

August 2, 2026

“Vertical Living in a Horizontal World”

Colossians 3:1–14

Pastor Gary Hamrick



Although we exist on the horizontal (earth), the Bible encourages us to have our minds set on the vertical (heaven). Believers in Jesus are called to have an eternal perspective: to “put off” the old, sinful ways and to “put on” the new, godly traits of Christ. Among all the godly traits Paul tells us to “put on,” there is one thing that we are told to do as Christ has done for us: forgive. We will learn about this one trait—among the other lessons of Colossians 3—in today’s study titled, “Vertical Living in a Horizontal World.”

1. **Colossians 3:1–14** – *“[1] If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. [2] Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. [3] For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. [4] When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. [5] Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. [6] Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, [7] in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them. [8] But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. [9] Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, [10] and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, [11] where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all. [12] Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; [13] bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. [14] But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection.”*
2. God’s generosity
 - a. Three things God has done for us:
 - i. We are raised with Christ.
 - ii. We are hidden with God.
 - iii. We will be raised with Him in glory.
3. We are raised with Christ
 - a. **Colossians 3:1a** – *“You were raised with Christ.”*
 - b. Before Christ, we had a dead spirit within a living body.

- c. After Christ, the Spirit of God indwelt and gave new life to the spirit of each Believer.
 - i. The Spirit gives us eternal life.
 - 1. **Ephesians 2:5** – God, *“even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ.”*
- 4. We are hidden with God
 - a. **Colossians 3:3** – *“Your life is hidden with Christ in God.”*
 - b. Believers’ sins are covered by the blood of Jesus.
 - i. **1 John 1:9** – *“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”*
 - ii. **Psalms 32:1** – *“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.”*
 - 1. David had the sacrificial system, which provided temporary atonement.
 - 2. This system foreshadowed a permanent and complete covering.
 - c. God does not revisit our sins.
 - i. **Psalms 103:12** – *“As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.”*
 - 1. Our sins have been nailed to the cross.
 - ii. If you have sinned, repent and be forgiven.
 - iii. **DISCUSS:** How does knowing God does not revisit your past help you come to Him and move forward?
- 5. We will be with Him in glory
 - a. **Colossians 3:4b** – *“You also will appear with Him in glory.”*
 - i. Whether after death or the rapture, we go to be with Jesus, our eternal reward.
 - b. **Romans 8:18** – *“I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”*
 - i. **DISCUSS:** How does looking toward your eternal reward allow you to let go of what this world offers?
- 6. Our response to God’s generosity
 - a. We must remember our eternal hope.
 - i. **Colossians 3:1** – *“Seek those things which are above.”*
 - ii. **Colossians 3:2a** – *“Set your mind on things above.”*
 - b. Having an eternal focus does not require us to disengage from this world, but rather to avoid being snared by the cares of this world.

- i. In *Mere Christianity*, C.S. Lewis said, “Aim at heaven and you will get earth ‘thrown in’; aim at earth and you get neither.”
- ii. **DISCUSS:** Who or what are you aiming at? What steps are you taking to keep moving toward that aim?

7. Spiritual addition and subtraction

- a. The command
 - i. We must put on the new man and put off the old man.
 1. More soberly, Paul tells us there are things we must “*put to death*” (verse 5).
 2. We must learn to say “no” to the old nature and repent from evil and turn to God in any areas where we have said “yes” to it.
- b. Defining the old man
 - i. The old man engages in sinful practices (**Colossians 3:5–9**).
- c. Defining the new man
 - i. The new man engages in godly practices (**Colossians 3:10–14**).

