



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

Living a New Life (Colossians 3:1-4)

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Paul Meinsen / (573) 418-2077 / www.capitolcom.org / paul.meinsen@capitolcom.org

Weekly Bible Study Schedule

- **Tuesday, March 29, 7 AM in HHR #5**
-Breakfast Provided
- **Tuesday, March 29, 8:30 PM in Room #225**
(Sen. Bob Dixon's office)

During the Legislative Session of 2010, we walked through the first two chapters of the Apostle Paul's letter to the church at Colossae. It is our plan to finish the book of Colossians by the end of the 2011 Legislative Session. Even if you were not here last year, we will get you caught up so the studies and discussion will be beneficial.

The first half of Paul's letter is filled with incredible teachings concerning the person of Jesus Christ and what He has done on behalf of men. But the question remains: What does this have to do with me or anyone else who ever lived? Does the truth about Jesus have any impact on anyone--especially those who claim to follow Him?

The second half of Paul's letter answers that question. The person and work of Jesus Christ is the foundation and reason for the believer's mindset and actions. It has everything to do with what a follower of Christ is to live and think. It is not just some abstract theology that has nothing to bear upon the everyday life of people. Rather, it "must pervade a man's whole nature. It affects not only his practical conduct, but his intellectual conceptions also."¹

INTRODUCTION

Up to this point in his letter, Paul has taught:

- God has qualified, rescued, delivered and redeemed His people (1:12-14).
- Jesus is the image of the invisible God (1:15) and has the fullness of deity (1:19, 2:9)
- Jesus is the creator, sustainer and ruler of the universe (1:15-17)
- Jesus is the head of the church (1:18)

- Through His death, Jesus...
 - ...reconciled us to God (1:20)
 - ...made God's people holy and blameless (1:22)
 - ...took the certificate of debt that God's people owed (2:14)
- Therefore, God's people have been made alive in Him (2:8-23)
- And it is Paul's passion to teach and preach Christ so that he may present people mature before God (1:24-29)

In chapter three, the Apostle transitions to the "practical, every-day" living out of these truths. Since God's people have been made alive in Christ, changes in mindsets, behavior and actions will follow.

These changes do not come about so that one can be made alive, but rather because one has been made alive. The latter is living in response to one's new life and standing before God. It is the fruit that comes because he or she has been made new. The former is simply "legalism"--which Paul addressed as being impossible to do anything in making one right with God (2:16-23).

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.² Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.³ For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.⁴ When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.

In this transitional passage, Paul reminded the believers in Colossae of their position in Christ, gave a command because of their position and stated a grand assurance.

A POSITION (3:1)

As pointed out in the introduction, the Apostle Paul made some incredible claims concerning the person and work of Jesus in this letter. In 3:1, he makes some incredible claims concerning the believer and his or her position with Jesus Christ. And this position in and with Christ becomes the foundation upon which he lays out his imperatives.

Paul's statement, "Therefore, if you have been raised up with Christ" is a reiteration of what he wrote earlier in 2:13, *When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him...*(cf. 1:21-22).

CAPITOL COMMISSION BIBLE STUDIES

LEGISLATORS & STAFF: TUESDAYS @ 7AM, HEARING ROOM #5

LEGISLATORS: TUESDAYS @ 8:30PM, ROOM #225

ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE: THURSDAYS @ 7AM, BROADWAY BUILDING 3RD FLOOR CAFETERIA

PROCLAIMING THE GREATNESS AND GLORY OF GOD IN THE MISSOURI STATE CAPITOL

MISSOURI

Living a New Life (Colossians 3:1-4)

Here is the big picture: All people stand before God as spiritually dead following after our own desires, the way of this world and according to the “prince of the power of the air”—Satan (Ephesians 2:1-4, cf. John 12:31, 2 Corinthians 4:4). But because of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross, the people of God now have forgiveness; their certificate of debt has been removed (Colossians 2:14; Romans 5:8-10). And through the physical resurrection of Jesus Christ, the followers of Christ have also been resurrected to a new life.

This is Paul’s thought here in 3:1. He teaching is that “if” (which should be understood as “since”) believers have been “been raised up with Christ”, then the believer has a new life. A follow of Christ is no longer enslaved to his or her own passions or the things of this world or the temptations of Satan, he or she is has a new life in Christ; which brings along a new lifestyle, thought patterns and a real hope.

Paul also reminded his readers why they should pay heed and find hope in Christ: Jesus is now at the “seated at the right hand of God.” This metaphorically teaches that Jesus Christ has taken His rightful place of majesty, authority and rule. A follower of Christ lives in obedience for he or she is under the sovereign rule of the King. Followers also find much comfort and hope for their King cannot be knocked from His throne.

A COMMAND (3:1-2)

It is because of our new position with Christ that Paul gives two commands which can be synthesize into one: “Pursue the things above.” Two main questions come from this command. The first is what does the Apostle mean by “keep seeking” or “set your mind”?

By the term translated “seek”, Paul is commanding the believers to turn their gaze upward; not in a literal fashion, nor some “mystical” form, but in a sense of direction. Believers are to pursue that which is eternal; which source is from heaven. These things of above are to be the guideposts as followers of Jesus Christ live out their lives here on earth.

