

Colossian 3 Series #3

“A Heart Set to Seek the Lord”

Review

I thought that it would be beneficial to start out the New Year reviewing what the Bible reveals as our prime directive in life. Although it can be found all through the Bible, Paul capsulizes it pretty well in his letter to followers of Jesus living in the Greek town of Colossae.

Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory. Colossians 3:1-4

EVERYONE who has been made alive in Christ lives in a new dimension. They have been giving new longings. Their heart has been change. They have a new spiritual awareness and perspective.

Since that is true, Paul reminds his readers that this calls for a new direction in life. 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.

Why should we focus on “things above”? Paul included a three-fold motivation for such a lifelong focus.

1. The old us died and God established a brand new core.
2. Some aspect of our new life NOW resides in this “above place” with Christ in God.
3. When Jesus returns we will come into a fully realization of our new nature.

Last week we focused on the fact of our resurrection life and some possibilities regarding the identity of the “things above”.

Today I will spend our time together exploring the instruction to seek or pursue. Two actions dominate this passage. Pursue or seek. Ponder or contemplate

Seeking the Lord Explained

This action is not all that complicated. First, to understand a word one needs to understand its usage and range of meaning. How did the common people use the term in their everyday language? Language evolves over time. Fortunately for us, we have tools to help us understand the original language and its usage.

The term used here is pretty straightforward. It meant to seek after, desire or pursue something you perceive as valuable or necessary. It could be translated desire, pursue, look for, demand. The term is used quite often in the New Testament.

The son of man came to “seek” and save the lost.
Jesus did not “seek” His own will.
Jesus did not “seek” His own glory.
Satan “seeks” someone to devour.
We are told to “seek” first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness.
We are not to be like those who “seek” after their own interests rather than God’s
Love does not “seek” its own way.
The religious leaders “sought” to kill Jesus.
Zaccheus went to great lengths in “seeking” to see Jesus.

The concept has to do with a more than casual desire to acquire something or someone. It involves concentrated energy. It involves specific and regular action. It involves intensity. In this verse Paul used a command in the present tense indicating it is something we are called to do on a regular basis. How can you tell whether someone really has a desire for something? What is the key to identifying what really matters? What indicates you really want something? I think it boils down to two things; time and resources. You will give your time to what you perceive as valuable. You will give all of your resource to acquire what you perceive as necessary for life.

The problem in our culture is that many really do not feel that knowing God is either valuable or necessary for everyday life. Oh He might be necessary to get into heaven or bail me out of a mess. Many evangelists are nothing more than life insurance agents. Once you have the policy you put it in the drawer and don’t look at it until necessary. I may pay monthly premiums (offering) to keep the policy in force but the rest of my time and resources are shifted to things I deem more satisfying. Pursuit of deeper relationship with God falls far down the list of priorities.

The reality is that we are called to be agents of reconciliation. We are to proclaim the good news that it is possible to have intimate relationship with God. Many do not want that kind of relationship with God. In fact, until a heart change, “no one seeks after God.” Paul instructed every born-again believe to seek after their new heritage. Continually pursue the “things above.”

What is the ultimate focus of things above? Relationship with God. Continually pursue deeper relationship with God. It is the first of four purposes of Chico. Pursue the things above CONTINUALLY. Just as the Colossians and the church at Ephesus, the contemporary church has lost sight of its highest calling. This is a lifetime pursuit. It doesn’t happen overnight or at a conference or even a church service. It involves a number of things. But initially it takes an intentional decision to seek deeper relationship with God. Like anything worth pursuing, it takes a decision to act. When I see the wonder of who God is and what He has done for and in me and what He wants to do through me, I give my life to continual pursuit of communion with Him and service for Him. That is where it starts. I need to set my heart to seek the Lord.

Glory in His holy name; Let the heart of those who seek the LORD be glad. Seek the LORD and His strength; seek His face continually. Psalm 105:3-4

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

It all starts with a decision to do it. This concept is best illustrated than explained. The rest of our time I want to look at the diary of a few people in the Bible for some clues. For the sake of time I will give you a reader's digest version and let you actually read their stories during the week in the weekly "going deeper" suggestions.

Seeking the Lord Illustrated

THOSE WHO FAILED TO SEEK GOD

Paul was afraid that Satan would lead the Corinthians from the simplicity of devotion to Christ. 2 Cor 11:1-3

The Lord has the same concern.

The LORD has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men, to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God. They have all turned aside; together they have become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one. Psalm 14:2-3

Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help, and rely on horses, and trust in chariots because they are many, and in horsemen because they are very strong, but they do not look to the Holy One of Israel, nor seek the LORD! Isaiah 31:1

*And Rehobom (who strengthened himself) did evil **because** he did not set his heart to seek the LORD. 2 Chron. 12:14*

Prodigal Sons

Normally we know this as the parable of the prodigal sons. It turns out that both sons were equally uninterested in relationship with their father. This parable is the last of three parables demonstrating the priority, intensity and passion of the Father's love for the lost.

Briefly, a father had two sons. The younger son demanded the father give him his share of the inheritance and left town. The older son continued working the farm. The younger son ended up losing every last cent on the party lifestyle. Lots of fun, friends, food, frivolity. Soon it was all gone; including the so called friends. He found himself working with pigs (worst of the worst for a Jewish kid). Finally he came to his senses and realized that even His father's servants were better off. Notice his resolve.

"But when he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have more than enough bread, but I am dying here with hunger! I will get up and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men."' Luke 15:17-19

What was his motive for returning? Relationship or a job?

In spite of his motives for returning, Jesus made the heart of the father absolutely clear.

So he got up and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to

his slaves, 'Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet; and bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.' And they began to celebrate. Luke 15:20-24

The Father was most interested in restored relationship.

