



CAPITOL COMMISSION

Something More Important than Politics

MAY 26, 2010

BIBLE STUDY NOTES ON COLOSSIANS 3:1-4

PASTOR FRANK ERB / BOX 13188, SACRAMENTO, CA / FRANK.ERB@CAPITOLCOM.ORG

The Capitol is an extremely busy place, especially now during a budget crisis and just before elections. In the midst of this hectic, high-pressure, environment, we need to remember what matters most.

Colossians 3:1-4 "Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory."

EXPLANATION:

Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ,
As far as God is concerned, it is as if we who are trusting in Christ for our salvation died with him on the cross and rose with him at his resurrection (Colossians 2:12-13, 20, Romans 6:8-10). We really are new creations (2 Corinthians 5:17)!

keep seeking the things above,

"Keep seeking" means to continually "seek or strive for earnestly."¹ "Believers' lives should be dominated by the pattern of heaven, bringing heavenly direction to their earthly duties."² Does this mean that heaven is all we think about? No, but it does mean that we think of it first. As Jesus said, we should "*Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness*" (Matthew 6:33).

where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.

When New Testament authors had visions of heaven after Christ's resurrection, they saw God the Father as a king seated on his royal throne with Christ the Son beside Him. Jesus is alive now, and can thus always "make intercession for us" before God (Hebrews 7:25).

Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.

"Set your mind" could be translated as "be intent on." We should pay closest attention to things that are eternal, not temporal. As it says elsewhere, "*Fix [your] eyes not on what is*

seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:18).

For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God

Paul considered his old self to be dead and gone. "*I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me*" (Galatians 2:20). This should be our attitude too. We who know the Lord are citizens of heaven who are in the world but not of it (John 17:14-15).

When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.

One day, maybe soon, Jesus will return to this earth and take us with him (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18). On this day, Christ will finish the amazing transformation he has begun in us. As John put it, "We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, for we will see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2; cf. 1 Corinthians 13:12).

APPLICATION:

Sometimes life seems like an out-of control bullet train, with the months and years flying by so fast that we can barely get a good look at them. (If you haven't experienced this, you are probably still younger than I am – just wait and you'll see.) The Bible says as much, comparing our earthly existence to but a passing mist (James 4:14).

"THINGS WHICH MATTER MOST MUST NEVER BE AT THE MERCY OF THINGS WHICH MATTER LEAST."

- GOETHE

With so little time here, we are wise to invest in what matters most. This is far easier said than done. There are countless distractions before us today. In fact, thanks to modern technology, an ever-growing media machine, and our fast-paced culture, we have more to capture our time and attention than any generation who have ever lived. We must constantly remind ourselves that, as Johann Wolfgang von Goethe said, the "things which matter most must never be at the mercy of things which matter least." And what things

WEEKLY BIBLE STUDY/FELLOWSHIP MEETINGS

LEGISLATORS: WEDNESDAYS @ 8:00 AM, ASSEMBLY RULES COMMITTEE ROOM
STAFF/LOBBYISTS/OTHERS: THURSDAYS @ 12:00 NOON, CAPITOL ROOM 125

California

Something More Important than Politics

matters most? They are all of the next life, for that life will go on forever (1 Timothy 4:8).

Even things that have potential for great good, including political involvement, can become dangerous diversions. CS Lewis warned about this in his *Screwtape Letters*. In this famous story, a senior demon named Screwtape advises his nephew, a demon named Wormwood, in how to destroy the man he was assigned to torment. One paragraph bears a frightful warning for those who are tempted to put political involvement before the things of God.

Whichever [cause] he adopts, your main task will be the same. Let him begin by treating [the cause] as a part of his religion. Then let him, under the influence of partisan spirit, come to regard it as the most important part. Then quietly and gradually nurse him on to the stage at which the religion becomes merely part of the "cause", in which Christianity is valued chiefly because of the excellent arguments it can produce in favour of the [cause]. The attitude which you want to guard against is that in which temporal affairs are treated primarily as material for obedience. Once you have made the World an end, and faith a means, you have almost won your man, and it makes very little difference what kind of worldly end he is pursuing. Provided that meetings, pamphlets, policies, movements, causes, and crusades, matter more to him than prayers and sacraments and charity, he is ours—and the more "religious" (on those terms) the more securely ours. I could show you a pretty cageful down here, Your affectionate uncle SCREWTAPE.³

EVEN THINGS THAT HAVE POTENTIAL FOR GREAT GOOD, INCLUDING POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT, CAN BECOME DANGEROUS DIVERSIONS.

Similarly, Jesus often warned about allowing worldly wealth to lure us away from eternal treasures.

Luke 12:21 "Then He said to them, "Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions."

And He told them a parable, saying, "The land of a rich man was very productive. And he began reasoning to himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?' Then he said, 'This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry.'" "But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?' "So is the man who stores up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

The Apostle John warned us about anything in this world that could capture our souls in this way. (1 John 2:15-17)

Does continually seeking the things above mean we need to become hermits or monks hiding away from society? No. Does it mean that we become "too heavenly minded to be any earthly good," if such a thing were actually possible? No. Nor does it suggest an other-world asceticism or disdain for material things (Colossians 2:16-23).

It does mean that we stay away from things that can pollute our very souls and destroy those around us (Colossians 3:5-11) and we continue to pursue daily growth in Christ likeness (Colossians 3:12-17). When we are doing this, we will be well invested for eternity. We will also be equipped to be "light" and "salt" to an often dark and rotting world that so desperately needs to know that there is something far better and infinitely more lasting to live for (Matthew 5:13-16).

¹Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-c1985). *The Bible knowledge commentary* (2:680). Wheaton, IL: Victor

² Ibid.

³ C.S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*. Published in 1942, Lewis was speaking especially about the debate in his day between "Patriotism" and "Pacifism," references to which have herein been replaced with [cause].