath, malice, love in the holiness Code found in Leviticus 17-26.
- The writing and teaching of the Qumran community may also have helped develop the concept of lists.
- If Paul is developing OT ideas with these two lists in Colossians 3:5-10, we can see his use of the Ten Commandments (idolatry) and the Leviticus Holiness Code which basically tells the Colossians to reject the false teaching (idolatry) and its immorality and pursue the character of God, who is their Father, by being holy as he is holy with their new nature (or, new life).
- List One of five vices – Colossians 3:5 – IDOLATRY – sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, greed
- List Two of five vices – Colossians 3:8 - SINS OF THE MOUTH – anger, wrath, malice, slander, obscene talk
  - And, maybe a sixth in 3:9...Do not lie to each other.

Colossians 3:5 – **“Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.”**

1. “Therefore” – (*oun*) Paul builds on the previous words which were to focus and desire Christ and the “things above” (not mystical, magical stuff, but things of God’s nature and God’s ways.)
2. “Put to death” –
  - a. this is based on the previously stated fact that “you have died.” So, now bring your actions in line.
  - b. These things have already been stated to be true:
    - i. We have been delivered from the dominion of darkness (1:13)
    - ii. We participate in Christ’s death (2:11-12)

- iii. God has already disarmed the rulers and authorities. Jesus has already triumphed over them (2:14-15)
  - c. In this scenario we are told in the imperative (mood of command) to “put to death”
  - d. We hear the same attitude in Romans 6:6-7 and 6:11-12, “...therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires.”
- 3. “earthly” – these are the things of the earth, the earthly things or the things that are NOT “things above.”
- 4. The first 5 of the 10 vices listed by Paul deal with sexual sin.
  - a. **sexual immorality**, *porneia* –
    - i. any sex outside of marriage.
    - ii. This is any unrestrained sexual behavior.
    - iii. Associated with idol worship in the OT (Isaiah 47:10; Jer. 3:9; Ezek.23:8; Mic. 1:7)
    - iv. When Paul introduced this concept it was a new virtue to the ancient world, specifically to the Greek/Roman world.
  - b. **impurity**, Phillips paraphrased NT translates this as “dirty-mindedness.”
    - i. In the OT this was manifest in two ways:
      - 1. Ceremonially impure concerning ritual worship;
      - 2. sexual immorality.
    - ii. Paul uses impurity to refer to sexual immorality in:
      - 1. Rom. 1:24 – “
      - 2. 2 Cor. 12:21 – “
      - 3. Gal.5:19 – “
  - c. **passion**, *pathos*, (“lust”)
    - i. here it refers to lust and uncontrolled shameful passions. The focus is again on domination of a person by sexual desires and sexual drive.
    - ii. Paul uses this to refer to the behavior of “the pagans who do not know God in:
      - 1. 1 Thes. 4:5 – “
      - 2. Rom. 1:26 – “
  - d. **evil desire**, *epithumian kaken*
    - i. used to refer to:
      - 1. general sinful desires:
        - a. Romans 6:12 – “
        - b. Romans7:8 – “
        - c. Romans 13:14 – “
        - d. Galatians 5:16 – “
      - 2. illicit sexual desires:
        - a. Romans 1:24 – “
        - b. 1 Thessalonians 4:5 – “
  - e. **greed**, *pleonexian, pleion*,
    - i. A Greek word made by combining two Greek words:
      - 1. The first meaning “more”
      - 2. The second being *echein* meaning “to have”
      - 3. Together they form this word which means “desire to have more”
    - ii. This word naturally leads to the next statement – “which is idolatry” – in this case it could refer to these things:

1. The desire to have more spiritual insight and more revelation than what the Lord gave. Thus, in context, mysticism is idolatry.
2. Or, if it stays with the theme of sexual sin, to want more sex in illicit ways is idolatry.
5. “which is idolatry”
  - a. Anything that interferes with our relationship with God, his Spirit, the life and it’s source of power “is idolatry” because it gets in the way of allowing God’s nature and our new life to flow, grow and show.
6. The lists of vices:
  - a. This first list of five vices ends with a description of these five vices as being identified with “idolatry”
  - b. The second list of six vices seen below also ends with a description of the list of vices. These are identified as sins “from your lips” or “from your mouth.”

