

Colossians ch 3 Vs 1-2

Proper Priorities

Vs1-2

Jesus' last command to the church was, *“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”* and So we (as the church) have both the privilege and the sobering responsibility to proclaim the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ (even to the uttermost parts of the earth.)

But simultaneously, and you might say paradoxically, before Christians can reach the world, they 1st have to leave it. We are to be in the world, but not of the world. Paul tells us in his letter to the Galatians that Christ, *“gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age.”* and So even though physically we live here on this earth, spiritually our citizenship lies in heaven, and as such our lives need to reflect that reality, when I go somewhere on a missions trip, or to a conference, I stand to represent you as well, I'm really sent by you and there's a very real part of me that represents you to those whom I'm speaking to or working with or ministering to. Now, I would think that you would that I would reflect this ministry in a fashion that is true to it's nature, the love for God that you have, and desire to reach out and minister to others in His name. Well, as citizens of heaven it's exactly the same; you're an ambassador of Christ here on this earth. and Jesus would, that you would reflect Him accurately, and His heart for the people you encounter, and He doesn't leave us as orphans, He supplies all the resources necessary to do just that.

Now as Paul approaches the latter ½ of his epistle, as is typical for him, he turns from positional to practical, from doctrine, to duty and how our belief determines our behavior. Because it doesn't do much good if Christians *declare* the truth, *defend* the truth, if they don't *demonstrate* it in their lives. How many professed believers today; are able to proclaim the truth, and even protect those truths through their defense of the gospel, and they'll do so readily as soon as someone starts to slam on the Lord. But their personal lives only deny the doctrines they profess to love, Paul put it like this (writing to Titus), *“They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work.”*

Now in that day with the worship of idols and all, there was little to no connection between beliefs and behavior, you could do whatever you wanted as long as you bowed the knee to your god and brought your sacrifice to his temple. But the Holy Spirit through the apostle Paul was bringing some radical revelations to these pagans, because what we believe has a definite connection to how we behave. Because faith in Christ brings you into union with Christ; and if you're sharing in His life, then you're to follow His example, or as John put it in 1 John 2:6, *“He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.”*

Maybe we'll talk a little bit more about what that means later, but if the Spirit of God dwells in you, then He'll be working holiness in your life, not compromise, and I'm not saying that the flesh isn't a present foe that we deal with until the day we see God face to face, but are we growing in godliness or worldliness?

In ch 3 Paul begins to connect doctrine with duty. He's demonstrated the nature of Christ, shown Him as a member of the Trinity, clearly demonstrated the fact that Jesus is God, and that at no time did He ever lower Himself in deity, that He was present before the worlds existed, the ever present I am, that He is preeminent in creation being Head over it. He's preeminent in redemption, being our Redeemer; He's preeminent in the church having given Himself for the church.

Now Paul is saying we need to reach a little deeper still because He needs to be preeminent in our lives, in the day to day grind and practical matters of life. and He begins with the positive, things we are to be busy about as believers.

Vs1

Now, when we went over vs 12 of ch 2 we spoke about this reality, our baptism into Christ, or our identification with Christ's death and resurrection and how as far as God is concerned when Christ died I died, and when Christ was raised, I was raised with Him @ that moment into the newness of life, through faith in the working of God, what God was doing on my behalf in Christ.

So Paul is drawing from this same principal here in vs 1 of ch 3 and it ties together with vs 20 of ch 2 and we'll see that contrast. and This word "if" is rhetorical, it's answer obviously implied by the phrasing of the question, and it would've been better translated for you and me to say, "since." "*Since you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.*" The right hand speaking of that place of power, and prominence, now I want you to notice this contrast and see how the scriptures tie together here. Look at vs 20 of ch 2 (read).

Now, vs 21-23 are parenthetical, they're the information or exposition, Paul's expounding on vs 20, they're some of the basic principals of the world that you've died to. and So he's saying, "Since you died with Christ (through identification with Him) from the basic principals of the world, don't concern yourself with the regimens and legalisms, philosophies and ascetic values (for lack of a better term, because there's really no value to them) that this world esteems. Don't seek after those things, because you're not of the world, so why seek after worldly values?" "But instead, since in reality you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is." and So you see the contrast and the words that Paul is using, words like "death", (and in vs 4) "life", the obvious implication being that the things of this world are death, but the things of Christ are life. What does Rom 8:6 say? "*For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.*"

So then what are the things that you and I want to seek after? Those things which are above, and this word “seek” is an interesting word which means to “strive after” or “crave” in the pure sense of the word it speaks of “coveting”, now we know that we’re not to covet the things of this world, but I tell you I covet after the kingdom of God, I want to be there. It’s used in the present perfect tense which speaks of a continuous action, in other words “continually seek after and strive towards those things which are above.” This is the same word Jesus used when He said, *“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.”* It speaks of a continuous action, you’re to continually seek after God, Jesus would put it like this and again using the same word He said, *“But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”* Covet after and earnestly desire the kingdom of God and His righteousness, seek those things which are above and God will take care of your needs down here.

