

Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 235

Colossians 3:1-17

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Episode Summary

Colossians 3 is the pivot point for the epistle. Having tracked through a number of significant theological points relating to Christ's supremacy to the law and angels, Paul turns to practical ramifications. This episode of the podcast focuses on two: (1) the "already but not yet" aspects of the Christian's status and how discipleship is rooted in that status, and (2) the "already but not yet" aspects of Christ's kingdom rule.

Transcript

TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, episode 235, Colossians 3:1-17. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey, Mike, how are you?

MH: Pretty good. Do you want to tell people about the Fantasy Football league, Trey?

TS: No, I'm not doing pretty good, Mike. It's been a rough year. [MH laughs] I'm "0 for..." I haven't won a game yet.

MH: What is it, 0 and 3 today?

TS: Pretty rough, Mike. It's only beginning. Long season, so I'm not worried. My team's competitive. I've just been playing teams that seem to want to score the most points.

MH: Just playing teams that seem to be better.

TS: Unfortunately, that's true. [MH laughs]

MH: I have an unfair advantage. I have Mori's leadership. So, you know.

TS: Yeah. Well, can I borrow him for next year?

MH: Nope. He is an exclusive property.

TS: Well, I'm not worried. Like I said, we're just getting started this year. So plenty of time for me to make some moves, and a comeback. All I've got to do is make the play-offs, Mike. Get that sixth seed, and I'm in, and then anything can happen. [MH laughs] Let the chips fall where they may.

MH: Yep, I hear you. I've been in the same situation before, so I know that it *is* possible. But you've got a long road. So what can we say?

TS: Well, let's talk about something a little bit happier, and that's your *Angels* book, Mike. [MH laughs] How's that been going? It's out, and the reviews are starting to come in.

MH: Yeah, it's upwards of 50 reviews already in a little over a week, which is pretty good. I don't know if that compares to *Unseen Realm*. I don't have that much of a memory. But a lot of good feedback. I've gotten some in email from colleagues that doesn't appear on Amazon, and so far, it's been a pretty enthusiastic response. It's actually helpful, even though I'm not (in the words of one person on Facebook) "telling people how to make angels do stuff for them." [laughs]

TS: If you [listeners] haven't seen Lexham's commercial for your book with Mori in it, it's fantastic. I love it.

MH: Mori is multi-talented. Not only is he a Fantasy Football wizard, but he's also quite good on the screen. [Laughter]

TS: Yeah, that suit looks good on you. I think you need to wear that suit at the next conference.

MH: Right. [laughs] That suit is happily back where it came from—from whatever place they rented that thing from.

TS: [laughs] Well, we also could mention, speaking of conferences, the annual ETS and SBL conferences at the middle and end of November are coming up, and we plan on doing a live Q&A in Denver, tentatively planned for that Friday, November 16th. We haven't confirmed it, but that's what we're trying to target. So if you're in the Denver area, start to mentally plan to come out and see us in Denver in November.

MH: And once we lock that down, I'm sure we'll have other details emerge.

TS: Absolutely. Alright, Mike, we're back into Colossians.

MH: Yes, we are. Colossians 3:1-17. We're basically having a little more than half of the chapter today, and we'll finish it up on the next episode, as well. In this one, the first 17 verses, there are really two trajectories that I want to follow for

this episode. I'll just give them to you ahead of time—sort of a preview here. The two trajectories are the “already, but not yet” aspect of the Christian’s status and how discipleship is rooted in that status; and secondly, the “already, but not yet” status of Christ’s kingdom rule. So based upon what Paul has said in the first two chapters... He’s laid the foundation for drawing out some implications. He’s going to talk about Christian conduct in light of this. So these are the two things that pop out in Colossians 3—these two “already, but not yet” things, these things that are in process but are still moving toward an ultimate conclusion. So the Christian status and how discipleship is rooted in that status, and then the whole idea of Christ’s kingdom rule presently, and moving toward an ultimate climax. So let’s just jump in to chapter 3. I’ll read the first four verses, and then we will get into some thoughts about it. Paul writes:

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

So we’ll stop there at verse 4, and you can already get this flavor of stuff that’s “already,” but then stuff that’s “not yet.” It jumps out in this passage. That’s really the first thing to observe. This paradigm (“already, but not yet”) is in Paul’s mind in a number of places, and in the minds of other biblical writers, too. But it’s kind of obvious here. “You *have* died; your life *is hidden*.” These are present realities. But then Christ, who is your life, when he appears (out there in the future, this “already, but not yet”)...

So the “already” stuff gets expressed even grammatically. There are certain aorist tenses. For those who need to review, the aorist tense in Greek is a snapshot. It views an action as an event, as a completed whole. So it’s not an action continuing. It’s not an action that needs something to be supplemented. It’s not an action in process. Process isn’t even in view. It just views the action as a whole, completed thing. And there are perfect tenses. Perfect is sort of building upon the aorist idea, where you have an event that has occurred in the past, and it has ongoing ramifications. It’s not that the event is in process, it’s that there are certain things that extend from it—ramifications that extend from it—that have implications *beyond* the completed event. So the phrase, “you have been raised with Christ,” it’s an aorist passive. It’s a completed event—completed action—and *passive*, that happened because of an external force. “You have died...” There’s an aorist again. “Your life *has been hidden* with Christ...” That’s a perfect and also a passive. “You have died” is active. So you have two passives and one active, and you have two aorists and one perfect here. So you have this “already” kind of thing going on.

