

Seeking Christ, Who is our Life

(Discussion Questions on last page)

I. Introduction

A. Greeting and prayer

B. Turn to Colossians 3:1-4

C. Background of Colossians:

1. One of my favorite epistles, because Paul so beautifully magnifies Christ and the key doctrines of Christology, and charges the church to magnify Christ in our own lives. So this is what we are going to look at this morning. This morning's title is "Seeking Christ, Who is Our Life." That is what Paul is going to challenge us with in the passage, and that is our goal this morning.
2. Paul's primary purpose of writing this book is to address what is known as the Colossian heresy that was spreading around the church - a false teaching that denied the deity of Jesus Christ, and propagated that He was not truly God but a spirit in a line of descendants of God. Additionally, because of this attack on the deity of Christ, the Colossian heresy turned to Jewish legalism, mysticism, and human reason for salvation. Their false teaching had led them to believe that because Christ is not God, they had to look to other solutions for salvation.
3. So Paul writes Colossians to set the record straight and provide a definitive work on the doctrine of Christ. Paul is showing that Christ is fully God, (supreme), and also that Jesus Christ is the Messiah who ushers in a New Creation, and is the Head of the Church, Christ's people who are a new humanity by His death, burial, and resurrection.
4. This doctrinal work that Paul lays out in Chapter 1, then informs every succeeding section of the book of Colossians.
 - a) Chapter 1 is all about that Christ is supreme. Chapter 3 then moves to, not only is Christ supreme, but He must be supreme in our lives.

(1) *It is not enough for Christ to just be prominent, or a priority, in our life. He must be preeminent - supreme.*

D. Brings us to the text: **Colossians 3:1-4** "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. 2 Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. 3 For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory."

1. **Paul is going to show in this passage that those who belong to Christ, have a completely new identity and reality, and this changes everything about their life.**

E. **Main theme - Due to the truth that we are new creations, with a completely new present and future reality in Christ, we must seek and set our minds on the things above.**

II. Exegesis

A. What I want to walk through in the time that we have, is four realities for the Christian that is in a new creation in Christ, and then we will look at the two imperatives Paul gives for the Christian, to live a life that is in accordance with these realities

B. Reality #1: We have been raised with Christ

1. **Verse 1: If then you have been raised with Christ**

- a) "If" here might be better translated as "since" or "because." Paul is writing to Christians, and the reality that follows - being raised with Christ, is a certain and guaranteed reality for every Christian.
- b) So how does this happen? What does it mean to be raised with Christ?
- c) Colossians 2:12-13 says **"Having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. And you who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together by him, having forgiven us all our trespasses"**

(1) For every Christian, at salvation when we put our faith in Christ and His atoning work on the cross, and we choose to identify ourselves to His death, burial, and resurrection, we become unified to Christ and a new self is created. We are made alive - previously we were dead to sin (which we will get to in a moment), but now we are alive to serve and worship and love Christ. And instead of being shackled to sin, Christ resides in us, the Holy Spirit is given to us, and we are being renewed into the image of our creator.

- d) Ephesians 1:3 says **"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places"**

(1) To be risen with Christ is be spiritually alive, to understand truth, blessings, and the will of God. We get all riches and privileges and access to the Father as we are now citizens of a heavenly kingdom.

2. And the implications that follow this truth, are many.

- a) Because we are raised with Christ, we can receive the Holy Spirit, and His power
- b) Because we are raised with Christ, we are free to serve and delight in God, not our sin
- c) Because we are raised with Christ, we now live for righteousness and bear the fruit of righteousness

3. Christ gives us a completely new identity, purpose, and life.

C. Reality #2: We have died to our sin

1. We will skip down to verse 3, and we will come back to verse 2.

2. **Verse 3: For you have died**

- a) Not only are we made alive in Christ, but our old self has died. We have died to our sin.

- b) If we go to Romans 6:6-7, we have a clear and powerful explanation of what it means to be dead to sin.
- (1) Romans 6:6-7 **“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. For one who has died has been set free from sin”**
 - (2) Those who are in Christ, have been set free from sin. Sin no longer holds power over us, we no longer have to be controlled by our sin nature. Before Christ we were slaves to sin, it was our nature, we could do no other. Christ defeated sin for us so that we no longer have to be dominated by it, and we can serve a new master.
 - (3) I love how Paul puts it in if we go down to Colossians 2:13-15. **“And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.”**
 - (a) **Powerful imagery, it's like a courtroom drama.**
 - (b) Those who are in Christ, are victoriously and definitely free from sin.
- c) What does this mean for us?
- (1) Two things, church, if I can encourage us with. Because we are dead to sin, we are free from both the POWER of sin and the GUILT of sin.
- d) We are dead to sin, and our identity is no longer our sin. If we are in Christ, we identify with Him, with the righteousness of Christ. We have been redeemed from sin's penalty!

