

Colossian 3 Series #2

“New Life In Christ”

Review

Last week we introduced a short series based on Colossians chapter 3. The core concept driving the content of this chapter has to do with the fact that God made us alive in Christ. Based on that reality (which depends on whether we have been born again or not) Paul lays out a life focus.

“IF you have been made alive” -- “THEN”

Two things should be the focus of life.

1. Continually pursue things above.
2. Continually ponder things above.

That’s the action Pursue and ponder – seek and contemplate things above.

Whatever Paul conceived as “above” it includes where God and Jesus exist.

“Where Christ is seated at the right hand of the Father”

Paul included a three-fold motivation for such a lifelong focus. (The WHY)

1. The old us died and God established a brand new core. (Past action)
2. Some aspect of our new life Now resides in this “above place”. (Present reality)
3. When Jesus returns we will come into a fully realization of our new nature. (Future expectation)

This message focuses on two aspects.

First, I want to review and expand on the reality of a resurrection to new life.

Second, I want to review and expand on “the above things” Paul charges us to devote our life to pursuing and pondering.

Paul lays out some basic lifestyle commands to consider instilling in your life for 2014.

He used a present tense imperative (command) indicating things we should continually practice.

Pursue and ponder things above not below; heavenly not earthly; spiritual not fleshly.

Continually Practice righteous paths

Put off the old

Put on the new

Continually permit the peace of Christ to rule your heart

Continually permit the word of Christ to guide your thinking (mind)

Continually pattern your relationships according to God’s design

NEW LIFE IN CHRIST (What did God do in us?)

Our contemplation of salvation generally focuses more on what God did **FOR** us rather than what God did **IN** us. Both are equally extraordinary and amazing. God forgave, redeemed, reconciled, sanctified, transferred out the kingdom of darkness, freed from slavery to sin and Satan, justified etc.

This could all be accomplished for us and yet nothing be done IN us. Christianity would be similar in concept to any other religious system. The supernatural aspect of Christianity is that God ALSO does something IN us.

Paul taught the Colossians the wonder of this work of God in us in chapter 2.

Continue to live in Christ the same way you received Him (by faith). Because when you received Him He rooted you in Himself and now continually builds you up and grounds you in Him. (Col 2:6-7)

In Christ the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you are in Him who is (continually) the head of all rule and authority, having been made full (and are still full). (with the same divine life) Colossians 2:9-10

*You were buried with Him in baptism (identification), in which you were also **raised up** with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. Colossians 2:12*

We could certainly manage to kill ourselves but could never raise ourselves to life. This new life, this resurrection to life is an act of God done IN us at conversion. God doesn't just give us something, we BECOME something through His life-giving work. Jesus became a life-giving spirit. (I Cor 15:45)

When my mother gave physical birth I was not just given something, I became something. We become a person by physical birth. We become a new person by spiritual birth. When God gave spiritual birth I was not just given something, I became something.

*As many as received Him, to them He gave the right to **become** children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man (physical life), but of God. John 1:12-13 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. John 3:6*

We are God's offspring by new birth. Our spiritual nature by new is as real as our physical nature by physical birth. We are called the children of God because that is what we actually **ARE**.

*See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; **and such we are**. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. 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 3:1-2*

No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed (sperma) abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. 1 John 3:9

There is a vast difference in being **called** something and actually **being** something. Just because someone calls you a name does not make you that. God breathed physical life into mankind at creation. Jesus breathes spiritual life into us at our new birth. Because of sin I became a child of wrath by NATURE. (Eph 2) Because of Jesus Christ I became a child of God by NATURE.

The act of my new birth is equal in magnitude to God's original creation. God's act of new creation is as glorious and monumental as His original creation. In fact, according to Rom 8 all creation waits eagerly and longs for the ultimate revealing of the sons (offspring) of God.

Our resurrection is equal in magnitude to the resurrection of Jesus.

The resurrection eliminated the power of the sin placed on Jesus.

Our resurrection eliminates the power of sin on us.

We **became** the righteousness of God not just given the righteousness of God.