In commanding, “set your mind”, the Apostle Paul is commanding something more than just thinking. “It refers not to a purely mental or intellectual process but to a *more fundamental orientation of the will*.”² O’Brien adds, “not simply an activity of the intellect, but also a *movement of the will; it has to do with aims and the motive underlying them*.”³

In other words, “the things above” are to be the pursuit of the believer. Since that is where the King is located, so also should be His followers in their desires, thoughts, and actions while living here on earth. Becoming a

follower is only the beginning. The continual “seeking” and “setting of the mind” is the lifelong quest of the believer.

The second question is simply, what is meant by “the things above”? Paul sets “the things above” in stark contrast with “the things of earth”. He has described some of these earthly things back in Colossians 2. These are the philosophies and traditions of men, foods or drinks, festivals, Sabbaths, visions and self-abasement (2:8-19). These are called “elementary things of the world” (2:20). Also, included in the “things of earth” are any sinful practices (Philippians 3:18-20; Galatians 5:19-21).

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“The things above” reflect the values of the King and His Kingdom. These include the fruit of the Spirit—*love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control* (Galatians 5:22-23). As well as... *whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise* (Philippians 4:8).

“The things above” also include mindsets such as...

- “to live is Christ, but to die is gain” (Philippians 1:21)
- “for momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison” (2 Corinthians 4:17)
- “looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13).

There is an old saying that is usually used disparagingly toward another which says “He is so heavenly minded to be of any earthly good.” Friend, the truth is this: If the people of God concerned themselves more with “the things above”, they would be the best types of citizens and people living here on earth. They would be the most productive for a community, show the greatest of love toward their fellow man, and be most joyous in all seasons. Paul’s desire is that “the Colossians’ preoccupation with heaven governs their earthly responses. To be preoccupied with heaven is to be preoccupied with the One who reigns there and His purposes, plans, provisions and power. It is also to view the things, people and events of this world through His eyes and with an eternal perspective.”⁴

It is when believers set their minds on earthly things that jealousies, strife, selfishness, worries, pride, bitterness, and other sins surface.

MISSOURI

Living a New Life (Colossians 3:1-4)

Thus, the Apostle Paul commands the followers of Jesus to continually follow after the higher things and to continually set our wills to be conformed to the mindsets and thoughts from heaven. The author of Hebrews puts it in another way:

Hebrews 12:1b-2 ...let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

AN ASSURANCE (3:3-4)

In this transitional paragraph, Paul reminds the readers that believers have been resurrected with Christ and thus have a new life with a new ethic. He continues in this passage to reveal two great promises for those believers.

First of all, for those once dead but are now resurrected with Christ, their lives have been tucked away or hidden with Christ in God (3:3). One understanding of this unusual wording can be that believers have a life “hidden” from the rest of society. Even though they look like everyone else (there is no magical halo or glow around believers), the unbelievers do not see nor understand what drives and motivates the followers of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:14). But one day, they will.

Another understanding, which fits the context very well, is the truth that God has taken spiritually dead people, raised them to spiritual life with the resurrection of His Son, Jesus, and will forever keep them safe and secure until the proper time. The Greek word translated “hidden” implies “hidden in a safe place”. In other words, God is forever protecting His people in Christ from anything that may want to snatch them away (John 18:28; Hebrews 7:25).

This picture of God being a refuge and stronghold can be found all throughout the Old Testament with passages like Psalm 18:2, *The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, My God, my rock, in whom I take refuge; My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold* (see also Psalm 27:5; Proverbs 30:5; Isaiah 25:4; Jeremiah 16:19; Joel 3:6; Nahum 1:7).

In the New Testament, this same truth is proclaimed:

Romans 8:31-39 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised,

who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Just as it is written, "FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG; WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED." But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

But that which is hidden will also be revealed. The second promise given to the followers of Jesus is that they will one day be revealed with Jesus. The life of a follower of Christ is so tied with Him that when He is revealed in glory (Revelation 19:11-16; Titus 2:13; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18), they also will be revealed. All that is hidden will be manifest for all to see. The Apostle John stated the same promise, *Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is* (1 John 3:2).

Before drawing to the conclusion, let these verses be a reminder to all who follow after Jesus. Be reminded, friend: It is all about Christ and not about you. Five times in this passage Paul refers to Christ; keeping the central focus on His person and work. The follower is raised up with Christ, to look to Christ, is hidden in Christ, will be revealed with Christ when Christ is revealed. You were dead; it was God through Christ who made you alive, thus there is no place for any type of pride in your life.

CONCLUSION

When a person is redeemed by God through the blood of His Son, Jesus Christ, a new life has begun. There is a new mindset, new set of values, a new hope and a new reason for living life. The Apostle Paul will flesh out these things in the remainder of his letter to the Colossian church.

Friend, the new life is only for those whom God has redeemed from spiritual death. He can forgive you of your sins and raise you with Christ--are you interested?

¹ J.B. Lightfoot, *St. Paul's Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon* (1879; reprint, Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1959), 209.
² Douglas J. Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2008), 248. (italics mine)
³ Peter T. O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon* Word Biblical Commentary Vol. 44 (Waco, Tex., Word Books Publisher, 1982), 162. (italics mine)
⁴ John MacArthur, *Colossians & Philemon* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1992), 128.