And then there are some “already” in the perfect tense: that phrasing, “your life has been hidden with Christ.” You have ongoing ramifications. And then when we hit verse 4, Paul’s going to be looking to the future—the “already, but not yet” stuff. The “not yet” aspect is when Christ is manifested. This is talking about a future thing. If you are looking in a reverse interlinear or some other kind of interlinear, that’s an aorist passive subjunctive. You say, “Why? Wait a minute. It’s an aorist.” Well, it’s an aorist because Paul’s viewing an event that’s going to happen. When it happens, that’s a whole, completed event. But the subjunctive mood in Greek is something that we really haven’t talked about on the podcast before. The subjunctive is the mood of *unreality*. In grammar, the indicative mood is the mood of reality—things that have already taken place or are already in process. We’ve either watched them happen or are watching them happen. Subjunctive is there’s some kind of contingency. It hasn’t happened yet. There’s some aspect that’s either delaying it or it’s out there, and that’s what we have here. So yeah, when Christ comes back... It’s a reference to the full orb of the event.

And by the way, since it is a reference to the completeness, you can’t really parse this up into stages, like a rapture or the second coming. It’s just a reference to the appearance of Jesus, just generally (broadly). So that’s why we have that tense there. But it’s subjunctive. There’s a contingency. Other stuff has to happen before this happens, that kind of idea. So we get this “out there in the future” kind of thinking. And when that happens, “you will also appear with him.” There’s our future tense, future passive. “You will also be manifested,” would be the way to translate that in passive language. “You will be manifested,” “you will be revealed,” or something like that, “when he comes back.”

So we’ve got “already” elements and we’ve got “not yet” elements, in the first four verses. Now, to unpack this a little bit more, just to try to keep it in simple terms—terms that relate to what he’s going to get into as far as how this should affect your behavior... Ultimately, that’s where Paul’s going. In other words, you have been given new life. Your new life in Christ has already started. You’re a new creation, kind of like 2 Corinthians 5:17. “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation.” So this language of Paul: “you have been raised,” “you have died,” “your life has been hidden”... it’s just another way of saying, “you have been given new life.” “You’re a new creation.” And this life—this new life—means that the old life is over. You have died. So you’ve been given new life. You’re a new creation, and since you’re a new creation the old life is over with. Your destiny (this new life) is not yet completely manifest. You’re going to be experiencing the ramifications of that as time goes on, but ultimately, someday out there when Christ appears, then you will be manifest for who you are in an ultimate sense. What’s going on now is *real* (if you’re a new creation, your life should be changing because of your new status), but your experience is still in this world. You still struggle; you still have sin. These things can’t be avoided because you’re still in this present reality, even though you’ve had a status change. And ultimately, things will go full-circle and you will be manifested for what you really

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are: children of God, members of the Council (some of these other passages that we've talked about in Colossians and the previous series in Hebrews).

Another way of looking at it still is, as certain as Jesus' life and impending appearance is, so your new life and appearance with him will be—and is. We have this “already” idea, and “not yet.” When *he* is manifest, when the validity of his resurrection is manifest to everyone by virtue of his return, then your faith in him will be vindicated because *you* will be manifest with him as what you truly are. He's hinting at glorification here, obviously, and the return of the Lord and believers returning with him—all this kind of stuff that is familiar to us eschatologically in the “not yet” part. But it's rooted in something that's already taken hold—a new status. Now, Moo, in his commentary, I like some of the things he says here. I think they're worth observing. He writes:

This identification reflects the relentless christological focus of Colossians (see, e.g., 1:15–20, 27; 2:2, 3, 19; and the Introduction, 61–63). And it reminds us of Paul's autobiographical remark in Galatians 2:20: “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live [MH: there's your status change], but Christ lives in me [MH: there's your ongoing]. The life I now live in the body [MH: ongoing], I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (cf. also Phil. 1:21). These verses reflect Paul's conviction that the life and destiny of the believer are inextricably bound up with Christ...

Our identification with Christ, now real but hidden [MH: because we have this futuristic idea, the “not yet” idea is in the passage], will one day be manifest. As John puts it, “Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known.

Now let me just break in here. It's interesting that the same lemma that's used in the Colossians 3:4 reference about appearing occurs in that passage. “We are children of God and what we will be has not yet been made known”—not yet been *manifest*. That Greek lemma is the same as the lemma in Colossians 3:4 about being manifest [*phaneroō*].

But we know that when Christ appears [*phaneroō*], we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.” (1 John 3:2)

There you have the “already, but not yet” very plainly. We *are* children of God, but what we *will be* has not yet been manifest. That's exactly what Paul's saying here in Colossians 3.

