

### Colossians 3:5-11

Paul has finished his theological portion of the letter that focused on attacking the false philosophies that had crept into the Christian teaching in Colossae and his presentation of True Christology and Soteriology (Christ and salvation)

How does a Christian “seek the things above” and “set the mind on the things above? Here the answer involves not seeking and doing the things of the earth by *putting to death* and *putting away* the old, sinful practices and *putting on* the new virtues. Notice seeking and thinking about things above does NOT involve visions, emotions and mystical experiences! This was the practice of the vain philosophies in Colossae.

Four key phrases from early Church catechesis begin the following paragraphs of thought:

- “put to death” (3:5)
- “put on” (3:12)
- “be subject” (3:18)
- “watch and pray” (4:2)

(Romans 6:11-7:6; Romans 8:11-18)

### 3:5 –

“Put to death”

“earthly”

Five of the eleven vices (5 of first 5) that Paul lists deal with sexual sin.

- a) sexual immorality, **porneia**, any sex outside of marriage. Associated with idol worship in the OT (Isaiah 47:10; Jer. 3:9; Ezek.23:8; Mic. 1:7;
- b) impurity, in the OT this was manifest in two ways: 1) Ceremonially impure concerning ritual worship; 2) sexual immorality. Paul uses impurity to refer to sexual immorality in Rom. 1:24; 2 Cor. 12:21; Gal.5:19
- c) passion, **pathos**, here it refers to lust and uncontrolled shameful passions. Paul uses this to refer to the behavior of “the pagans who do not know God in 1 Thes. 4:5 and Rom. 1:26.
- d) evil desire, epithumian kaken, used to refer to: 1) general sinful desires (Rom. 6:12; 7:8; 13:14; Gal. 5:16) ; 2) illicit sexual desires (Rom. 1:24; 1 Thes. 4:5)
- e) greed, **pleonexian**, **pleion**= “more” and **echein**= “to have”, desire to have more. This could lead to the next statement – “which is idolatry” – in this case to have more spiritual insight and more revelation than what the Lord gave. Thus, in context, mysticism is idolatry. Or, if it stays with the theme of sexual sin, to want more sex in illicit ways is idolatry.

... “which is idolatry”, anything that interferes with our relationship with God, his Spirit, the life and it’s source of power “is idolatry” because it gets in the way of allowing God’s nature and our new life to flow, grow and show.  
- this first list of six vices ends with a description for the 6<sup>th</sup> vice just as the second list of six also ends with a description of the 6<sup>th</sup> (11<sup>th</sup>) vice

### 3:6 –

“On account of these”

“the wrath of God” – this was an OT concept Zeph. 1:14-15

“is coming”

### 3:7 –

“once walked”

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

“when you were living in them.”

### 3:8 –

“you must put them all away”

- this second list uses the word **ta panta** translated “all”
- imperative mood, the mood of command

These next five vices focus on our relationship with others in society, family, church, etc.

- f) anger

- g) wrath
- h) malice
- i) slander – (spoken language vice #1)
- j) obscene talk - (spoken language vice #2)

**3:9 –**

- k) do not lie - (spoken language vice #3)

“you have put off the old man”

“with its practices”

**3:10 –**

“have put on the new self”

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

“being renewed in knowledge”

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

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“after the image of its creator”

**3:11 –**

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Vice/Virtue Lists

- Vices listed in the NT: Rom. 1:25-31; 13:13; 1 Cor. 5:10-11; Eph. 5:3-4; 1 Tim. 1:9-10; 6:4-5; 1 Pet.4:3
- Virtues listed in the NT: 2 Cor. 6:6-7; Gal. 5:22-23; Eph. 4:2-3; Phil. 4:8; 1 Tim. 3:2
- The best the OT has to compare to this is Prov. 6:17-19; Jer. 7:9; Hosea 4:2 and even the Ten Commandments
- In Greek/Roman culture of the NT times the literature and philosophers had developed vice/virtue lists that may have given form to the NT style seen here in Colossians
- The four cardinal virtues of Hellenism promoted by the stoic philosophers were: wisdom, manliness, self-control, righteousness.
- The corresponding vices were also four in number: folly, cowardice, intemperance, injustice
- But, it is interesting to note that never are the four Hellenistic vices repeated in the NT lists.
- And, Paul’s list of the fruit of the Spirit is unique and not duplicated in secular philosophy of his day.
- It may be that Paul and the NT writers develop their list with help from the Old Testament.
- Consider that Leviticus taught sexual morality and addressed anger, wrath, malice, love in the holiness Code found in Leviticus 17-26.
- The writing and teaching of the Qumran community may also have helped develop the concept of lists.
- If Paul is developing OT ideas with these two lists in Colossians 3:5-10, we can see his use of the Ten Commandments (idolatry) and the Leviticus Holiness Code which basically tells the Colossians to reject the false teaching (idolatry) and its immorality and pursue the character of God, who is their Father, by being holy as he is holy with their new nature (or, new life).