*He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might **become** the righteousness of God in Him. 2 Corinthians 5:21*

Paul expanded on the concept of this glorious resurrection and new life in Ephesians 2. After describing a hopeless condition apart from a work of God in us, Paul masterfully explains what God actually did **IN** us.

But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions (and walking according the dictates of the devil), made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenlies (things above) in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, having been created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them. Ephesians 2:4-10

From now on we recognize no one according to the flesh (there is a new way of relating to people); even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him in this way no longer.

Relationship with Christ now goes **BEYOND** a physical connection. A new spiritual dimension has been opened up.

*Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away (point in time event); behold, he **has become** (point time event with continuing results) new. 2 Corinthians 5:16-17*

Connection with Christ through faith brought about a new birth, regeneration, new creation. Our old identity as a chronic law-breaking rebel died when we died with Christ. At that moment we became and we still are new.

*We once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of **regeneration** and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. Titus 3:3-7*

Paul told the Corinthians that this core change results in a new ability to perceive spiritual truth.

*Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. But a **natural** man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. But he who is **spiritual** (who has been regenerated) appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one. For **WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, THAT HE WILL INSTRUCT HIM?** But we have the mind of Christ. 1 Corinthians 2:12-16*

This core change also has implications for the way we live. Righteous living not only becomes **POSSIBLE** but **PREFERRABLE**. The motivation for continually pursuing and pondering the

things above is to realize that because of our new birth, it is our core nature to focus on those things. It is our birthright. It is our heritage in Christ. It is our true nature.

THINGS ABOVE (What should we pursue and ponder?)

As our key passage indicates, the focus of our pursuit in life is God and His kingdom.

“Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness”

Jesus and the Father and the Spirit rule the universe with all power and wisdom from a throne.

We currently have access to that throne.

Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. Hebrews 4:16

I am coming to believe that this is more than metaphorical. Access to God’s throne is actual.

This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and confident access through faith in Him. Ephesians 3:11-12

for through Christ we both (Jew and Gentile) have our access in one Spirit to the Father. Ephesians 2:18

Peter described the new heavens and earth as a place where righteous dwells. 2:pet 3:13

It is a place of holiness. It is a place where God’s will is done. Jesus taught us to pray for heaven-like realities on earth.

That God’s name be hallowed.

That God’s kingdom rules here as it does there

That God’s will is done like it is continually done in heaven.

So many people endured severe tribulation and hardship due to a graphic glimpse of eternity. God provided Jacob with a life transforming vision of heaven.

Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it." He was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." Genesis 28:15-17

This is an example of failure to recognize a spiritual reality that was there all the time.

Isaiah encountered a life altering vision of the “things above” which he described in Isaiah 6. After that encounter, Isaiah referred to God as the “Holy One of Israel.”

Ezekiel also attempted to relate his vision of the indescribable “things above.”

God enabled Elisha and his servant a glimpse into the “things above.” 2 Kings 6.17

Jesus longed to return to the “things above”.

Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was. John 17:5

John received a rather extensive vision of the “things above” which he recorded in Revelation. John described Heaven as both material and spiritual.

Paul spoke of a glimpse of heaven that completely impacted his life and ministry.

I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a man was caught up to the third heaven. And I know how such a man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, God knows—was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak. On behalf of such a man I will boast; but on my own behalf I will not boast, except in regard to my weaknesses. 2 Corinthians 12:2-5

Paul’s focus upon a future spiritual reality enabled him to endure present physical hardships.

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. Romans 8:18

We do not lose heart (in severe tribulation), but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man (our true core) is being renewed day by day. For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, 2 Corinthians 4:16-17

In fact, Paul considered every other pursuit in life garbage compared to achieving the full reality of the resurrection life. (Philip 3)

The “things above” that we pursue and ponder is a place not only of sights but sounds.

John spoke of the glorious worship of men and angels both now and in the future.

Jesus instructed us not to be consumed with food and clothes and material things but...

"Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. Matthew 6:33

The central nature of God's kingdom is not of this world (material only) but of another.

Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. John 18:36

For the Father rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son... Colossians 1:13

David longed to be in the house of the Lord. David pursued it and pondered it continually.