Because Christ is now “in us,” we have “the hope of glory” (Col. 1:27), and it is that same union, expressed in the other direction—we “in Christ”—that will bring hope to its certain accomplishment. As the text in 1 John suggests, the believer's

appearance “in glory,” or “in a state of glory,” will mean a final transformation into the “image” of Christ (see esp. Rom. 8:29) by means of resurrection (1 Cor. 15:43; cf. also Rom. 8:18; Phil. 3:20–21). In Christ God has restored the definitive and perfect “image of God” that was marred in the fall (Col. 1:15), and believers who are joined with him will share that image.”

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This is about transformation—being conformed to the image of his Son. The whole concept of imaging is familiar to this audience by virtue of our discussion in *Unseen Realm* and in podcast episodes—being God’s representatives. Paul is getting at this same set of thoughts, just in a different verbiage. So what Paul’s talking about here is, first of all, the believer’s destiny, glorification, and everlasting life with Christ because we are united to him, we are in him, we are in the Body of Christ (all these phrases Paul uses). And secondly, he’s talking about this new life, a thing true of us because of union with Christ, which means that our old life is over. We’re dead. Our old life is over.

Paul is going to proceed, then, to tell the Colossians believers that following Jesus—living in conformity to his will—means thinking that way. It means thinking that way about your old life. Look at what Paul says elsewhere (just a few other passages). 2 Corinthians 5:17 (I’ve already alluded to this one):

¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

The old life is dead. You have to think this way moment by moment, day by day. This is actually what scripture means by the renewing of your mind. My old life is over; I’m a new creation. Galatians 2:20:

²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

And then Romans 6:5-6:

⁵ For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. ⁶ We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.

This is why Paul will attach a series of commands to what he’s just said in Colossians 3:1-4. Now, if you actually look at what follows (and we’ll include Colossians, the first four verse in this)... But here are the imperatives. If you have Bible software, you can run a quick search for the imperatives (the imperative is

the mood of command) in Colossians 3. And this is what you get. Here are the imperatives in these first 17 verses:

- Verse 1: “Seek the things that are above.”
- Verse 2: “Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.”
- Verse 5: “Put to death, therefore, what is earthly in you.” And then he lists a whole bunch of struggles of the flesh: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, covetousness (which is idolatry)...
- Verse 8: “But now you must put them all away.” Put away these old things: anger, wrath, malice, slander, obscene talk from your mouth.
- Verse 9: “Do not lie to one another.” He picks that one out as an old behavior. Verse 12: “Put on, then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility...” In other words, do the opposite. You’re a new creation. Set that in your mind. “My old life is over; I’m a new creation.”
- Verse 15: “Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts.” So “let rule” is the command. And here’s another command in the same verse: “Be thankful.”
- And then verse 16: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.”

So we have seek, set your minds, put to death (what’s earthly in you), put away (all these old behavior patterns), don’t lie to one another, put on the new behavior patterns, let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, and let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, and be thankful.

Those are the commands in the first 17 verses. And they extend from this status change. If we can just boil it down, Paul’s talking about a status change. Your old life is gone; you’re a new creation. And that conclusion is based upon the first two chapters of who Jesus is and his exclusive ability to cancel your debt of sin (nail it to the cross). We’ve talked about all this. The fact that he is exalted above all other powers, both good guys and the dark powers that would seek to enslave you, and what he did on the cross—the cross event... Because of all that stuff that we’ve covered in the first two chapters, Paul transitions in chapter 3 to what a lot of people would call “practical stuff.” Personally, I think the first two chapters are practical theology. There’s nothing more practical than biblical theology. If you’re actually thinking theologically, that shouldn’t be a conundrum. It tends to be an excuse to not think about that stuff and just get to the preachy stuff. That’s not where Paul’s head is. Paul draws his conclusions about conduct on the basis of theology—on the basis of what he’s just talked about, doctrinally—and some of that stuff’s pretty heady stuff. We’ve spent a number of weeks in those two chapters.

So these commands really extend from your status change. The commands describe decisions that you have to make now—states of mind that believers need to cultivate. And if that’s done, states of mind, behaviors that will be

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manifest in our lives, in our conduct... These decisions or states of mind reinforce or demonstrate the idea or reality that our old life (the life we lived that led to everlasting death and that would cut us off from everlasting life), that's what the old life could produce: temporary gratification, everlasting death. And so we have a new status, and our state of mind needs to involve all of that. My old life is over; I'm a new creation.

So the commands are actually ways to remind ourselves of the real life that awaits us (what our destiny now is) and how our old life hastened self-destruction and anger and misery to everyone around us in some way. Now, the reverse (the idea of putting on) are decisions that we have to make positively. So all of this is about... Like I said a few minutes ago, what Paul's saying here is unpacking the idea of being renewed in your mind. There are decisions to make, both negatively (don't go back to the old life) and positively (put on these new things) and states of mind. You're doing this, not to earn brownie points with God. You're doing this because you're thankful. There's verse 15—the command to be thankful. You're doing this because you're thankful for what has been done for you. We're not earning brownie points with God. We're not working our way to heaven. We're not hoping our perfection (or near-perfection) does the job. It's not in view at all. The first two chapters are about the preeminence of Christ and the cross event. That's what does it. That's what changes your status. And as we've said many times, God loved you when you had the awful, terrible status. "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." But what changes our status is what Jesus has done on our behalf. And Paul is saying, "Because of all that stuff, verse 1. [laughs]

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.

