

On Heavenly Mindedness, Part 2

Colossians 3:1-4

Trying to live the Christian life without Christ is nothing more than empty and fruitless moralism. And that is the saddest of all conditions, so close yet so far away. Covered with religion when you've got a tomb inside of you. But, if you have been raised with Christ, then by God's grace you've fulfilled the one condition necessary for gaining the necessary perspective. Obeying the blessed commands that Paul gives here.

Look at those two commands, second point in your outline, two obligations. Two commands, two obligations. Now that we've talked about the one condition, let's finish the, if-then statement, this conditional statement. If then you have been raised with Christ, then, here is the, con, here's the fulfillment of it, seek the things that are above where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. And then number two, set your mind on things that are above, not on things that are on the earth.

If you've met that one condition, that single simple nonnegotiable prerequisite then you have what it takes to proceed to step two. The two obligations, first seek the things that are above. And then second, set your mind on the things that are above. We'll take those as two sub-points.

Sub-point A, you could call it, has to do, seek the things that are above, that has to do with your pursuits. That has to do with your ambitions, that has to do with your will, and what is your will driven by but your affections and your desires. That's what this is about. So when Christ commands, "Seek the things that are above where Christ is seated at the right hand of God," we're here to obey that command, absolutely, because that's where your savior is. We love him, we want to be close to him, to be close to where he is, that person is the one who won our full salvation. And he has preceded us to that place. We want to be where he is. So our eyes are drawn ever upward, looking to our savior and the reward of our full salvation.

Second reason, we're compelled to seek the things above, because Christ is seated there. He is seated there at the right hand of God. Do you ever struggle in gift giving, especially to people who've lived a long time and have received

many gifts over their life? You're like what do I give to the person who's got everything? Right? What do you give to the Person, capital P, the one Person who has everything? Well in the infinite mind of the eternal God, here's the greatest reward that he could give his Son, his obedient Son who obeyed him fully in everything. You know what he gave him? The presence of God.

Listen, what makes heaven, heaven is that God is there. you know why we want to go there? God is there. That's why Christ wanted to be there. After Christ obeyed the Father perfectly and completely, accomplishing all the father's will, his reward is to be seated at the father's right hand. And then to continue doing the father's will, at the father's side. Is there any greater joy for a son than to be near his father? The greatest pleasure for Christ, the greatest joy for him, the gift that God gave to the one who already possesses all things by virtue of his divine nature, is to be bodily in the presence of God. Christ is right now bodily, physically, in his true humanity, Christ is experiencing that fullness of joy.

So the reward Christ enjoys right now, what does that reward have to do with us? That's where this gets so good. Listen, not only do we keep looking upward. Not only do we keep

seeking the things above because Christ is there, but also because we get to share in his eternal reward. He won it by his merit, by his obedience, and united to him, raised with him, we share in that reward. Christ, our head, he knows the fullness of divine joy now. And he intends to bring us into it.

“Behold I go to prepare a place for you,” where I go, “that where I go you may be also.” Right? He’s going to bring us into that fullness of joy to participate, it, in it with him. That’s what Jesus prayed for all of us, that we would partake of that full reward. John 17:24, he prayed “Father, I desire that they all, whom you have given me,” so all the elect, all of God’s people, from, from start to finish, “all that you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me from before the foundation of the world.”

Is it any wonder why Paul commands us “Seek the things that are above.” What else would you seek? Where Christ is seated at the right hand of God and, actually, that’s a present tense, imperative, which means a continuous aspect. A habitual pattern of life. Keep on seeking the things above. Look, why does he need to command us to keep seeking? Because in our current condition we’re so, aren’t we, dull of heart? We’re so dull of

mind. We're so prone to forget and slip back into old habits of thinking. So we need to revisit this command over and over, that we might keep on seeking the things above until the day comes when we are transported into glory, into his presence; our minds are, preoc, to be preoccupied with being there, with being with him, a prelude to enjoying our full reward. And that's why Christ rejoiced to command us in the same way in Matthew 6:33. Don't preoccupy your mind with anything else, but keep "Seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." Right? So, sub-point A, has everything to do with our desires. It has to do with our affections, what do we want?

We go after the things that we want. We pursue the things we love. We make time for the things that we want and desire. Yeah, but we often find our hearts dull, our thinking muddled, our love growing cold. So that tension, right? We've got to keep on going, we've got to keep on pursuing the obedience to this command because we're prone to be dull, we're prone to be weak. We need to keep coming back.

So how do we keep seeking, how do we keep striving to obtain? How do we change our desires, and fan those desires into a flame? How do we keep pursuing the things of Christ when we

wake up every morning with our heads and hearts so dull? How can we be that heavenly minded when we're daily encumbered by weakness and frailty, when we're ensnared by distractions and tripping over temptations? It's very simple. We've got to fight and win a battle in the mind. "Set your minds," as he said in verse 2, "set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on the earth."