8. Traits to put off

- a. **Colossians 3:5** – “*Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.*”
 - i. Earthly members
 1. The ESV says, “*Put to death therefore what is earthly in you*” (verse 5).
 2. The NIV says, “*Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature*” (verse 5).
 - ii. Fornication
 1. Fornication is sex outside of marriage.
 - iii. Uncleanness
 1. The Greek word used for “*uncleanness*” refers to “immoral living.”
 - iv. Passion
 1. One of the sins is “*passion*,” which is translated from a Greek word that means “impulsive behavior.”
 - v. Covetousness and idolatry
 1. We begin to worship what we long for.
- b. **Colossians 3:6–9** – “[6] *Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, [7] in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them. [8] But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. [9] Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds.*”

- i. Paul said that Believers “*once walked*” in the vices and habits of the old man.
- ii. We must put off anger and wrath, which are not the same vice.
 - 1. Anger comes from the Greek **orgē**, meaning “deep settled resentment.”
 - 2. Wrath comes from the Greek **thymos**, meaning “sudden, explosive flareups” that burn out quickly.
 - 3. **DISCUSS**: How do anger and wrath rob you? How have you learned to let go of anger or wrath?
- iii. Paul said that we are to put off these sinful practices—but this is not an exhaustive list.
 - 1. **DISCUSS**: How does this vice list convict you? How can you replace what you must put off with what you must put on?
- iv. Sin brings shame and a snare, but freedom is found in Jesus.
 - 1. **Romans 7:24–25a** – “[24] *O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? [25] I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!*”

9. Traits to put on

- a. The new man engages in godly practices (**Colossians 3:10–14**).
 - i. Jesus will help us, but it is our responsibility to put off the old and put on the new.
- b. **Colossians 3:10–11** – You “[10] *have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, [11] where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.*”
 - i. God does not show favoritism.
- c. **Colossians 3:12–14** – “[12] *Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; [13] bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. [14] But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection.*”
 - i. Tender mercies
 - 1. “*Tender mercies*” is a Greek word that means “compassion.”
 - ii. Meekness
 - 1. “*Meekness*” is not weakness, but “strength under control.”
 - iii. Longsuffering
 - 1. “*Longsuffering*” is another word for “patience.”
 - iv. **DISCUSS**: What virtue is God helping you practice? How?
- d. The incompatibility of the old life and Jesus

- i. You cannot add Jesus to your old life. You must obey Christ in putting off the old man.
 1. **Mark 2:21** – *“No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; or else the new piece pulls away from the old, and the tear is made worse.”*

10. Forgiveness

- a. Paul emphasized the need to forgive others.
 - i. Jesus exemplifies every virtue, but the only thing in this list we are told to put on “*even as Christ*” did is forgiveness (**Colossians 3:13**).
 - ii. Often, the greatest obstacle to Christian growth is a person harboring unforgiveness in his heart.
 1. **DISCUSS**: Stop and pray that God reveal to you any bitterness and unforgiveness you have towards someone. How can you combat the impulse to hold on rather than let go of offenses? What does it mean to release a person to the Lord?
- b. Understanding forgiveness
 - i. Some say they will forgive but not forget; this is not Biblical.
 1. **Jeremiah 31:34b** – *“I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”*
 2. This principle is not exclusive to the Old Testament. This same verse is quoted twice in the New Testament:
 - a. **Hebrews 8:12** – *“I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.”*
 - b. **Hebrews 10:17** – *“Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.”*
 3. God forgives and forgets—not because He’s forgetful, but because He chooses to not hold our pasts against us.
 - ii. Defining forgiveness
 1. Forgiveness does not mean you condone what someone did.
 2. Forgiveness is entrusting our pain to God and not holding others’ pasts against them.
 3. **DISCUSS**: How does knowing that Christ has paid such a great price to forgive you of every evil thought, word, and deed motivate you to forgive others?
- c. The reason to forgive
 - i. Unforgiveness makes us captive to bitterness.
 1. **DISCUSS**: Have you been taken captive or “*overcome*” by a sin (**Galatians 6:1**, NLT)? How does the Bible tell us we can be free (**Galatians 5:16; James 4:7**)?

- ii. Forgiveness is a decision, not a feeling.
 - 1. Martin Luther King Jr. said, "Forgiveness is not an occasional art; it is a permanent attitude."
- iii. Forgiveness is a command, not a suggestion.
 - 1. **Colossians 3:13b** – *"Even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do."*
 - 2. **Mark 11:25** – *"Whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses."*

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New King James (NKJV)