So he's talking about decisions and a state of mind. And this is ongoing. It's not a once-and-done deal. There's an "already" status that you have, and there's a "not yet" point of manifestation—point of ultimate reality, point of ultimate transformation—that's still out there. So let's talk about his list a little bit, the things to avoid. This is how Paul does this in the chapter. When he gets to verse 4, where we just ended, then he starts going into:

⁵ Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. ⁶ On account of these the wrath of God is coming. ⁷ In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. ⁸ But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. ⁹ Do not lie to one another,

seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices¹⁰ and have put on the new self...

And then he transitions to some more positive things. So let's talk about the negative things that he lists there. Moo points out this. I like the way he puts this. He says:

The lists of sins that we find in vv. 5 and 8 have parallels in a number of other New Testament texts and are sometimes matched by comparable lists of virtues (see v. 12). Scholars have dubbed these, respectively, “vice lists” and “virtue lists” and have argued that they represent a literary “form” that the New Testament writers have borrowed from their environment. Whether this is the case or not, what is more important for the interpretation of Colossians 3 is the degree to which the vices listed here reflect actual problems in the Colossian community. The list of sins in v. 5 focuses on sexual sins, while the one in v. 8 singles out sins relating to interpersonal relationships. The virtue list of v. 12, along with many of the positive exhortations of vv. 13–17, also focuses on community relations.

Regarding the sexual sins that are listed in this section, O'Brien, in his *Word Biblical Commentary*, has a little thought here. He says:

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Five sins are identified with the earthly members: fornication, impurity, lust, evil desire and covetousness in general—a movement from the outward manifestations of sin to the inward cravings of the heart, the acts of immorality and uncleanness to their inner springs.

That's a good observation. And he's right. The list here moves from the stuff that people see to the stuff they don't see—the stuff that's lurking inside. And Paul's saying, “You've got to deal with all of it. You've got to put off these things because you've had a status change and your old life is dead, it's gone.” So you need to be thinking in this mode, thinking in these terms. The reality of your status change needs to run through your head every day and even throughout each day, because that is going to lead you to be on the page you need to be on, thinking about what it is that pleases God and what doesn't please God—what it is that destroys you and other people around you, and what doesn't. This is a mental and a spiritual, and ultimately, a behavioral transformation, based upon the content of the theology Paul has been getting into.

Now, I want to take a little bit of a rabbit trail here. I'm going to track through these terms for sexual sins here. There are a few things that are worth observing here. The first one, in verse 5... “Sexual immorality” is how ESV translates it. It's the Greek term *porneia*. Note that *porneia* is different than adultery. Adultery is a different Greek word altogether. It's *moicheia*. And this *porneia*, just generally speaking, is a term that should not be exclusively restricted to ritualized sex, like

in pagan religious practices, like engaging the temple prostitutes. That certainly is included in it, and if you're married, then it transitions to adultery. But if you're not married, it's still a sin. But it's wider than this ritualistic idea, even though that's a big part of it. And in John 8:41, for instance, we see evidence of this, where the Pharisees accuse Jesus this way. "You are doing the works of your father. You're doing the works your father did," Jesus says. "This is what you guys are doing. You're of your father, the devil." And they said to him, "Well, we were not born of sexual immorality. We have one father, even God." They accuse him of being born out of wedlock. And so it goes back to the Joseph/Mary situation, which has nothing to do with temple prostitution.

So *porneia* extends beyond that. I actually blogged this at one point on my website, because this seems to be a trendy thing, even in evangelicalism now, to restrict *porneia* to temple prostitution. It seems like (I hope not) to legitimize fornication. It's just completely wrong. So I wrote this on my website:

If you read the context of this passage, verse 41 is an accusation levied at Jesus by the Pharisees. What do they mean by tarnishing Jesus this way? They are charging that he was the out-of-wedlock child of Mary and Joseph. It isn't hard to see why they'd do this. Matthew 1:18-25 clearly tells us that Jesus was not Joseph's child, and that Joseph found Mary pregnant before he and Mary had been married (they were only betrothed, engaged). Joseph stayed with Mary for the duration of her pregnancy, even though people knew they were only betrothed. No doubt they were ridiculed and held in contempt. Matt 1:25 also clearly tells us that Joseph had no sexual relations with Mary until after the birth of Jesus — which would also be time enough for the traditional betrothal period to have elapsed.

It runs its course, and everybody can see that she's pregnant.

The charge that Jesus was the child of "fornication" (*porneia*) very clearly tells us that *porneia* refers to sexual intercourse before marriage. That was the whole point of the Pharisee's jibe: Jesus was illicit because Joseph and Mary had a sexual relationship before it was proper.

That's their dig at him.

Next term in the list is impurity (*akatharsia*) which refers to any kind of moral corruption. It's applied to sexual sins. Moo has a footnote to legitimize that—to validate that—that *akatharsia* is paired with *porneia* in other passages (2 Corinthians 12:21, Galatians 5:19, Ephesians 5:3, Revelation 17:4). It's very clear that this is also sexual in its orientation.