One thing I have asked from the LORD, that I shall seek: That I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD And to meditate in His temple. Psalm 27:4

Wow! “Seek” “Meditate”; Pursue – Ponder

We should not be preoccupied with a place but with who lives there. It is a place where the beauty of the Lord is prominent. Jesus encouraged His troubled disciples by describing a future place to live but the focus was on community with Him.

*"Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. If I go and prepare a place for you, **I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.** John 14:1-3*

The writer of Hebrews includes a very interesting declaration related to “things above” experience below.

But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel. Hebrews 12:22-24

The writer did not say you WILL come but uses a perfect tense verb to indicate that you came at a point in time and are still somehow surrounded by this reality. The writer wrote about these things as a present reality to followers of Jesus.

- A mountain in the city of the living God (not earthly) (Declaration of God's will)
- The HEAVENLY (not earthly) Jerusalem (the capital of the kingdom of God.)
- Myriads of angels.
- General assembly and church of the firstborn enrolled in heaven. (Graduated Christians)
Cloud of witnesses? Praying believers. Worshipping believers
- God – the judge of all who will make ALL THINGS RIGHT

- Spirits of the righteous made perfect. (Graduated Old Testament God-followers)
Moses, Elijah who talked with Jesus. Samuel who came back briefly.
- Jesus – the mediator of a new covenant
- The sprinkled blood (of Jesus) which has greater impact than the blood of Abel

The writer mentioned the fact earlier that Jesus entered the heavenly tabernacle to sprinkle HIS all sufficient once-for-all blood on the altar that is still there as an eternal reminder that IT TRULY IS FINISHED – PAID IN FULL. Something definitely worthy of our contemplation.

Paul urged the Philippians not to be like those who follow their fleshly appetites and set their mind on earthly things but to contemplate heavenly realities.

For (reason to live differently) our citizenship is (currently) in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior (physical return), the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself. Philippians 3:20-21

He will transform our physical bodies that we also will be able to fully function in both worlds.

Jesus rebuked Peter because of an earthly focus.

And He was stating the matter plainly (about His death and resurrection). And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him. But turning around and seeing His disciples, He rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind Me, Satan; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's." Mark 8:32-33

Things above also have to do with character and behavior.

Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom. But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy. And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace. Jam 3:13-18

Paul addresses putting of the old ways and adopting the new later in the chapter. Ephesians 2:20 explains how we were created for “good works / behavior”. The New Covenant is all about the ways of God written on our transformed heart. Philippians declares that God is at continually work in us as we work **out** (not for) this new way of life to the point where we not only do what pleases God but want to. (Philip 2:12-13)

I know these truths cause an internal struggle.

“But I don’t feel new.”

“I still have urges for things I know are not from “above”.”

“There is an internal struggle raging inside me.”

Paul struggled with the same thing but maintained a different perspective.

What I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate. Romans 7:15

The flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. Galatians 5:17

Romans 7 and Galatians 5 clearly describe a current internal battle. I hope to provide a new perspective to put that struggle into context with the truth concerning our new core.

It is vital that we understand that the foundation to a life pleasing to God and living godly must include a clear understanding of who we became at conversion.

*Therefore we have been buried with Christ through identification into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk (live) in newness of life. For if we have become united (identified) with Him in the likeness of His death, **certainly** we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection (continually), knowing (perceiving) this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be rendered powerless, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin. Romans 6:4-7*

Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Romans 6:11

Here it is.

We have been made alive by the power of Christ. We are born again as children of God.

If we have truly been transformed at the core of our being, our life purpose is to pursue and ponder “things above”; the things associated with our new life.

WHY?

We died and were raised a different person.

Our new life is presently connected to the dwelling place of God and Jesus.

When Jesus returns to earth, the true nature of our new nature will be fully revealed both on a spiritual level and a physical level.

Some claim we can be too heavenly minded we are no earthly good. That is not Biblical. More accurate is that we can be so earthly minded we lose any eternal impact.

Set your heart to seek (pursue) the Lord.

That will be the focus of next week.