

Last week Jim shared about some of the blood problems he has been having and this week it made him feel better bad. So please remember him in your prayers, because I know he really appreciates them.

Please open up in your Bibles to Colossians 3. Each time I have the opportunity to teach we have been studying out way through the book of Colossians. This morning we are actually at a major turning point in the book. Colossians is four chapters long. In chapters 1 and 2 Paul mainly deals with doctrine, with teaching. He has been trying to show the Colossians the errors of the false teachers and guide the church into the truth.

Colossians 1:9-10 ESV

- (9) And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,
 (10) so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.

Paul wants to see the believers mature and grow in the faith. The teaching of the false teachers threatened this growth. One of the lies that were being taught was that Christ was not enough, that something else was needed for salvation. Paul wants to make it clear that Christ is all we need so spends most of chapter 1 describing who Christ truly is.

Colossians 1:17-20 ESV

- (17) And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.
 (18) And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.
 (19) For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell,
 (20) and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

After describing Christ Paul's attention switches to describing how incredible salvation is, that Christ has secured for us. He is pleading with the Colossians not to trust in anything but Christ for their salvation. He is the one who has made peace through His blood.

Colossians 2:6-8ESV

- (6) Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him,

He encourages the Colossians if the Christian life started by faith in Christ through the Spirit's power why would it change for your growth? Don't trust anything else continue to walk in the way you started based on Christ and in the Spirit's power.

- (7) rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

- (8) See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.

He warns them that there are many philosophies and other ways of thinking that are based on man centered thinking, and after the sinful world. This whole chapter he keeps pointing the Colossians back to Christ and what He has done for us on the cross.

Colossians 2:12 ESV

- (12) **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.

I want to remind you this verse is not describing our water baptism but our baptism in the Holy Spirit. This is a reality for every believer. When we accept Christ we receive the Holy Spirit. and He identifies us with Christ death and also with Christ resurrection.

He expands on this idea of being baptized into Christ death by challenging the Colossians to no longer submit to man made laws.

Colossians 2:20-22 ESV

- (20) **If with Christ you died** to the elemental spirits of the world, **why, as if you were still alive in the world**, do you submit to regulations—

He is reminding them of their spiritual baptism in Christ death, if you truly died to the flesh why are you following fleshly rules?

- (21) "Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch"
 (22) (referring to things that all perish as they are used)—according to human precepts and teachings?
 (23) These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.

Then in chapter three Paul starts to change his focus. He has laid the doctrinal case against these false teachers now he is going to expand the practical application. And he starts this section by looking at how we as believers should live in Christ's new life.

Colossians 3:1-4 ESV

- (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.

Colossians 3:1 ESV

- (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.

-Notice this section starts with an “if”

In the Greek there are three ways to write a conditional “if...then” statement

This is a first class condition meaning Paul is assuming the outcome as true

When he says “**If then** you have been raised with Christ”

He is assuming that the Colossians have been raised

That fits with the entire context of the book the Colossians are believers who have been raised with Christ.

I point this out because often these “if” statements can be misused and turned into tests for true salvation.

That is not what Paul is saying, Paul is encouraging believers to grow and mature in areas they might not be. His goal is not for them to question their salvation but to point out an area that they need to grow deeper in.

Paul brings up the fact that they have been raised with Christ; it points us back to the baptism of Holy Spirit found in Chapter 2 verse 12.

Colossians 2:12 ESV

- (12) **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.

Paul has already expounded on the idea of identifying with Christ death. It is because we died with Christ that we no longer have to submit to the law. He is now emphasizing the fact that just as we identify with His death we also identify with his resurrection and new life.

Romans 6:3-5 ESV

- (3) Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?

Again this is discussing our Baptism of the Holy Spirit

- (4) We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.
- (5) For if we have been united with him in a death like his, **we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.**

If we only were able to partake in His death and not in His resurrection then we would be free from the power of sin and its consequences but we would have no power to live the Christian life.

It was His resurrection that enables us to walk in a new life in Christ.

Colossians 3:1 ESV

- (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.

And all believers have been raised with Christ, this may seem repetitive but the rest of the passage hinges on this crucial point.

As believers the following commands on what to seek are pointless if we are not convinced of where our life truly is. If I see my life, what is truly important to me, as being here on earth then the following commands will be hollow.

We need to see that we have been raised with Christ. This is where our true life is. Listen to how Paul describes what God has done for us in salvation.

