

Series: *Christ's Preeminence Demonstrated*

Title: "Right Doctrine Produces Right Living" (Colossians 3:1-4:6)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 8/27/2017

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Dear friends, today we are resuming our study of the book of Colossians. Thus far in this study, we have covered the first two chapters completely, and we have covered the first four verses of chapter 3.

As we begin today, I hope that if you are able to do so you will open your own copy of the Scriptures with me, and turn to Colossians chapter 3, beginning at verse one. I am going to read a larger section than I usually read on a radio broadcast, but I believe we need to begin the next phase of our study of the book of Colossians by looking at the fuller context of the verses in chapter 3 that we are now going to focus upon.

The Next Section of Colossians

So please follow along with me as I read Colossians chapter 3, beginning at verse 1, through chapter 4, verse 6. This is the inspired Word of God:

If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is

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idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them.

But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.

Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; 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. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.

Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatever you do in

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word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.

Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them.

Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord.

Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.

Bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God. And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ. But he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done, and there is no partiality.

Masters, give your bondservants what is just and fair, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.

Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving; meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the Word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains, that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.

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Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time. Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.

Thus ends the reading of God's Word.

Colossians: A Connected Book

Dear friends, we have been studying the book of Colossians together on these broadcasts for several years. Some of you have been with us for all that time. Others of you have joined in this study at various points along the way. And perhaps for some of you, today is the first time that you are joining us in this study. And so we welcome all of you.

In fact, this is broadcast number 180 in this series on Colossians. And we are only now coming to chapter 3, verse 5. When I tell some people how long we have been in this series, I think they wonder how it is possible. In fact, some pastors have asked me the question: "How can you spend so much time in this one book of the Bible?"

Well, there are two parts to my answer. First of all, whenever I preach a series of messages, on any part of the Word of God, I can never promise that I will complete the examination of that particular portion in a fixed and limited number of sermons or broadcasts. Why is that? It is because I believe that a minister of the Word must be led by the Spirit of God in preaching. Far too often in churches today, pastors skim over the surface of the truths of God's Word without showing their people the

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great spiritual riches that are to be found through a deeper understanding of Scripture. Pastors think that people will be bored if they don't move through Scripture quickly. And I fear that some pastors have not gotten hold of these riches for themselves as they prepare to preach. Many Christians are on a spiritual starvation diet because of shallow preaching. I pray that the Lord will keep me from doing that.

Secondly, as we have studied the book of Colossians, our examination of the great truths that we find here has taken us to many other places in the Bible. And that is how it should be. Even though the words were written down by many different individuals over a period of many hundreds of years, the Word of God is one Book. It speaks with one voice. God the Holy Spirit is the Author of every word on every page. He employed human writers to communicate His truth, but as we read in second Timothy chapter 3, "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God..." Literally, in the original language, "all Scripture is God-breathed." God spoke the very words that we have before us through His human instruments who wrote them down.

And so in our study we have seen that all of Scripture is interconnected and interrelated. Dear friends, we sin against the Lord, and we miss the great riches of God's Word, if we do not pay careful attention to the details and the interrelationships. And by the way, we are going to see that in a very striking way in the next two messages of this series. We are going to see that Numbers chapter 25 in the Old Testament has a very direct relationship to the opening words of Colossians chapter 3, verse 5.

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Paul's Inspired Pattern

We also need to remind ourselves of another important fact. We have seen that in the Apostle Paul's letters to the various churches he employs a very consistent approach. Paul always begins by reminding his readers of things that they already know about God, and about Christ, and about His salvation. And then, Paul uses the foundation that he has just laid – the things that his readers already know – as the groundwork to lead his readers into deeper and wider and higher truths.

In the book of Colossians, those truths focus upon the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul mentions Jesus in nearly every one of the 95 verses of this book. Colossians is one continuous exposition and exaltation of the Lord Jesus Christ in all of His manifold offices and aspects, and His marvelous relationship to each and every child of God.