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Passion, the next term (*pathos* in Greek) is lust. It is often in a sexual context—not exclusively, but it does show up (Romans 1:26, 1 Thessalonians 4:5).

“Evil desire,” generally (James 1:14-15). This is the same term, but in other passages it can very clearly have a sexual flavor to it.

“Covetousness, which is idolatry.” It’s an interesting description. Why would covetousness be described this way? The Greek term is *pleonexia* (to verbalize that: “to want more”)—covetousness or greed. Moo says:

Greed (Gk. *pleonexia*), the last item in the list, likewise usually has the general sense of an “inappropriate desire for more,” but this general sense would, of course, include the uncontrolled desire for more and greater sexual experiences

It’s tacked on to the end of these other words that have a sexual orientation.

Philo claimed that the first commandment prohibits “money-lovers” (*On the Special Laws* 1.23). And the New Testament frequently highlights the love of material possessions as offering a particularly enticing and entrapping alternative to the love of God (e.g., Matt. 6:25–34; 1 Tim. 6:17; Heb. 13:5).

What Moo is going to do here is he’s going to transition into talking about why there is an association with idolatry. What is it about one thing more—whatever the object of greed is, whether it’s sex or money or something else... What’s the connection with idolatry? And he’s saying that Philo and other writers make this connection, too, so this isn’t unusual for the New Testament. Back to Moo. He says:

Ephesians, as usual, offers the closest parallel: “For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a person is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God” (5:5).

The word used in the Ephesians text (*eidōlōlatrēs*, “idolater”) occurs along with “immoral person” (*pornos*) and “greedy person” (*pleonektēs*) in 1 Corinthians 5:10, 11 and with “immoral person” in 1 Corinthians 6:9 and Revelation 21:8; 22:15. Clearly, then, we are dealing with a customary cluster of terms and ideas. Jewish writers habitually traced the various sins of the Gentiles back to the root problem of idolatry; and especially was this true of sexual sins. Putting some other “god” in the place of the true God of the Bible leads to the panoply of sexual sins and perversions that characterized the Gentile world. Paul reflects this tradition here: sexual sins arise because people have an uncontrolled desire for more and more “experiences” and “pleasures”; and such a desire is nothing less than a form of idolatry.

I think that summarizes the contents pretty well. That’s all in verse 5. When you get to verse 8, there’s another list of sins. Paul says, “Now you must put them all away.” Here’s another list to put away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and

obscene talk from your mouth. As commentators have pointed out (and I referenced a couple), the first list is sexual in orientation and the second list is really about interpersonal relationships. To quote Moo again here... I like the way he puts this as well:

Determining the exact referents of the five items that follow depends, first, on deciding just what the concluding prepositional phrase, *from your lips*, modifies.

ESV has, "But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your lips"—from your mouth. So Moo says the TNIV prefers "lips" to "mouth." Translations disagree. The word there obviously is used to connote the speaking function of the mouth. If it modifies the verb (to put away) then all the sins listed here will have to be in some sense sins of speech. "Put away from your mouth all these things: anger wrath, malice, etc." Now, Moo's actually going to object to that.

But giving this extended meaning to these words does not have good lexical support.

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What he's basically saying is, "Look, depending on how you take the grammar, if 'from your mouth' modifies all of these terms (anger, wrath, malice, slander, obscene talk)..." Obscene talk is obvious. Slander's obvious. What about anger, wrath, and malice? If they all modify 'from your mouth' then we have to define these in terms of speech to know what specific sins Paul is talking about. But Moo's saying, "That's probably not that defensible." And you can see why. Because anger, rage, and malice can be expressed in other ways. I mean, you can punch somebody in the face. That demonstrates anger. You don't have to say a word. So back to Moo. He says:

More likely, then, *from your lips* should be attached to the end of the list as a way of reinforcing the last two sins.

(Which are kind of obvious: slander and obscene talk, to use the ESV translation.)

On either reading of the syntax, Paul's concern is especially that Christians would avoid unnecessarily critical and abusive speech.

It means at least that much, but with the first three, Paul's probably not restricting it to just speech. Anger, wrath, and malice... Paul would know that they can be expressed in other ways, and none of them should be part of a Christian's life. What about this "obscene talk" item? Because I know people are going to have questions, and I have actually gotten emails about this, too. "Should Christians swear?" I guess it's a reasonable question to ask. I just grew up in a Christian environment where you just didn't do that. I don't do it because I grew up with so

much of it, it just turned me off. But people have this question. So what about the term? Moo writes this:

The Greek word behind *filthy language* (*aischrologia*; literally, “shameful words”) is rare, occurring only here in biblical Greek. It seems to have the general sense of “obscene language,” and probably, in combination with *slander*, refers to the use of coarse language when defaming another person.