D. Reality #3: We are hidden with Christ

1. **Verse 3: Your life is hidden with Christ in God**
 - a) The third reality for the Christian is that our life is hidden with Christ in God. What does it mean to be hidden with Christ?
 - b) It is that our life is intertwined with the life of Christ, it is all wrapped up with Jesus. The Christian's life is Christ-centric, and God looks at Jesus Christ and sees me, I am united in Christ and in His resurrection. And the world does not yet fully see who I am in Christ, it is hidden. But one day, Christ will appear and they will see Christ for Who He truly is, and they will see me, fully revealed and glorified in Christ.
 - c) One of the most beautiful implications of this, is that to be hidden with Christ is that we have eternal and complete security

- (1) John 10:28 says “I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.”
 - (2) The promise and assurance for those that are in Christ, is eternal security. There is no one more secure than those who belong to Christ. He is the Good Shepherd, with the power and control to give absolute security. Christ claims us as His, given to Him by the Father to protect.
 - (3) It’s like a parent’s grip on a child as they are walking in a crowded place, or crossing the street. There are few things tighter than the grip of a parent on their child. It is firm, and strong, nothing will separate them from their child. But it is also secure, and safe. That child will be right by their side, and nothing will come in between them. No matter what the child does, if the child falls, or let’s go, or stumbles. Because it is not about how tightly the child can hold on parent, but about the secure grip of the parent who is not going to let go no matter what.
2. Our life is intertwined with the life of Christ. Concealed from the world for a time, but one day to be revealed, with the confidence that we will be held secure by our heavenly Father for all of eternity.

E. Reality #4: We will appear with Christ in glory

1. Verse 4: When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory
 - a) Lastly, we come to the fourth and final reality. And this is a future reality. One day, Christ, the One Who has given us our life, Who we identify with, and are unioned with, will come back to earth, and we will appear with Him in our glorified and resurrected bodies - our final transformation.
 - b) Because of our united status with Jesus Christ, our privileged union with Christ, He is coming back for us, and we will ascend to heaven with Him.
 - c) I Thessalonians 2:16-17 says “For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.”

(1) The one beautiful truth I would have us takeaway this morning is this: this world is not our final destination.

(a) John Piper puts it this way “So, yes, let us seek to reflect the glory of God now. We must. But what a defeated and hopeless life we would live if we thought, “This is my real life: this measure of holiness, this measure of purity, this measure of Godwardness, this measure of joy, this measure of glory. This is the real me.” No. That is not the real you. When Christ who is your life - the Creator of your life, the Sustainer of your life, the Redeemer of your life, the Pattern of your life, the Treasure of your life - when he

appears, then and only then, will it appear who you really are, for you will shine like the sun when you appear with him in glory.”

2. Titus 2 says that this is our blessed hope - the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.
- F. These are our realities in Christ - Raised in Christ as a New Creation, Dead to our sinful old self, Hidden with Christ, and the future promise that we will one day appear with Christ when He comes again.
1. This is who we are in Christ, and what I want to turn to next, that because of our identity in Christ, that Paul then gives us two imperatives to act upon.
- G. Let's go back to verses 1-2. This is the "So what?" So we have been raised in Christ, so we have died to our sin, so we have been hidden with Christ, so we will appear. So now what do we do? Two things Paul gives us.
1. **Verse 1-2: If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.**
 2. Two imperatives here: we are to **seek** the things that are above, and to **set our minds** on things that are above
 - a) Notice the wordage here: If or [because / since] you have been raised with Christ, you are to act this way. This is the expectation of us, our marching orders.
 - (1) Ephesians 4:1 says **"I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called"**
 - (a) We are called to live and act in a way that reflects who we are in Christ.
 - (i) **It's like an ambassador, that represents the United States and goes overseas.**
 - (ii) **Paul says in Philippians 3:20 that "our citizenship is in heaven." We are not permanent residents on earth but ambassadors for the kingdom of God. We have been commissioned. And so we must act like it.**
 3. **Imperative #1: Seek the things that are above**
 - a) How do we act, in a way that would reflect our identity in Christ and future hope?
 - b) First, Paul says to seek the things that are above
 - (1) Seek - Greek zeteo, strive for, crave after, pursue
 - (a) To seek something is to be actively pursuing it. It's not like when you are sitting on the couch, trying to find a channel to watch. This is an active type of seeking. This is a call to action, to live for the things that are above.
 - c) What are the things that are above? I think our passage answers this in the second half of verse 1. "Seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God."