Sub-point B, that has to do with the way you maintain your desire for Christ. The way you fan into flame the affections that you have for Christ. How you keep seeking the things above? Want to know the secret to seeking the things above? Grow your affections for Christ. Grow in your devotion to Christ. And how do you strengthen your affections for Christ? Simple, think about him and think about him a lot, and keep on thinking about him. The verb is *phroneo* in the Greek from the Greek word for mind, it has, has to do with pondering. It means, to think intently about, and keep thinking about. Again it's the present tense. So, think continually about the things above.

Notice, at the same time we're to purpose to not think about the things that are upon the earth. Because the world has nothing for us. Paul says, Romans 12:2, "Don't be conformed to this world, be transformed by the renewal of your mind. That by

testing you may discern what is the perfect will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.” So keep setting your minds, keep thinking about the things that are above, not about the things that are on the earth. How do you do that? How do you renew the mind?

How do you stop thinking about earthly things, and fill your mind with heavenly things? Devour scripture. Devour it. Eat it. Read it. Meditate on the words that have come from the mind of God. Those are the things above, right? They don’t come from earth. They don’t come from the heart or mind of man. They have come down to us from heaven. They are literally heavenly things revealed from God.

This is Philippians 4:8, right? Same concept there. “Finally brothers,” get this list, “whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.” Let me suggest something. Take all of your current distractions, take all your entertainment, all your extra-curricular activities and past times, take all the things that you do with your so-called free time and run them through that Philippians 4:8 grid. And as you run them through that grid and you test

against whatever is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable, excellent, and worthy of praise, as you run them through that grid, jettison anything that doesn't meet that standard.

Once you do that, you're going to find your schedule free up. You're going to see a whole lot of time available for more bible reading, and prayerful meditation, which results in spiritual power in your life, and wisdom for living and an abundance of unmitigated joy. And don't just think about the, the free time and the past times, think about what you busy yourself with. Think about what you say, yes, to because you don't have the courage to say, no, to the things you should say, no to. Think about what you obligate yourself to and how you give yourself to this and that and things that do not matter.

Look Christian, you've got to get your mind into the word of God. And you've got to get the word of God into your mind. That's what this is about. We need his thoughts in our heads, that is the input. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly. And don't just depend on yourself, it's to be a corporate thing. We're to teach one another, we're to admonish one another. That's how this works. That's the input and then, the output is going to be Colossians 3:16, "Singing psalms and hymns and



spiritual songs.” Thankfulness in your hearts to God. Joy is the output.

You don’t find anything more excellent than hymns and psalms and spiritual songs. Thankfulness, gratitude come pouring out of your heart, that’s the output. You become like the man of Psalm 1 whose delight is in the law of the Lord; on his law he meditates day and night. You’re going to be like a tree planted by streams of water, that yields its fruit in its season. And even the weakest parts of it, the leaves, they don’t wither. That’s because the vitality of God’s eternal life flows in and through you, goes through all you do, and you will surely prosper.

Those are the two obligations. Let’s turn to the three motivations in verses 3-4 we find three reasons to obey those commands, and they become really motivations for us. “For you’ve died,” it says there, “and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.” Three motivations, so you’ve got three sub-points here.

Powerful perspective, when we consider our past, our present, and our future because that’s what you find there in those two verses, past, present and future. Sub-point A has to

do with your past. Keep seeking the things above. Keep thinking about the things above because your past life is over. It's over. Who you once were is dead and gone. So it makes no sense to keep visiting the grave. You've died. That corpse is buried, don't keep going back. Its fleshly ambitions and dreams and hopes and aspirations. Everything that it used to occupy... dead and gone. All the priorities, the pursuits, the pleasures, dead and gone. So again, quit visiting the grave of your old dead self.

Quit rehearsing those thoughts and memories. Quit feeding those old desires. Quit giving in to those old temptations. Keep seeking the things above, keep thinking about the things above, because what you once were has been put to death.

Sub-point B has to do with your present. Paul says in verse 3, you've died and, present tense, your life is currently present tense hidden with Christ in God. Therefore, let the reality of your present condition motivate you to keep on seeking the things above and keep on thinking about the things above. Your present life, that is who you really are. Who you are right now, your life is first of all as it says here, first of all it's glorious and second of all it's unseen. There's a

glory there and there's an unseen, there's an invisibleness to it.

Verse 3 demands really the exercise of faith, right? Because contrary to what our senses tell us, we're actually dead, our old self is dead even though it feels very much alive, right? Contrary to what our eyes tell us, our true life is not here. But it's there. It's up there. Where it's hidden with Christ in God. We've got to live by faith and not by sight. That's what motivates us to keep on seeking the things above, to keep on thinking about the things above. Because we have to keep on feeding our faith with this truth.

We have to always look beyond our physical senses. And feed our minds instead with spiritual realities. That even though we feel locked down here on this earth the truth of it is that we are very much alive with Christ in God. And in fact, the life of God in Christ is the very source of all our vitality. The more we find our present identity in Christ, not on the things of our dead past, not in the things of our past culture, our old traditions, our family identity, our jobs, our bloodlines, and all the rest.