You could go out to a lexicon like BDAG for that (Liddell, Scott). You’re going to see this term used in a defamatory sense. So it doesn’t quite overlap with what we would think of as crude language or scatological language. Scatological is in reference to body parts and body functions. It doesn’t clearly have a one-to-one overlap with that kind of stuff. It actually most likely refers to using language that is defamatory in some way, or pejorative. Now, you can certainly use those kinds of words in defamatory and pejorative ways, and that would be what Paul is targeting. But it seems that that’s actually what’s more in view with this vocabulary choice, and not just being crude. Now, that’s not an endorsement of being crude, obviously. But for the sake of what Paul would have had in his head, this would be language... The whole list, really, is going to be included this thought. What Paul is really angling for is tearing somebody down. And there are a variety of ways you can do that. You can do that delicately; you can do it crudely. Paul is opposed to both. This is not what Christians do. To defame and tear down and ridicule—all these sorts of things—this is what Paul is concerned with, not whether you might have an expletive that refers to a body part or something like that. If it’s aimed at someone in a defamatory way, well, that’s really what’s in view here in Paul’s head. It’s not an endorsement of the other, but in terms of vocabulary, what he’s targeting is the treatment of other people. Now, on the positive side, Paul gets into this when you hit verse 12. Paul writes:

¹²Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, ¹³bearing 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. ¹⁴And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. ¹⁵And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. ¹⁶Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly [MH: which is not technically the Bible, by the way, because Jesus didn’t write anything, but it really refers to what Jesus taught, the record of Jesus’ teaching], teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. ¹⁷And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

40:00

And that's the section through verse 17 that we're going to cover today. So there's a lot in there. A number of these verses could be commented on, but we're going to be selective here for the sake of the episode. Verse 16, "Let the word of Christ (let Jesus' teachings)..." And that includes his example, as well, not just his verbal teachings. "Let what Jesus taught, either by word or example, dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God."

Now, the imperative there is obviously "let dwell." This should be something that you internalize and that you let influence your thinking. We're talking about the renewing of the mind—mental transformation—here, because that's going to influence your outward conduct. So being renewed in the mind—that's what "let dwell" is getting at. And then he adds these participles. So what you should let dwell (that's the imperative) inside (in your thoughts) is what Jesus taught (either word or deed, his teaching). And then you have these three participles that extend from the imperative or that are connected to the imperative: teaching, admonishing, and singing. These three participles explain *how* we let Jesus' teaching and example dwell in us richly. We do that through teaching, we do that through admonishing one another, and we can also do that with music. It helps us internalize things. And obviously, this is a verse that people are familiar with.

In all the debates over church music (should we do this, should we not do that) and both the endorsement and the critique of what happens in church worship... I think you can reduce the passage to a fairly simple question, but it's also a profound question, and that is: "Does your church worship (in other words, does what you sing—the music performed) actually teach and admonish?" There's no participate in here for "make you feel good" or even, "does it encourage you or uplift you?" Now, the point is not that it's wrong to have music that encourages or uplifts, but the point is that it *is* scripturally misguided to *not* have music that teaches. You *need* music that has some content to teach you. It teaches you the content of Jesus' teachings. It's consistent with the content of Jesus' teachings, and it also exhorts you to follow his example. I'll be the first one to say, I've heard a lot of music in church, and some of it immediately comes to mind that hits those targets really well. And there are others that don't hit them at all. It's really about creating a spiritual buzz. Okay, I understand that that can be important. That can play a role in our motivation and pick us up and be an encouragement, but if that's *all* you're doing, then you are missing the mark of what Paul describes here—that helps you internalize what needs to be internalized. It's a simple point, but it's also a pretty important point.

So that, in a nutshell, is the first part of our episode, where Paul is talking about the "already, but not yet" in terms of your personal status as a believer. You're already dead. Your old life is over. You've had a change of status, and now, in the here and now, we need to be transformed in our minds. He's going through all this... We need to set aside the old life; we need to be transformed in our

minds. Here are some ways to do it. Here are some things to avoid. Because we have a destiny, and at some point who we are is going to be manifest. The validity of what we believe is going to be displayed, is going to be manifest, so we need to keep all these things in mind.

The second thing I want to hit on in the episode is the “already, but not yet” status of Christ’s kingdom rule. Now, I have flirted with this topic on a couple of other episodes, but I decided I’m going to take this episode as a place where this lives now so that we can easily reference it to people who ask, or people can pass it on, and say, “Here’s where Mike talked about X-Y-Z topic in a little more detail.” And this whole idea of Christ’s kingdom rule (and this is tied to the defeat of the principalities and powers)... We’ve flirted with this topic already in a couple of episodes and outside the series in Colossians and other episodes, but this will be a place where you can camp a little bit on the topic. So back to the beginning of our passage, Colossians 3:1:

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.

45:00

Okay, he’s on a throne, so he’s got to be ruling something. You don’t sit on thrones and not rule things. This is imagery that speaks of rulership. And how do we parse this? Well, I want to zero in on just one aspect of Colossians 3:1—this reference to “seated at the right hand of God.” Just that simple phrase. That phrasing shows up in other places in the New Testament. Some of them are Pauline; some of them are other writers. And it’s interesting, when you track on that one phrase, where you wind up. I’m just going to read through some of these passages. Ephesians 1:15-23. This is Paul. Paul writes:

¹⁵ For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, ¹⁶ I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, ¹⁷ that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, ¹⁸ having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹ and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might ²⁰ that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹ far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. ²² And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, ²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

So you get an “already, but not yet” and along with that, there is the supremacy—the rulership—of Christ above every ruler, authority, power, and dominion. This is Pauline terminology for the powers of darkness. Christ is superior to them. Their authority that they had over the Gentile nations has now been nullified and delegitimized. They have every right, and God has every expectation, that they should be brought back into the fold. 1 Peter 3:18-22, we’re looking for the same phrase: “right hand.”

