

“All in the Name of the Lord Jesus” (Colossians 3:1–17)(5.2.21)

Colossians 3:1–17 (NIV84) *Rules for Holy Living*

3 Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. ³ For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

⁵ Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. ⁶ Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. ⁷ You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. ⁸ But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. ⁹ Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices ¹⁰ and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. ¹¹ Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.

¹² Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. ¹³ Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. ¹⁴ And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

¹⁵ Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. ¹⁶ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. ¹⁷ And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

The word of God for the people of God.

LET US PRAY.

Title: **“All in the Name of the Lord Jesus”**

INTRODUCTION:

This chapter has the title over it of “Rules for Holy Living.” We tend to think about rules as restrictive and in one sense, they certainly are. On the surface, when rules are connected with holy living, we have an even stronger sense of them being limiting.

Another way to look at rules is to see them as setting boundaries. Living within these boundaries creates safety. Living within these boundaries allows for freedom. As an illustration, we have a fenced back yard. Our dog, Zacchaeus, has free range within that fenced yard. It keeps him from getting run over by a car. It keeps other unwanted things out of the yard. He is free to run, chase squirrels (though never catching them), collect sticks and rocks, and lay in the sun and dirt.

We do see some of these features in today’s text; but, there is so much more. Look at these instructions expansively. They are not so much about what you are not to do; but rather, they are about the life we are called to live into. To be whom we are called to be; to maximize the life Jesus has made possible for us; we need to embrace these rules for holy living.

BODY:

For example, each of the last three verses deal with gratitude: be thankful, sing with gratitude in your hearts to God; and, giving thanks to God the Father through Jesus. When we look at the world through eyes of gratitude then our perception of who God is, who we are, and our dependence on our heavenly Father properly crystalize. A grateful heart recognizes the greatness of God and our humble place in His world.

This week, I had a moment of self-revelation, in a seemingly innocuous situation. I was getting my breakfast ready and realized there wasn’t enough Shredded Wheat in the Tupperware container. We have large pantry style cabinets and when I looked inside, the new box was about half-way back. I took a couple of things out so I could reach it. But, it was a tall box and it could only be removed by tilting it.

The problem was that there were more things in the way. I started to get annoyed as I am removing boxes and containers from the pantry and putting them on the counter. That is when it hit me. I was getting annoyed because we had so much food in the pantry, that it was inconvenient to take a minute to move things around. So, I repented of my ingratitude and thanked the Lord for His bounty! Having an attitude of gratitude should be one of the easiest guidelines for most Americans. We have so much and yet we lose sight of how blessed we truly are. We get used to our abundance. We take it for granted. Somehow, we come to think we are entitled to our blessings. One barometer of our gratitude is our Church giving. According to Health Research Funding, "The average weekly giving amount per churchgoer is \$17 per week."

Now, let us look at the beginning of this scripture. We are told to set our hearts and our minds on things above. Our motivations for living are to be based on the throne room of God, not on earthly things. Why? Because we have died to the things of this world. Because we have been raised with Christ. We are secured with Christ. In fact, Christ is our life. That is a radical reorientation. Not only that but we are reminded that Jesus is coming back. When Jesus comes again, we will be glorified with Him. Do these seem like empty words to you? Are they too good to be true? If you believe them, can't you see how your outlook on this life will be completely reframed? We are called to live our lives on a higher plane.

Let me share a hymn with you called "Higher Ground" by Johnson Oatman, Jr. & Charles H. Gabriel, that promotes this outlook. Paul tells us that we can learn from psalms, from hymns, spiritual songs. Do you have Christian music stations tuned in on your car radio? Did you know there is Christian music on cable TV?

Higher Ground

1. I'm pressing on the upward way,
New heights I'm gaining every day;
Still praying as I'm onward bound,
"Lord, plant my feet on higher ground."
 - *Refrain:*
Lord, lift me up and let me stand,
By faith, on Heaven's tableland,
A higher plane than I have found;
Lord, plant my feet on higher ground.
2. My heart has no desire to stay
Where doubts arise and fears dismay;
Though some may dwell where those abound,
My prayer, my aim, is higher ground.
 - Refrain
3. I want to live above the world,
Though Satan's darts at me are hurled;
For faith has caught the joyful sound,
The song of saints on higher ground.
 - Refrain
4. I want to scale the utmost height
And catch a gleam of glory bright;
But still I'll pray till heav'n I've found,
"Lord, plant my feet on higher ground."
 - Refrain

Paul explains this holy life to which we are called, to which Jesus made possible. Pastor Maxie Dunnam explains: “Note the emphatic underscoring of accomplished reality. It is a settled fact that we are dead with Christ. There is no question we are risen with Him. We have died to all Christ died to; we are raised to all He was raised to. We now have to live out in practice what has already happened in fact.”

There are still remnants of our old selves that we need to shed. We can no longer walk, we can longer live the way we used to live. Paul uses a clothing example of taking off the old and putting on the new.

Why would we take the dirty smelly rags out of the hamper when instead they should be burned?

When I went to basic training for the Coast Guard, we were gathered into what was called a forming company. There were young men from all over the nation. Some were from the city and some were from the country. There were different colors and creeds. There were different levels of education.