The more we find our present identity in Christ the more we're motivated to keep seeking the things above and keep

thinking about the things above. The present reality is our true identity in Jesus Christ and he is the source and he is the final goal of all of our life. In other words, he is the author and finisher of our faith. So there are past motivations, present motivations, you've died, let's keep the coffin lid closed. Your life is hidden with Christ in God. So you need to feed the by faith thinking and not the by sight thinking.

Sub-point C, finally, has to do with your future as a Christian. Your future. You need to keep seeking the things above. You need to keep thinking about the things above because your future life is glorious and that glory cannot remain hidden, that's verse 4, "When Christ who is your life appears then you also will appear with him in glory." What's that referring to? When's that going to happen? That's a reference to the second coming of Christ, isn't it? When every eye shall see him.

Not just our eyes, every eye. Again for those who are not Christians this can come across as pie in the sky and the sweet by and by kind of talk, right? It comes across as encouraging us to be so heavenly minded that we're of no earthly good. That's not God's view of it. God's view is that you need to be so heavenly minded that you'll become of some earthly good. We need

to be heavenly minded more and more and more, and not less and less.

For those of us who were raised with Christ, born again, spiritually alive, it's this promise of fulfilled hope that is perhaps our strongest motivation to keep seeking and keep thinking about the things above. We absolutely love the thought of being with him. We love the thought of being there forever. We need to remind ourselves, as the Apostle Peter said, that "God has according to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again." Spiritually regenerated to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

What do we look forward to? An inheritance that is imperishable, and undefiled and unfading. Kept in heaven for you. Who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. That time, that future hope, that unveiling, that's when our faith becomes sight. That's when Christ returns.

On that day we're going to enter the fullness of joy forever. Joining Christ in the presence of God. Notice the contrasting statements in verses 3, in verse 3 and verse 4. Paul says in verse 3 your life is now hidden with Christ. And then verse 4 that Christ who is your life, that's when your hidden

life will become visible. So what is hidden will become visible. What is not seen is going to become seen.

It's the verb *phaneroo* to be made manifest, to be revealed, to be made visible, put on display. It's what the Apostle John also taught in 1 John 3:2. That when he, "When Christ appears we shall be like him because we shall see him as he is." Perfect vision on that day means immediate conformity. We're going to grow up into full grown maturity in an instant. Into the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, when he comes we will experience immediate conformity to the image of Christ. No more waiting.

Listen beloved, we need to stop being distracted by the beautiful and interesting things that surround us and perhaps that's why Jesus said, "If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it from you. It's better for you to enter into eternal life maimed than to have everything intact and suffer in hell." Keep seeking the things above, we keep on thinking about things above. That means we're going to be much about the word of God and much about prayer.

Can I recommend something that'll help you increase your diet of God's word. Increase your frequency in prayer, your faithfulness in both those disciplines. Do an inventory of your

week. Just take your week, and write down how you spend your time. And resolve as you set about to journal your week to do what you always do. That is to say, don't become all of a sudden more spiritual and disciplined just because you're writing it down. Record how you actually spend your time as a routine habit, hour by hour, typical week. And then do a biblical assessment. Perhaps use this text or use passages like Philippians 4:8 and think about how God, prayerfully think about how God would have you make adjustments in the use of the time he's given you as a stewardship.

Because time, like all the resources God distributes to us, how we use time is something for which we'll also give an account. And keep in mind, time is that one resource that once you spend it you can't get it back. If we use time well, turning from worldly minded distractions to that which will promote heavenly mindedness we're going to find ourselves at the end of our lives spiritually fruitful, useful in the Lord's work, very productive in the gifts that he has given to us.

Oh, Christian has the physical earthly sight that you possess blinded you to the splendor and majesty of our glorious lord and savior Jesus Christ? Spend your days feeding your faith by which you see with spiritual eyes. As Peter says, "Though you

have not seen him you love him, and though you do not see him now you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory. Obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls." Let's pray.

Our Father we're grateful for this text, a very essential vital text at the hinge point of Paul's letter to the Colossians. As he turns them from what did not sanctify but actually polluted and harmed them as he turned them over to rooting out all evidence of idolatry in the heart. All sexual immorality, and sensuality, and covetousness, and greed which is idolatry. He commanded them to put those things to death because they are the root causes of so many sins that show up on the surface: Anger, wrath, malice, slander, abusive speech.

Heavenly Father that's, that's what we need is to set our mind on Christ. We pray that our vision would be filled with him. That you'd cause our hearts to rejoice in it. Help us to be diligent and consistent. Let us pay attention every Sunday and all through the week. Since you have given us the gift of the word of God in English. Let us take advantage of one of those many bibles that we own, and read it daily. Meditate on it often and prayerfully. Help us to do what you've commanded us to do for your glory in Christ's name, amen.