Sound Doctrine: Not Mere Theory

But we have also reminded ourselves many times before that the Apostle Paul does not hold forth all of these wonderful truths about the Lord Jesus Christ merely as theological facts. It is never the Apostle Paul's method to deal with theology in the abstract. He never merely deals with theory. And it is never God the Holy Spirit's way to do that anywhere in Scripture. Dear friend, if you ever deal with Scripture as just so much abstract theology, then you have severely and tragically missed the point of God's Word.

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Now I am acquainted with some people who know a great deal of theology in the abstract. They know things in the Bible at a conceptual and theoretical level. I am sad to say that I have encountered many men who are pastors and church leaders are like that. But quite frankly, these people are in a sad spiritual state. The Word of God is not practical to them. The Word of God does not truly touch their hearts and change their lives. I fear for some of these people; I fear that perhaps they have never truly known what it means to be saved. It is not possible to be truly saved, to have God the Holy Spirit living within you, and to go on thinking that the Word of God is merely a theoretical book.

Perhaps I'm speaking to someone today who is like that. Perhaps you know many facts in the Word of God. Perhaps you can even quote a great deal of Scripture. But dear friend, is that as far it goes with you? Do you not understand that the Bible is the only supernatural Book? Do you not understand that God's commandments and requirements apply to you? God only describes one Book as living and powerful, and the critic of the thoughts and intents of the heart – and that Book is His written Word.

Mere Theory Will Not Save a Soul

You are in great danger if you think that these things may apply to other people, but that you somehow are living on a higher plane, where mere theory is enough, and God's Word doesn't need to touch you.

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Yes indeed, we need sound theology. Christians need sound doctrine. But it does us absolutely no good to just understand these things as abstract facts. James chapter 2 verse 19 tells us that the devils understand these things, dear friends. Even they believe these things at a certain level. Romans chapter 1 tells us that every human being understands the basics of theology, including God's eternal power and Godhead. We understand those things simply by observing the created universe.

But that kind of knowledge, and even that kind of belief, does not save a person from the wrath of God. It does not save a person from eternity in Hell. Theology rooted in Scripture is God's special revelation to us. But theology, sound doctrine, is of absolutely no use at all if it is not practical.

Knowing that you are a sinner in need of salvation, and knowing that Christ died to save sinners, is not enough. You must personally believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. You must personally put your faith in Him and in Him alone, in order to be saved.

And knowing that God requires a changed life is not enough. You must become a Christian in order to really know how to live a life that pleases God. Theology, sound doctrine, must become practical. And that is the work of God the Holy Spirit, indwelling every believer, illuminating His Word for us as we hear it preached, and as we read it and study it for ourselves. You must earnestly seek the work of the Holy Spirit to apply the truths of Scripture to your life.

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Dear friend, if the message of the Word of God has never really gotten inside you and deeply affected you – if your own personal reading and study of the Word of God, or your own hearing of the Word of God preached, has never brought you to the place where you fall on your knees before the holy God of the universe and understand your sin and your wretchedness, and your absolute and utter helplessness apart from the person and work of Jesus Christ – dear friend, if you have never been affected in this way, then I seriously doubt that you are truly saved.

And if you are not in the Word of God for yourself on an ongoing basis, and if the Word of God is not showing you on a continuing basis the kind of a life that you must live in order to be conformed more and more to the image of the Son of God, and if you are not convicted of the sin in your daily life, if you are not continually grieved by it, if you are not continually seeking the sanctifying work of the Word of God and the Spirit of God in your life, to put to death within you the things that displease the holy God of the universe – then dear friend, I seriously doubt that you are truly a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. I truly doubt that God the Holy Spirit is living within you.

A Practical Book

And that is exactly the theme we find here in the book of Colossians. Paul constantly interweaves his exaltation of the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ with practical instruction about how Christians are to think, what they are to

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believe, how they are to live, and how they are to deal with the problems they are confronting in life.

As we take up this series in the book of Colossians once again, I want to remind you of a very high-level outline of this book. I want to do this by reminding you of some of the questions that the Apostle Paul addresses in each chapter of the book.