¹⁸ For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, ¹⁹ in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, ²⁰ because they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water. ²¹ Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, ²² who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.

Just think of the Great Commission. “Go ye therefore and teach all nations...” That’s not where the Great Commission starts. That’s usually how it’s quoted. That’s actually not how the Great Commission starts. It starts in verse 18. It’s not just Matthew 28:19-20. It’s Matthew 28:18-20.

¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me...

50:00

Christ is ruling something, and the fact that he is seated at the right hand of God both tells us that the kingdom rule has begun, the power... the “authority” is a better way to put it. The authority of the gods of the nations from the Old Testament who are enslaving the Gentile, their authority has been nullified—delegitimized. And what the disciples are supposed to do is make disciples from those nations. Make them members of the family of God, because as the kingdom of God increases, the kingdom of darkness diminishes. That, in a nutshell, is spiritual warfare. It’s not praying some incantation or yelling at a demon. This is how spiritual warfare is usually taught. Like I’m going to assume the authority to pray something really loud, and then the demons are going to get scared and go away. What spiritual warfare actually is is the Great Commission. That’s what it is: growing one kingdom and diminishing another. Because you have the authority (because you’re in Christ) on earth to go into hostile territory and say, “It is time to come home.” The spiritual authority that has been over you, that has enslaved you—yes, it’s an outgrowth of a punishment that happened a

long time ago, and Israel failed in doing their job to be a kingdom of priests and to bring you back into the fold through them (through the single people of God in the Old Testament context). They failed miserably, but at least God produced the Messiah through the seed of Abraham, who has now delegitimized their authority. And they're going to fight. They're going to fight because it's their turf. And so what we do is we remember that all power is given to Jesus in heaven and on earth. Go, therefore, and make disciples from every nation, because as that kingdom increases, the other one diminishes. And this is a war of attrition. The gates of hell will not be able to withstand it. The gates of hell is the one taking the beating, not the Church. This is all content from *Unseen Realm*. Let's look at another passage. Romans 8:31-34:

³¹ What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? ³³ Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.

This harkens back to language in Colossians and in Hebrews that the connection of the resurrection and the ascension with the completion (and therefore the completed status) of the believers' salvation—the believers' inclusion in the family of God—is all linked to the program of Christ: the event of the cross, the resurrection, and the ascension. Because of those three things, that's why we have the forgiveness of sins, that's why we have eternal life. Our works do not contribute to this. They don't supplement it. It's not based on anything we do; it's based on something that was done *for* us. We beat this horse a lot in the book of Hebrews. We've been beating it in Colossians. There we have it in Romans again. It's the one who's at the right hand of God saying, "yep, they're mine" who is interceding for us. He's not sitting there saying, "Oh, man. I just wish they'd spend a few more minutes in church..." No, it has nothing to do with performance. It has everything to do with believing in the performance of someone else, i.e., Jesus. Acts 2. This is part of Peter's sermon.

²⁹ "Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. ³⁰ Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, ³¹ he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. ³² This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. ³³ Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this

that you yourselves are seeing and hearing. ³⁴ For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says,

““The Lord said to my Lord,

“Sit at my right hand,

³⁵ until I make your enemies your footstool.””

What Peter's saying is, “You realize that since the Spirit has come...” (and there they are at Pentecost and everybody has seen this happen) “that's proof of the resurrection and the ascension.” It's proof of that, because Jesus taught that “only after I do these things, only after I return to the Father will the Spirit come.” These things are just tied together. Hebrews 1... we hit this a lot in our previous series:

Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets,² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. ³ He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high...

55:00

So he can't sit there until he's made purification for sins, and if he's sitting down and the Spirit comes, then you can be guaranteed—you can be sure—that you have been forgiven—that purification has been made for your sins. And by the way, he became much superior to angels—as superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs. It seems clear that at the ascension event Christ returned to the place of rulership over God's celestial family. The spiritual kingdom, as it were, and the earthly counterpart of that is yet to come, so we have this “already, but not yet” rulership going on—another indication of how the supernatural world of the heavenly host is analogous to or a template for the world of humanity. The heavenly host is an analogy to the way God looks at us as his earthly family. If you've read *Supernatural*, if you've read *Unseen Realm*, if you've heard interviews of me about any of those books, that's the constant reference point. Why is angelology (if I can use that term) important? Because the way God looks at his heavenly family and his relationship to his heavenly family is analogous (it's a template for) the way God looks at us. These points of correlation are drawn intentionally, and they have significant theological ramifications. Acts 2:33, I'll just read it again.

³³ Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing.