Ephesians 2:1-6 ESV

- (1) And you were dead in the trespasses and sins
- (2) in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—
- (3) among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.
- (4) But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us,
- (5) even when we were dead in our trespasses, **made us alive together with Christ**—by grace you have been saved—
- (6) **and raised us up** with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,

Notice this incredible promise in verse 6. Our true life as believers is in heaven with Christ. We have been raised up. This is true spiritually about us now.

This is one of the reasons why understanding Revelation 4 is so crucial. It is in Jim's study on Revelation where we get to see this fully take place.

We will ditch our mortal sinful bodies and be perfectly raised with Christ. We will one day be in the throne room of God worshipping Him, it is a guaranteed date on the calendar more real than any plan you could ever make.

This is the challenging part about this teaching; it is something that is currently true about us and something that will be true about us in the future. We have been raised with Christ and we will be raised with Christ.

Colossians 3:1 ESV

(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.

After Paul has established our identity who we truly are he challenges us to “seek the things that are above”

And just in case there was any doubt about what the things above are he elaborates.

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

Paul is challenging us to seek heavenly things, eternal things, things that will last. It is the same challenge Christ gave:

Matthew 6:19-21 ESV

- (19) "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal,
 (20) but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.
 (21) For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Christ is trying to point out that we pursue so many things that don't matter. So much of what we pursue is earthly; it can be demolished and stolen. Often it is hard for us to see that what we are pursuing is earthly. It really stands out though when you are around someone who is pursuing eternal heavenly things.

I remember seeing this perfectly one time I was playing basketball in California against one of our churches elders. We were guarding each other in the post and smack talking each other a little in fun, we had a great relationship and liked to rib each other. Then during a play I got a great block against him. I puffed out my chest a little bit and was super proud of the play I had just made. Then I made a comment that I was glad his son wasn't here to see him get embarrassed like

that. I've never forgotten his response, He looked at me and said Kyle if all I am to my son is a basketball player than I have failed as a father.

He was seeking the things above. He knew His skill level as a basketball player was not something eternal. Who he was as a man of God was eternal that's what mattered that's what he wanted his son to see.

Paul expands on this thought in verse two.

Colossians 3:2 ESV

(2) Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.

We were first told to seek the things above that has to do with our actions, what we pursue, the follow up command is to set our minds on things above. This is more about our thoughts.

The same phrase is used in Philippians but in the negative sense about pursuing earthly things.

Philippians 3:18-20 ESV

- (18) For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ.
 (19) Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, **with minds set on earthly things.**

Notice the descriptions of a person who has set their mind on earthly things.

- It leads to ruin
- Their God is their belly- meaning they follow after any lust or desire that there body has.
- They are proud about the things that they should be ashamed of.

Then Paul gives us the contrast of what the believer should focus on:

- (20) But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,

He points out that our true home is in heaven, We have been raised with Christ! Our focus, what we pursue what we think should not be earthly, it should be heavenly, it should be about our true home.

Colossians 3:2 ESV

(2) Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.

When it says in verse two the things of this earth it does not necessarily mean the typical sinful things we would often think about. Often in scripture when the World is mentioned it is meaning the entire sinful order it is the word Kosmos listen to 1 John 2 talk about the World.

1 John 2:15-17 NASB

(15) Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

(16) For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.

(17) The world is passing away, and *also* its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.

1 John describes this sinful order, that is opposed to God. This is not the word used in Colossians. In Colossians it is the word *ge*, it simply means earthly, physical.

Colossians 3:2 ESV

(2) Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.

These are things that on the surface might not be inherently sinful but when focused on and pursued they become sinful.

Setting our minds on something that is earthly is focusing on what is right in front of us and not viewing things through a heavenly lens. It is focusing on the physical life and not where our true life is in heaven.

Again if you are ever around someone that has a heavenly eternal mindset it stands out. This past year at camp I had planned a special activity for one of the days we were going to go on a hike to a waterfall. This was a big deal to our group we don't often do outdoorsy type activities. The hike was about an hour from camp with windy roads the whole way. Before the week at camp I had gone and scouted out the trail and made sure it would work well for the group. As we turned off the highway towards the parking lot of the trail we found a closed sign. We didn't know it yet but just a few days before the trail had significant flood damage and large portions of the trail were washed out. At this moment the bus is on a narrow gravel road full of cranky and partially car sick students and there is no trail to go down. I began walking with another leader to go look at the trail and try to figure out what to do, and all this leader could talk about was the spiritual growth that was happening at camp and the great conversations they had been having with the students and what the students were learning. At this point my mind is swirling with everything that was immediately facing us, and I asked them this situation doesn't bother you. And they

responded no that this was just a bump in the road. We just need to seek what God was doing.