- (1) Christ, God's beloved Son, is right now at the right hand of God in heaven, highly exalted at the highest place of glory, honor, and status.
- (2) To seek the things above is to seek heavenly things - the realities, values, and the actions that have eternal consequence.
 - (a) Ultimately this is to seek and to desire the mind of Christ - whose primary objective was the will of the Father / heavenly things. We are seeking and devoted to the purposes and mission of Jesus Christ. As we identify with Him at salvation, so we identify with Him in the Christian life, seeking to daily be more like Him.
- d) Jesus Christ was preoccupied with doing the will of His Father. Our priority in life should be the same - that we are preoccupied with doing the will of our Father.
 - (1) This is not to say that we have our head in the clouds, or are of no earthly good in our community, jobs, our responsibilities.
 - (2) What it is to say is that our priority is that we are first seeking the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and then everything else in our life we are submitting to God, trusting Him to work out all other areas of our life and seeking to faithfully serve Him in what we've been called.
- e) Practically, what does this look like? A few things to think on:
 - (1) Matthew 6:33 - Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. Labor for the expansion of the kingdom of God - the expansion of the Gospel
 - (2) Romans 8:5 - Those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on things of the Spirit.
 - (a) Fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5)
 - (b) The attitudes, convictions, and will of the Spirit
 - (c) As we have been learning as a church, this is to be walking in obedience to the Holy Spirit, and to allow the Spirit's power to transform us and work through us.
 - (3) Lastly, I think it ultimately comes back to Christ. Philippians 2 says to have this mind among yourselves which was in Christ. The mind of Christ is a humility and obedience to the Father even to the point of death on the cross.
- f) So first - we are to seek the things above, the things of heaven, where Christ is. We are to pursue the things of the heavenly kingdom - transformation into the image of Christ, evangelism, discipleship, things that have eternal worth and eternal value.

4. Imperative #2: Set your mind on things above

- a) Seeking goes hand in hand with the next imperative Paul gives, which is to set your mind on things above. I like how one translation puts it - "to set our affections on the things above."

(1) This is not something that comes naturally to us. A renewal of our mind is required to be able to set our affections on heavenly things / to live a life that is concerned more about heaven than the things of this earth.

(2) How do we accomplish this?

(a) Colossians 3:16 "Let the word of Christ 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.

(b) We are created to be creatures that worship something. And are flesh bends us to worship anything that is not God. We need a renewal of our mind, to be transformed to the image of Christ and not of this world. (We know this from Romans 12).

b) Contrasted with setting our mind on the things above, is the things of this earth. Our priority is to heaven, not to the temporal things of this world.

(1) The obvious implication here is to put away the sin of this world. And Paul expands on exactly that in verse 5 when he goes on to say "Put to death therefore what is earthly in you. Sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry."

(2) I think in addition to putting to death sin - this can also be amoral or even good things in our life, that threaten to dethrone Christ as Lord of our life.

H. Do you notice that when you first meet someone, and you spend a few hours with them in conversation, getting to know them. You can quickly discern a lot about a person based on what they talk about, what gets them excited when they are having conversation..

III. Conclusion

A. If we had time, I would read Colossians 1 because it is such a beautiful poem of the glories of Jesus Christ. Chapter 1 is all about the supremacy of Christ, and it sets the stage for this passage well, which is all about how Christ must be supreme in our lives.

1. It is not enough for us to have the knowledge that Christ is supreme. We must make Him supreme in our lives.

B. We pursue Jesus Christ, as there is nothing better, nothing more sufficient, nothing more satisfying, nothing more valuable. Christ is our life, because it is through Christ that we have life, and will receive our future, glorified bodies and reside in the presence of God for all of eternity.

1. This is essence the Christian life - to be awakened from spiritual death, and to find Christ as all-sufficient and all-satisfying.

C. To make Christ supreme in our life, is to count everything else as loss.

D. The treasures of this earth pass away, they are fleeting, And not just the actual physical things. The happiness, the joy of this earth, does not last.

- E. To pursue Jesus Christ, is to pursue a joy that lasts forever, and is not dependent on our circumstances or our surroundings, but is dependent on the work of Jesus Christ, who is Our life.
- F. And so church, as we close, my encouragement and challenge to us as the body of Christ, and to myself, is that we would make Christ preeminent in all aspects of our life - and find Him as our superior satisfaction.
 - 1. And the convicting thing for me, as I was preparing this message, is that for Christ to be preeminent in my life, it means He must be preeminent in ALL areas of my life. It is not just the parts that are easy, or the parts that I want Him to be.

Discussion Guide

From Colossians 1:15-20, what are some ways in which Paul says Jesus Christ is preeminent? How do these truths make possible the realities that are true of a Christian, that are discussed in Chapter 3 verses 1-4?

Discuss some ways that baptism symbolizes the work of Christ in us at salvation. What is the proper (Biblical) observance of baptism in the church? (Colossians 2:12-13)

Read Colossians 3:2-3. What kinds of things are the “things above” and what kinds of things are “the things on earth”? Are there certain areas that are harder to set our minds on, or in contrast, what things on earth can be most tempting to be preoccupied with?

Christ is supreme, and must also be supreme in our lives. What areas can it be difficult to make Christ supreme in? What are ways in which we can work to submit to Christ these areas in our life?