If people would seek after the almighty God, like they do the almighty dollar this world would be a different place, but too often we seek 1st things to be added to us and then with our residual, or left over time we seek after the kingdom, our priorities are out of line and then we wonder why we struggle or why things are the way they are. But you can’t serve 2 god’s, we feel sorry for those people who bow down in the jungles or in eastern mysticism to idols of wood or stone, because they’re gods aren’t gods at all and can’t deliver them from they’re condition.

How many people in modern day USA bow the knee to the god of mammon, can’t come to church, have to finish up a job, can’t read my bible, I’m working on some bids. and On and on the list could go, but let me tell ya money is just futile as any stone statue when it comes to your soul, how much is enough? and What does it profit a man to gain the whole world if he loses his soul, how many people prioritize the things of this world, it’s super bowl Sunday you know? Now is there anything-wrong with watching a football game? No, but listen, don’t bow the knee to it, football is not your god, don’t seek 1st the super bowl at the expense of the kingdom of God, seek those things which are above.

Now, what are those things which are above? Well 2 things which are mentioned right here in this vs “where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.” God the Father, and God the Son (now I’m not going to get into the Trinity discussion today 1 God rep in 3 persons) but this is clearly showing us 2 of the 3 persons of the Godhead. So you’re to be coveting earnestly, and striving after or craving Christ, God the Son and God the Father, when I think of where Christ is, and the heavenly realm my mind gravitates toward holiness.

I think of the righteousness of God, as I meditate on things above (in regards to where Christ is) I think of freedom from sin (and Paul will speak practically of that) I think of peace, the peace that passes all understanding. Obviously you'd think of Love, why? Because God is love, so if you're seeking after Him, then the love of God is going to be a very real part of your life. Of course the things of the Spirit, not so much the gifts of the Spirit, because those things will pass away (though they're absolutely essential here and now) but I think primarily of the fruit of the Spirit. Gal 5:22-23 tells us that, "*the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.*" Joy, kindness, faithfulness, gentleness, the things which are above, things that are eternal, if you're seeking those things which are above, you will be eternally minded. Not side tracked and distracted by the temporal things of this life, 2 Cor 4:18 says, "*we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.*"

Seek after eternal things, now the question may arise, "How am I to seek after such things?" "How am I to strive after the Lord, or earnestly seek holiness, righteousness, the peace of God, freedom from sin, the Love of God, things like, joy, kindness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control, things which are eternal?" Well, that's a good question, but I would encourage you to be careful not to over complicate your relationship with God. #1 I would start with Prayer, remember Jesus said, "*Ask and it will be given you.*" James said we so often have not simply because we ask not (James 4:2). and Again Jesus said in John 16:24, "*Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.*"

You see the Lord wants you to have a Christian experience that's full of life and vitality, but it's not found in the things of this world, but those things which are above. The things of this world leave you dry, empty and confused, #2 The study of God's Word, David said, "*Your Word have I hidden in my heart that I might not sin against You.*" and Again, "*How shall a young man (or any person for that matter) cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your Word.*" The Word of God is vitally essential in your pursuit of those things above, why? Because it's God's Word that washes and cleanses our minds, it has with in it the power to transform our lives through the renewing of our minds. It gives you the mind of Christ vs the mind of man, and it causes you to view things from God's perspective vs the saturations and inundations of the worldly perspectives that bombard us everyday. #3 I would encourage you to spend time engaged in those things that actually build you up in the Lord vs merely entertaining you.

In other words, if there's things that are edifying that are going on in the body, hey, get involved. Be apart of a prayer group, engage in a home fellowship, come to the women's studies there's a number things that you could be taking an active role in that would edify you and build you up vs sitting at home on your couch watching friends or ER. Prov 27:17 says, "*As iron sharpens iron, So a man sharpens the countenance of his friend.*" These are practical ways that you can seek after those things above. Vs2 continues

Vs 2

Notice the 2 key words of these vs we're to "seek" and we're to "set" seek those things which are above, and then set your mind on them, fixate your mind steadily upon *those* things. Not the things of this world, (Look at 1st John ch 2 vs 15-17). The enemy knows the vulnerability of man, and oh how he likes to take the things of this world and seek to start some type of a love relationship or stir a love with in our hearts for the things of the world. and It's not that we're not free to enjoy the things of this world that aren't innately evil, for instance, the super bowl won't make you godly in and of itself, but nor is it explicitly forbidden, but don't live for it, and seek after it. How many people set their entire schedules around certain athletic events that are taking place? Be careful yes God has given us all things to freely "enjoy" but He, and He alone are we to love with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength, I wonder how many people schedule their lives around the godly activities and bible studies of the church?