This is what I meant by earthly things that are not necessarily sinful but they can become our focus. In that moment I was entirely focused on the problem at hand. My focus and mind were set on earthly things. I needed to be reminded by this staff person that God was doing something bigger at camp, something eternal. The trail being closed shouldn't take our focus off of that.

They were absolutely right, that trail being closed and spending two hours on the bus that day was the best thing that could have happened at camp. Through that situation the staff bonded, the students got sleep on the bus and bonded more with each other and the band and the entire atmosphere and spirit of the camp changed after the failed hiking trip.

When we focus on earthly things the things that are pressing right in front of us, we miss the eternal, the big picture of what God is doing.

So how do we do this? How do we keep our focus on the things above, the heavenly things? I think we see Paul's answer to this question in verse 3.

Colossians 3:3 ESV

(3) For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

He brings us back again to salvation. He points out that we have died to this world, and our true life, is with Christ in God in heaven.

This is how you keep an eternal perspective
He keeps pointing out the truth about salvation where our life is.

Paul does the same thing multiple times in scripture. He challenges us to view things from a heavenly perspective and then reminds us about how we were saved. Listen to Romans 8

Romans 8:28 ESV

(28) And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

This can be a rough verse for people. Some are able to find great comfort in it, knowing God is working things for good. For others I know this verse can be difficult to read when nothing in life looks like it is working out. You can't see how God is going to work in this situation.

This verse is hard because it is a heavenly perspective, it is challenging us to trust God with the big picture when we can't see it. But notice the following verse after this promise, after this

Romans 8:29-30 ESV

- (29) For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.
 (30) And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

Again Paul points us back to salvation. Reminding us of who we are in Christ, and of God's incredible love for us that He would save us.

Romans 8:31-32 ESV

- (31) What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?
 (32) He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

His point is simple but extremely challenging, If God loved you enough to save you, loved you enough to send His son to die for you, would He ever take His hand off of you? Would He ever stop loving and caring for you?

Romans 8:37-39 ESV

- (37) No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.
 (38) For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers,
 (39) nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Paul's answer is a resounding NO! If I ever start to doubt God's love for me, or start to doubt what He is doing I need to look to the cross. In the cross you can see His love His power and His goodness.

It is the truth of the cross that should give us a heavenly perspective.

I want to read our passage together so we can see how Paul links the eternal heavenly perspective with our salvation.

Colossians 3:1-4 ESV

- (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.

We are called to seek and set our minds on the things above because that is where our true life is because of our salvation.

Christ is our life, so often we believe the lie that this right in front of us is life, but God keeps trying to show us that as believers our true life is in heaven. It is not here. This theme is all throughout scripture.

John 1:4 ESV

(4) **In him was life**, and the life was the light of men.

This is talking about Christ, In Christ is true life!

John 10:10 ESV

(10) The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. **I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.**

Christ offers us true everlasting abundant life. The earthly physical life around us is so small when we compare it to the abundant eternal life that Christ offers us.

Revelation 22:1-2 ESV

- (1) Then the angel showed me **the river of the water of life**, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb
- (2) through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, **the tree of life** with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

In the end we are restored access to the tree of life. All the way back in Genesis, Adam and Eve were kicked out of the garden not because God was mean but to keep them from getting to the tree of life.

Genesis 3:24 ESV

(24) He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way **to guard the way to the tree of life.**

In heaven we are restored to the tree of life. This is what we have been waiting for. We will have perfect unity with Christ for all of eternity. This is why God keeps pointing us back to salvation. He wants us to grasp that our future in heaven is more real than anything around us. Everything that is earthly won't last, true life is not found down here.

Colossians 3:1-4 ESV

- (4) When **Christ who is your life** appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

True life is found in Christ when we focus on things of this earth we rob ourselves of being able to have that mindset. Believers can have a very earth focused life. It is such a shame when we are called to something so great.

God has called us to start seeking after and thinking like our true selves. Who we truly are in heaven.

1 John 3:2-3 ESV

- (2) Beloved, we are God's children now, and **what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him**, because we shall see him as he is.

When we see Christ we will finally know what true life is. The application isn't fare off.

- (3) And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.

John says prep for that day. Purify yourself; start living your new life now we don't have to wait for heaven He gives us the opportunity to start living eternally now as we look forward to the day where we will fully have life.

As believers we have a tremendous option to live and focus on earthly things or to live and focus on eternal things. This is what the bema seat is all about, what have we been living for what have we been seeking.

1 Corinthians 3:11-15

- (11) For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.
 (12) Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw—
 (13) each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done.
 (14) If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward.
 (15) If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.