In Colossians chapter 1, Paul is addressing these questions: *Do you want to be fruitful in every good work?* If you do, then you need to grow in your knowledge of Jesus Christ. *Do you want to be strengthened spiritually?* Then you need to understand more about Jesus. *Do you want to understand the depths and the wonders of your salvation?* Then you need to learn more about what Christ has done for you.

In Colossians chapter 2, the Apostle Paul answers these questions: *Do you want to have God's protection against the deceptions of false teachers?* Then once again the answer is to learn more of Christ, because hidden in Him are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. *Do you want to live before God in a manner that is fitting for a believer?* Then seek to be rooted and built up in Christ. *Do you want to be on your guard against those who say you need more than Christ's work in order to be saved?* Then understand what it means when Colossians chapter 2 verse 10 declares that you are complete in Christ. *Do you want to understand the true nature of Christian liberty?* Then once again, understand who you are in Christ; understand

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the bondage from which Christ has liberated you; and, understand the Lordship of Christ over you.

In Colossians chapter 3, the Holy Spirit through the Apostle Paul addresses these questions: *Do you want to understand how to develop Christlike character? Do you want to understand why God requires that?* Then let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom. *Do you want to have a godly Christian home? Do you want to have right relationships within the home between husband and wife and between parents and children?* Then understand that Christ is the Head of your house.

And at the end of chapter 3 and on into chapter 4, the Holy Spirit through the Apostle Paul addresses these questions: *Do you want to understand what your attitude should be as an employee in the workplace? Do you want to understand why it is important for you to do the best job you possibly can for your employer and for your customers?* Then you need to understand that your ultimate authority in all these relationships, the One to whom you ultimately answer, is the Lord Jesus Christ. *Do you want to understand how and why you should deal fairly with your employees or subordinates in the workplace?* Then understand that you have a Master in Heaven, the Lord Jesus Christ.

And further on in chapter 4, the Holy Spirit through the Apostle Paul addresses these questions: *Do you want to know how to pray for your pastor, for the leaders of your church, for missionaries?* Then pray that God would open the door for them

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to speak the mystery of Christ that God has now revealed. *Do you want to have true fellowship with others in the body of Christ, whether it is people in your local church, others who are believers in Christ within your community, or others who are far away?* Then you need to understand that the focus of true fellowship with other believers is the Lord Jesus Christ and His inspired, infallible, inerrant Word.

Neglect Sound Doctrine at Your Peril

There is great danger for Christians and the church if we abandon the path of right doctrine. When Christians abandon right doctrine, they quickly cease to follow the path of right living. Their witness to a lost and dying world is made null and void. How does that happen? We have many examples in the Word of God:

- Old Testament Israel and Judah repeatedly abandoned the Law of God, and it brought destruction and captivity upon them, and made them a spiritual proverb among the pagan nations.
- In the New Testament, the Galatian church abandoned the path of sound doctrine and soon began following after another gospel, a false gospel that leads souls to Hell. And their lives began to show it.
- The Corinthian church abandoned sound doctrine and soon sank into gross immorality, materialism, and an incipient form of today's Charismatic false teaching.

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Dear friends, we must heed such examples. We ignore them at our great peril. As we move on in Colossians chapter 3, we must now build upon the right doctrine that we have learned in Colossians chapters 1 and 2. And the thing we must build upon that foundation is right living. Jesus Christ – the preeminent Christ, the holy Christ, the all-powerful Christ, the Christ who is the Head of the Church – He himself is the very foundation of right living for the believer. And the Lord willing, we will begin to look at God's specific commandments of right living for the Christian, as we continue this series in our next message.

About the Broadcast

The Scripture-Driven Church airs each week across the United States and around the world. Our goal is to obey Christ's Great Commission: preaching the Gospel to all, and equipping believers in Christ to live every area of life by the sole authority of Scripture, to the glory of our Lord and Savior.

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The prayers of our listeners and supporters are vital to all we do. We thank you for bringing this ministry before the throne of grace. We are also grateful to God for the gifts of individuals and churches that support this work financially.

**May the Lord richly bless your personal study
of His inspired, infallible, inerrant Word.**

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