

## Seek Things Above

### Colossians 3:1-4

**Colossians 3:1-4** *If* then you have been raised with Christ, seek <sup>b</sup>the things that are above, where Christ is, <sup>c</sup>seated at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup> <sup>a</sup>Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. <sup>3</sup> For <sup>a</sup>you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. <sup>4</sup> When Christ <sup>a</sup>who is your <sup>1</sup>life <sup>b</sup>appears, then you also will appear with him <sup>c</sup>in glory.

#### I. See the New, Hidden Realities in Christ

##### 1. We've been raised (1) ... and seated with Him

**Ephesians 2:4-6** *But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, <sup>5</sup> even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ- by grace you have been saved- <sup>6</sup> and raised us up with him and **seated us with him in the heavenly places** in Christ Jesus,*

##### 2. We've died (3) ... and been raised with Him--pictured in baptism

**Colossians 2:12** *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.*

**Romans 6:1-4** *Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? <sup>2</sup> By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? <sup>3</sup> Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? <sup>4</sup> 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.*

##### 3. We're hidden with Christ (3)

– There are innumerable blessings/realities that are “not of this world” and cannot be seen... our life in Christ is part of this.

##### 4. Christ is our life (4)

**Phil 1:20** – “for me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.”

##### 5. Glory awaits (4)

**2 Thessalonians 1:7-10** *[He will] grant relief to you who are afflicted...when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, when he comes on that day to be **glorified** in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed...*

##### 6. Are these your promises? (ref. the “If” again in 3:1) --Gospel appeal.

“Why not today?--believe and call out...”

#### II. Further Seek the New, Hidden Realities in Christ

##### 1. Set your mind on things above (2)

- Not commending what he'd condemned in chapter 2 (asceticism & mysticism)
- Not commending escapism (monastic lifestyle)

- Not saying Christian life is merely waiting for his return
- Paul understood the Christian life to be dual citizenship (Phil 3)

## 2. Seek the things above (2)

- Not spatial so much as "other realm" or that which is to come ("now and not yet")

**Luke 12:29-31** do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, nor be worried. For all the nations of the world seek after these things, and your Father knows that you need them. Instead, seek his kingdom, and these things will be added to you.

**1 John 2:15** Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

### **Jeremiah Burroughs--A Treatise of Earthly-Mindedness (1649)**

1. When men look upon earthly things as the greatest things.
2. When their choicest thoughts are busied with earthly things.
3. When their hearts cleave to the earth.
4. When their hearts are filled with distracted cares about the world.
5. When the greatest endeavors of their lives are about earthly things.
6. When they seek any earthly thing for itself, and not in subordination to some higher and godly good.
7. When they are earthly in spiritual things.
8. When they conceive of the most heavenly truth in an earthly way.

## 3. Live in your heavenly identity (3)

- Dead to what you're dead to...
- In the security of a life hidden with Christ in God

## 4. Be watchful and eager for his return (4)

**Psa 90** - "teach us to number our days that we might apply our hearts unto wisdom"

### III. Specific Examples of an Upward-Seeking Life

1. Long for Worship
2. They Hunger for His Words (Bible) John 5:39
3. Go to Him in Prayer
4. Look for and long for His return
5. Seek to live in His ways
6. Aim to sanctify (set apart) all of life
7. Look to promote these things in others
8. Wrestle through your heartaches and trials in a God-ward way (2 Cor 4:16-18)

### IV. Self Examination--Do these not describe you? Are you not doing these things well?

- Perhaps you aren't a Christian (3:1 "If ...") ... have no redemption, death & resurrection ...
- There's hope! Go back to the indicatives... these things flow from the indicatives
- Christ is seated (signifies work completed-- Old Covenant priests never sat. (Heb 10:11-12)
- Rest in the Gospel! (Rom 8:31-37)
- Notice the progression: Realities in Christ → New identity → Changed conduct

## *Seek Things Above*

Colossians 3:1-4

### Introduction

The preeminence of Christ continues to be central. Reread thesis statement of the letter: Col 1:16-20.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Colossians 1:16-20** For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities--all things were created through him and for him. <sup>17</sup> And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. <sup>18</sup> 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. <sup>19</sup> For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, <sup>20</sup> and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

*If you haven't already, read this week's text:*

<sup>ESV</sup> **Colossians 3:1** If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup> Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. <sup>3</sup> For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. <sup>4</sup> When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

### Discussion 1: Stopping the Indulgence of the Flesh

Chapter 2 ended declaring the powerlessness of self-made religion for "stopping the indulgence of the flesh." *Remember, chapter and verse markings are not inspired. There is a continuation of thought into chapter 3.* Here he turns the corner and begins describing the gospel alternative: seeking/setting our eyes on things above--the preeminent Christ!