**3:6 – “On account of these the wrath of God is coming.”**

1. “On account of these”
2. “the wrath of God” – this was an OT concept Zeph. 1:14-15
3. “is coming” –
  - a. Paul spoke of the wrath of God being revealed in time or in his own day as in Romans 1:18-32, “The wrath of God IS being revealed from heaven.....”
  - b. Paul also spoke of the wrath of God being revealed at the end of time at the final judgment as in Romans 2:5 – “because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God’s wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed.”
  - c. Eschatological Wrath in:
    - i. Romans 5:9 - “Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through him!”
    - ii. 1 Thessalonians 1:10 – “...and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.”
    - iii. Romans 2:7-8
4. In light of Paul having just spoken about the day Christ’s glory is revealed it is fitting that Paul is talking about the pouring out of God’s wrath in the final judgment.

**3:7 – “In these you too once walked, when you were living in them.”**

“once walked” – the old practices and old nature

“when you were living in them.” – the old life and life source

- the once/now contrast as seen in Colossians 1:21; 1:22; 2:13 is presented as in Eph.4 –

See stages of revisionism from Ephesians

Paul’s focus here is to compare their NEW life to their OLD life which has died in Christ

This means they need to live in the NEW way and “put to death” the OLD ways.

**3:8 – “But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth.”**

1. “you must put them all away” – *apothesthe* means “to get rid of” and can be used to mean putting away or taking off clothes. This word, *apothesthe*, is used with the contrasting verb *enduo* to mean “to put on” in:
  - a. Romans 13:12-14, “So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light... not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh.
  - b. Eph. 4:22-25 – “You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body.”
    - i. this second list uses the word *ta panta* translated “all”
    - ii. imperative mood, the mood of command
  
2. These next five vices focus on our relationship with others in society, family, church, etc. The phrase “from your mouth” is interpreted in two basic ways:
  - a. Applying to two sins of the mouth: slander and obscene talk
  - b. Applying to the entire list.
  - c. This means this is a list of sins or manifestations of the sin nature through the mouth: anger, wrath, malice, slander, obscene talk.
  - d. It appears that “from your mouth” modifies this entire list.
  
3. The writing of James in James 3:1-6 focuses on the sins of the mouth manifesting the inner sin nature.
  - a. Anger- *orge* – emotions of hatred, focused on the inner man
  - b. Wrath – *thumos* – an outburst of passion, focused on the outer action (*orge* and *thumos* or anger and wrath are virtually synonyms in the NT)
  - c. Malice – *kakia* – evil attitude that manifests in evil actions towards others. This is a vicious mind that will manifest in slanderous speech
  - d. slander – *blasthemia* – is blasphemy against God (Matt. 12:31; Luke 5:21; John 10:33; Rev. 13:1, 5-6) but is slanderous speech when spoke against others (Matt. 15:19; Mark 7:22; Eph. 4:31; 1 Tim. 6:4). Of course, James says that to speak against men is to speak against God himself in James 3:9.
  - e. obscene talk – *aischrologia* – similar to Ephesians 5:4 where the word *aischrotes*, “obscenity”, is used. But, this would seem to be obscenity in the form of abusive language towards people. Thus, language that breaks unity and prevents peace in society, family and the community of believers.
  
- 3:9 – “**Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices**”
  - a. do not lie – this is the opposite of truth. Since we are a people of Truth there is no place for lying or deception in our new behavior or language. In Romans 1:25 “lie” contrasts with “truth” and in that context “truth” is reality and the “lie” is a false reality, false philosophy, false god, false religion:  
 “They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen.” – Romans 1:25
  - b. “you have put off the old man”
  - c. “with its practices”

**3:10 – “and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.”**

“have put on the new self”

- image of clothing is used where earlier Paul used the image of circumcision

- the verb is aorist tense which indicates this event has already happened. Meaning, their identity has already changed, but their behavior needs to be brought in line with the new reality, new life, new nature, new kingdom, new power, new life source. (Romans 6:1-14; Ephesians 4:17-5:1)

“being renewed in knowledge”

- this is present tense which means this transformation in our lives is occurring now and is an ever occurring process in our lives.

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“after the image of its creator”

**3:11 – “Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.”**