Some had long hair or maybe beards. There were all forms of dress.

When everyone had arrived late in the afternoon, first they fed us. Then we were taken to the uniform shop and issued our new clothing, literally from head to toe. We boxed up all our civilian belongings and mailed them back home. We slept in the same large barracks room. After breakfast, we marched, badly, over to the barber shop where we were all given the same haircuts.

All of this was deliberately designed to create us anew. Our identity was going to be forever impacted.

We still had our personality and individuality, but our value system was supposed to be shifted. Our loyalties would be realigned. Our personal goals and mission would be consistent with the Coast Guard’s. Our behaviors would be changed because our hearts and minds would be changed. We would learn skills appropriate for this new life in the Coast Guard.

Certainly, you can see the parallels to the Christian community. There is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all. It does not matter where we come from or what baggage we have left behind. It does not matter what we look like or the scars we wear. What does matter is that we are “image bearers” of our mutual Creator. It is the commonality of Christ that we share that is important and it binds us together.

Notice that our desired clothing closely resembles the fruit of the Spirit. I challenge you to make a checklist from this scripture with two columns. One column is all the things we need to put to death, to starve until they completely shrivel up. The other column is all the things we need to nourish and grow. When we do that, we are actually manifesting the life of Christ within us.

I have shared this before. Paul tells us Philippians 4:8 (NIV84) how to properly feed our spiritual nature. And, when we do this, we will starve the ungodly tendencies.

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.

Print that scripture. Put it someplace for a frequent reminder. The Deceiver is probably whispering to you right now, “Why bother? That won’t help.” That is a lie. We read in today’s 10th verse: put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. Your mind plays a significant role in developing the embryonic Jesus within you.

Paul parallels this idea in Romans 12:1–2 (NIV84)

12 Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. ² Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but **be transformed by the renewing of your mind (repeat)**. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

This is further supported by today’s 16th verse: Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Our worship music should be instructing and reinforcing our faith journey. It should be coupled with serious Bible reading, study, and meditation. Through these activities and disciplines we learn the language of God so that the Holy Spirit can strongly speak into our lives and communicate with our spirit. The Christian life requires the Holy Spirit.

It is telling and honest that Paul reminds us that we are to bear with each other. The obvious implications are that we are not perfect and every one of us needs to make allowances for our Christian sisters and brothers because they are making allowances for us. Each one of us is on a faith journey, growing into who Jesus has made possible.

Living in community can be challenging. There will be failures and disappointments. We will fall short, sin, and cause pain for each other. Forgive. Be forgiven. Be people of grace. Why? The Lord forgave you. Our God is the God of grace. What is the overcoat of the new self we have put on? Love. Love binds all the Christian virtues together. Love never fails.

Surely, you have heard the expression, "What's in a name?" It comes from that famous love story Romeo and Juliet by William Shakespeare. Juliet bemoans that Romeo bears the last name of her family's sworn enemies. Names are important. There is great power in the name of God. Yahweh starts the 10 Commandments, "I AM the LORD your God." And continues, "You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses His name"

Paul closes this scripture on rules for holy living, "And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus." Jeremiah 14:9 (NIV84)

You are among us, O Lord,
and we bear your name;
do not forsake us!

We bear the name Christians after Jesus the Christ.

Micah 4:5 (NIV84)

⁵ All the nations may walk
in the name of their gods;
we will walk in the name of the Lord
our God for ever and ever.

Today, our nation seems to have many little "g" gods that we are following. Even many people that profess Jesus seem to be stumbling along. Preacher Alexander Maclaren said, "It is impossible to walk firmly if one foot be down in the gutter and the other up on the curbstone." What is to be done? Again, Maclaren:

"The only way to get rid of evils engendered in the constitution of society is to elevate and change the tone of thought and feeling, and then they die of atrophy. Change the climate, and you change the vegetation. Until you do, neither mowing nor uprooting will get rid of the foul growths.

So **the gospel** does with all these lines of demarcation between men. What becomes of the ridges of sand that separate pool from pool at low [tide]? The [high] tide comes up and over them, and makes them all one, gathered into the oneness of the great sea."

Hebrews 13:15 (NIV84) Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that confess his name. Psalm 9:10 (NIV84) Those who know your name will trust in you, for you, Lord, have never forsaken those who seek you.

CONCLUSION:

In small things or in large things, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus. Whether it be pleasant or whether it be distasteful, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus. In public or in private, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus. He tells us, in Matthew 5:16 (NIV84) "...let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven."

The Grand Canyon has an observation deck made of glass. It allows you to experience God's creation in a whole new way. You would not think about going out on it if it didn't have railings. Those railings are the rules for holy living. Because of them, your view and your walk bring you into a different realm.

In a related example, the Sears Tower in Chicago has a glass elevator. As you are drawn towards heaven, your perspective is significantly enlarged. You see things from a higher plane. And, part of the blessing is

in the journey as you rise to the sky. When you can have such an experience, why would you settle for the conventional and mundane and stuffy elevator ride?

Central to this scripture are the three simple words that are easy to overlook: Christ is all. Christ is all.

Christians, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Amen and amen. Let us pray.

Thank you!