#### Related text:

<sup>ESV</sup> **Galatians 5:16** But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. <sup>17</sup> For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. [*Followed shortly by lists of the fruits of the flesh and the fruits of the Spirit*]

*Does it say you won't have the desires of the flesh?*

[We have enough guilt with sin we've actually committed, we cannot afford to beat ourselves up over temptation. What do you do with temptation? Are you praying for a transformed heart & mind? ... transformed appetites & priorities?]

*Note the last phrase--Again, what do you want to do?*

[Do you *really* want to stop sinning? *Or do you really just wish you could get away with it?* Are you growing to hate your sin? *If not, have you considered the possibility that you have never really repented and trusted in Christ for salvation?* Paul in Romans 7 describes a Christian's struggles with indwelling sin--note his use of "what I want to do" language there.

This week's text begins with "lf then you have been raised with Christ..." ]

### Discussion 2: Seeing/Living in the Hidden Realities of the Preeminent Christ

#### *Are these verses about you?*

[Ryan noted verse 1 "lf then you have been raised with Christ..." and gave a gospel appeal. Leaders--keep this up. We can never afford to assume people have repented and believed. Seen in its true light, it can never be boring either. Every gospel appeal should excite you. It should fill you with anticipation and hope as you hear the dead being called forth from the spiritual grave. Is that awesome or what? Perhaps someone in your CG (or a visitor) will "come forth" from the grave tonight... Call them!]

#### *Christ... is Your Life--Is this a statement defining Christ or you?*

[Obviously not defining (limiting in this case) Christ!... Recall the "He [Christ] is..." language from the letter's thesis statement (Col 1:16-20). *Christ is preeminent in everything... including in your life.* Leads to the next question... ]

#### *Are you living in your heavenly identity?*

[Do you understand this progression? (Getting the horse before the cart...)]

*New Realities in Christ → New identity → Transformed character/life*

Are you resting in Christ's finished (perfectly completed) work? Or are you busy trying to save yourself by your works/behavior?

If you were to describe yourself in a paragraph for us to read, would Christ be preeminent in your description? Now if you were to do this same exercise for the people you work with... how similar would they be?]

#### *Are you seeking things Above?*

[Are you putting more energy and effort into your daily comfort and/or earthly retirement than your eternal reward? *Leaders--if any of these are hitting close to home, lead out in confession and repentance.*]

### Discussion 3: Where is Jesus Now? And What's He Doing?

[In heaven seated at the right hand of the Father. Review the significance of being seated... ]

<sup>ESV</sup> **Psalm 110:1** The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool."

<sup>ESV</sup> **Ephesians 1:16** I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, <sup>17</sup> that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, <sup>18</sup> having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, <sup>19</sup> and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us

who believe, according to the working of his great might <sup>20</sup> that he worked in Christ when **he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places**, <sup>21</sup> far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.

**Hebrews 10:11-12** And **every priest stands daily at his service**, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. <sup>12</sup> But when **Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God**,

*And where are we (positionally)? (... And are we living with this in view?)*

[Already & not yet... seated with Him in glory!]

**Ephesians 2:4-6** But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, <sup>5</sup> even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ- by grace you have been saved- <sup>6</sup> and raised us up with him and **seated us with him in the heavenly places** in Christ Jesus,

*...And What's He Doing?*

<sup>ESV</sup> **Hebrews 7:25** Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since **he always lives to make intercession for them**.

[He, a perfect Savior, is making intercession for his saints. *If your group has time, you can read Jesus' High Priestly prayer of intercession in John 17. Note the things Christ asks the Father for on our behalf (understanding that Christ's prayers will be honored!) Note for whom these prayers are offered up--the elect.*]

<sup>ESV</sup> **John 14:2** In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would **I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?** <sup>3</sup> And if I go and prepare a place for you, **I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also**.

[He is preparing a place for us and has promised to return. Does Jesus keep his promises?]

*Are you living in expectation of Christ's return?*

[Or are you wasting your life<sup>1</sup> pursuing "the American dream"? What ought we to be doing until he returns?--The Great Commission]

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<sup>1</sup> Get and share copies of John Piper's *Don't Waste Your Life*.



## *Seek Things Above*

Colossians 3:1-4

Reread central theme of the letter: Col 1:16-20 and read this week's text.

### *Discussion 1: Stopping the Indulgence of the Flesh (cf. Gal 5:16-17)*

*Does it say you won't have the desires of the flesh?*

*Note the last phrase--Again, what do you want to do? (cf. Rom 7)*

### *Discussion 2: Seeing/Living in the Hidden Realities of the Preeminent Christ*

*Are these verses about you?*

*Christ... is Your Life--Is this a statement defining Christ or you?*

*Are you living in your heavenly identity?*

*Are you seeking things Above?*

### *Discussion 3: Where is Jesus Now? And What's He Doing?*

*(ref. Psa 110:1; Eph 1:16-21; Heb 10:11-12)*

*And where are we (positionally)? (... And are we living with this in view?)*

*(ref. Eph 2:4-6)*

*...And What's He Doing?* *(ref. Heb 7:25; John 14:2-3)*

*Are you living in expectation of Christ's return?*