You see we're talking about proper priorities, seeking 1st the kingdom of God, not the kingdom of man. "*Do not love the world or the things of the world*" all of those things are temporary, and have with in them the capacity to drag you down. God would have you be occupied with those things that are eternal and those things that are going to build you up, 1 Chron 22:19 says, "*Now set your heart and your soul to seek the LORD your God.*" I like that, set your heart and soul to seek the Lord your God, be careful that you don't get caught up in the Satanic trap of being mindful of the things of man.

You remember when Peter was rebuked by Jesus because he was seeking to get Jesus to avoid the cross, to take the pathway of least resistance; you know what "man" in his right mind would do this sort of thing. But Jesus turned to Peter and said, "*Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.*" So avoid the trap of setting your mind on things on the earth, those temporary things that serve as distractions and indulgences for the flesh. Rom 8:5-6 says, "*For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.*" So set your mind on things above, the things of the Spirit.

Phil 4:8 says, "*Whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy--meditate on these things.*" Set your mind on these things, and again I believe that there are at least 3 practical ways to get our minds on the goal, to set our minds on things above and as Jon Courson said it, they are treasures, trials, and transfers.

#1 Treasures, Jesus said, *“Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”* and We’ve mentioned this before, if you invest in the stock market, you watch it closely, if real-estate is your gig, you’re looking for good deals, if you invest in certain hobbies then you’re always looking for better equipment or little bells and whistles that make what you do better or more effective. But if I quit playing guitar, I could care less about the latest strings that sound better and brighter with better tone and longer sustain, I’m no longer investing in music, I’ve lost interest.

Now listen, when Jesus said in Matt ch 6 to lay up treasure in heaven, it wasn’t God’s way of “raising” money. God doesn’t need your money, He uses gold for asphalt, and precious gems for His foundation work in His city. But knowing the heart of man, and that *our* hearts follow after *our* treasure, it’s His way of “raising” our hearts and minds out of the things of this world and placing them into heaven, placing them on things above. So that we’ll have an interest and desire and affection for the things of the kingdom of God, the KJV says set your “affections” on things above, and one way we do that is through our treasure. Because I give to the work of the ministry, I’m interested in the work of the ministry. I’m making eternal investments and it excites me to see things progressing and lives being changed and people being blessed, my heart trails right behind my treasure. and Jesus knew that, that’s why He exhorted the people to place their treasure towards eternal things and not the temporal things of this world, because then you’ll set your mind on things above, you’ll be eternally minded, not temporally minded.

#2 God (I believe) uses trials to place our minds on heaven, “a trial a day that comes your way, will keep you homesick for heaven.” If I were never frustrated, if I were never disillusioned, or if I were never hurt or let down stressed or strained by the things of this world, why would I care about anything else? Why would I desire to put my mind on anything else, I’m completely satisfied right here, but man when something comes up that drives me to my knees, causes me to cry out to God, I’m just reminded all the more that our light afflictions are but for a moment and yet they’re working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

Paul also said, *“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”* Rom 8:18 and So when I’m on my face crying out to God, it just serves to remind me of how desperately I long to be with Him. Where God will wipe away every tear from our eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things will have passed away. Trials turn our minds upon things above.

#3 Transfers, when the people we love precede us into heaven, when they are transferred from this world into the arms of Jesus, when you have a friend or a parent, maybe a child or a spouse in heaven, a grandparent or someone near and dear to you in heaven, your heart longs all the more to see them again and your mind is turned toward and tuned in to those things above.

Treasures, trials and transfers, 3 ways in which our hearts and minds can be set on those things above, where Christ is, the believer's whole disposition should orient itself heavenward, just like the needle of a compass points north.

Allow heavenly values, the things of the Spirit, eternal matters and those things which are above, be that which dominates your mind, it'll revolutionize your behavior, and we'll see this more as we go on as Paul connects doctrine to duty and how the Holy Spirit works practical purity and holiness into our lives.

But maybe you're here this morning and you've never sought after, or set your mind on things above, you don't know Jesus Christ in a personal way, and you're at a place where the emptiness, frustration, and disillusionments of the world have brought you to the end. Everything seems to be a temporary fix on a permanent problem, Jesus wants to tend to your need today, He suffered the death of the cross that you might know Him, and live forever. and He's in the business of giving new life, your sick of your life, that's good, because He wants to give you a new one, but He won't force you to take it, you'll have to willingly surrender to Him.