So the Spirit... Think back. This is *Unseen Realm* content. If you're not familiar with *Unseen Realm*, you've got to go to the podcast website, watch the videos for the basic worldview—the Divine Council worldview, Deuteronomy 32 worldview. That's why they're there. But the Spirit who *is* but *isn't* Jesus, just as Jesus is but isn't God the Father—he *is* God, but he's not the Father. The Spirit is the Spirit, but he's also equated with Jesus in certain passages. Paul says twice, "The Lord, who is the Spirit..." Spirit of Christ/Spirit of God. "Spirit of Jesus" and "Spirit of God" are interchanged in the New Testament. So the Spirit, who is but isn't Jesus, is sent because Jesus conquered death (that's the Genesis 3 solution). He is everywhere present in believers, which means he is there to combat the dominion of sin—that's the Genesis 6 solution.

Remember, there are *three* reasons why the world is a mess, not just one. It's not just the Fall. It's three. Genesis 3 rebellion, Genesis 6:1-4 rebellion, and then what happens at Babel. And so the third of these is the Spirit is the agent who launched the reclamation of the nations. That's the solution for Babel, and that happens in Acts 2. So Acts 2 is the validation (because the Spirit obviously showed up) of the resurrection and the ascension, because Jesus said, "This isn't going to happen until these other things happen. So when you see this happen, you can be sure that I am at the right hand of God. I have been raised from the dead. Your sins are forgiven. You're going to have eternal life. You're in my family now." All this stuff. And the Spirit is the trigger to all of this. The Spirit comes and shows that Jesus *did* conquer death. The Spirit comes as proof that he rose again and ascended to the Father, even though lots of people had seen him in post-resurrection appearances and all that. But this is another way to look at it. And when the Spirit comes, he indwells believers, and that's the retardation—the inhibition—of depravity. We now have something inside of us that works against depravity, which was the big point of fallout from the Genesis 6 episode. And the Spirit is also here to indwell and empower people at Pentecost who go back to the nations and become these little cell groups to plant churches and to tell people about the Messiah. Because there's this guy, Paul, that's going to come down the road, and a lot of other believers, too, that are going to go out from here in Jerusalem into those nations and reclaim them. All of these things work together. And they contribute to the whole question of the importance of the incarnation, to the whole plan of salvation. It wasn't for the angels that Jesus did this. It was for humans. It was for humanity. And Hebrews 1:13:

¹³ **And to which of the angels has he ever said,
"Sit at my right hand
until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet"?**

Again, it's this "right hand" language. It's only to the Son that he says that, because when he's seated at the right hand of God he is superior to everything

else in heaven, except the Father. So all of these ideas—these disparate threads—they all come together. You just have to see the lay of the land for that.

1:00:00

So to wrap up this episode, there are two “already, but not yet” things going on in these 17 verses. One is the status of the believer, and the other is the idea of rulership with Christ. Now those two things are connected (I think you can already tell that) but I wanted to present them as two separate “already, but not yet” themes that are going on in this chapter. “Already, but not yet” isn’t just about eschatology. It is about eschatology, but it’s about other things, too. This is a paradigm in scripture—a mode of thinking—that you’re going to see, theologically, in a number of places attached to a number of ideas—a number of aspects of theology. And if I can give a little shameless plug here, at the end of this, a lot of this stuff we went through today I talk about in the *Angels* book, and have talked about in the forthcoming (whenever that is) *Demons* book. But this is important stuff. It’s a good drill-down. If you’re listening to the podcast, and you haven’t read *Supernatural*, or you haven’t read *Unseen Realm*, you’re a bit handicapped here. But you can get caught up and listen to it again. These are important places to drill down within a worldview. If you have ever suspected that, “Boy, I have lots of Bible stuff floating around in my head, but I don’t know how to connect these things. They must be connected in some way.” Well, you’re intuition is correct. So that’s one of the things we try to do here on the podcast. It’s one of the things I try to do in what I write. The places that do teach people... The churches that do spend time teaching people do a good job of giving them data, but it’s an altogether different thing to connect the points of data (to connect the dots) so hopefully you get a little sense of that here in this episode. The takeaway is “already, but not yet” operating on two different levels in Colossians 3:1-17.

TS: Alright, Mike. Well, when can we get more *Unseen Realm* material? [MH laughs] When is the second one, *Unseen Realm 2*, coming out? What do I have to do to get you to write...

MH: That’s not even a twinkle in my eye right now... [laughs]

TS: But you *can* get all that content on www.MoreUnseenRealm.com.

MH: Yeah, that takes you a little bit beyond *Unseen Realm*. But there’s a tab in MoreUnseenRealm.com that says “What’s Next?” and it has a *long* grocery list [laughs] up top.

TS: We need to start chipping away at...

MH: There’s a lot more to be added, but again, everything I produce in some way is going to drill down into the first one. You’ve got to get the first one. You’ve got to get *Unseen Realm* and get the lay of the land. And if you have this sneaking suspicion that there must be something that connects all the stuff in the Bible,

your suspicion is correct. And that's what I try to do in the book: give you the lay of the land and connect the dots so that you have the framework in your head.

TS: Alright. Well, there you go. Go get his new *Angels* book, too, while you're at it. And leave a review too, please. We appreciate that. Alright, Mike, well, we wrap up chapter 3 next week, and we're looking forward to that. And with that, Mike, I just want to thank everybody for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God Bless.