Now the scene pans to the elder son. He was incensed that the Father celebrated the younger brother's return.

He answered and said to his father, 'Look! For so many years I have been serving you and I have never neglected a command of yours; and yet you have never given me a young goat, so that I might celebrate with my friends; but when this son of yours came, who has devoured your wealth with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him.' Luke 15:29-30

Notice the younger son's motive. He was more interested in recognition for his hard work and celebration with his friends. He had no interest in celebration with his brother or his father.

These parables were missiles to the heart of the Pharisees who were complaining about Jesus eating with "sinners." The brothers represent two false motives for serving God. The younger brother represents the materialistic gentiles. The older brother represents the activist Pharisees.

Why do people seek God today? It is to get something from him not have relationship WITH Him. The church culture today errors on both counts. Either get stuff from God that satisfies my desires or do things for God to get recognition and blessing. Both of these lack a true heart FOR God; a heart set to seek His face.

The desire of the Father for both the sons was to be with them and them with Him. The highest call to the regenerated heart is to continually pursue deeper relationship with Him.

Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: "He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us"? James 4:5

The reason for the rebirth is for an intimate son/daughter relationships.

And what agreement does God's sanctuary have with idols? For we are the sanctuary of the living God, as God said: I will dwell among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be My people. Therefore, come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord; do not touch any unclean thing, and I will welcome you. I will be a Father to you, and you will be sons and daughters to Me, says the Lord Almighty. 2 Corinthians 6:16-18

THOSE WHO WERE FAITHFUL TO SEEK THE LORD

David

When You said, "Seek My face," my heart said to You, "Your face, O LORD, I shall seek." Psalm 27:8

*O God, Thou art my God; I shall seek You earnestly;
My soul thirsts for You, my flesh yearns for You, in a dry and weary land where there is no water.
2Thus I have beheld You in the sanctuary, To see Your power and Your glory.
3Because Your lovingkindness is better than life, My lips will praise You.
4So I will bless You as long as I live; I will lift up my hands in Your name.
5My soul is satisfied as with marrow and fatness, And my mouth offers praises with joyful lips.
6When I remember You on my bed, I meditate on You in the night watches,
7For Thou has been my help, And in the shadow of Your wings I sing for joy.*

*⁸My soul clings to You; Your right hand upholds me. **Psalm 63:1-8***

*As the deer pants for the water brooks, So my soul pants for You, O God. ²My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; When shall I come and appear before God? ³My tears have been my food day and night, While they say to me all day long, "Where is your God?" **Psalm 42:1-3***

*How lovely are Your dwelling places, O LORD of hosts! ²My soul longed and even yearned for the courts of the LORD; My heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God. **Psalm 84:1-2***

Josiah

*And he did right in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the ways of his father David and did not turn aside to the right or to the left. For in the eighth year of his reign while he was still a youth, he began to seek the God of his father David; and in the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem of the high places, the Asherim, the carved images, and the molten images. **2 Chron. 34:2-3***

Daniel

*So I gave my attention to the Lord God to seek Him by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes. **Daniel 9:3***

Asa

Asa was a king of Judah. When he came to power after the death of his father Abijah he immediately went to work removing the things that had taken attention away from the true God and instructed the people to seek the Lord. God honored him by bringing amazing victory over a much stronger foe.

Asa responded to a prophet's instruction and still committed to seeking the Lord.

- Removed idols. The things sought after for meaning in life.
- Restored the altar. The place of sacrifice, the place of worship.
- Rallied the family of the faithful for worship. (Gathered and assembled)
- Rendered sacrifice to the Lord. (sacrificed)
- Resolved to seek the Lord. (entered into the covenant, made an oath)
- Rejoiced over their commitment to earnestly seek the Lord.

They had fellowship and rest. Then Asa face another battle and crumbled. Rather than call out to God as before he looked to men for help. God sent a prophet.

Were not the Ethiopians and the Lubim an immense army with very many chariots and horsemen? Yet, because you relied on the LORD, He delivered them into your hand. For the eyes of the LORD move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His. You have acted foolishly in this. Indeed, from now on you will surely have wars." Then Asa was angry with the seer and put him in prison, for he was enraged at him for this. And Asa oppressed some of the people at the same time.

And in the thirty-ninth year of his reign Asa became diseased in his feet. His disease was severe, yet even in his disease he did not seek the LORD, but the physicians. So Asa slept with his fathers, having died in the forty-first year of his reign.

Seeking the Lord is not a onetime thing. God calls us to seek the Lord continually.

There are so many examples to observe. Perhaps Paul's personal reflection in Philippians covers it the best.

For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh

The Paul rattles off a list of "fleshly" credentials that would rival any card carrying Pharisee. Talk about recognition for lifetime achievement. Notice his new perception of those earthly credentials.

But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.

It is not that those things carried no value. It was just that in light of his highest calling their value was reduced to garbage.

For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

Here I think he means fully living out the resurrection life on earth. He admitted that he had not completely got there yet.

Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.

Look at the focus on relationship. His motivation is because Jesus made him His own.

Further,

Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Paul did not hold on to past activity or credentials or even failures but keep his eyes on the prize. The prize? The "above" call of God in Christ. God made us alive in Christ. And we are NOW seated with Christ who is our life. Our life is NOW hidden with Christ who is seated at the right hand of God.

We are to continually pursue that "above" life above the life below.

WE are to pursue and to continually ponder the spiritual aspect of our identity.

Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. Only let us hold true to what we have attained. Philippians 3:1-16

It begins with a decision to set your heart to actively seek the Lord this coming year.

When you do, there are some phenomenal rewards.

These are just some.

- He will let you find Him.
- He will bless and reward you.
- He will give you increased wisdom and understanding
- He will give you a heart of Praise.
- He will restore your heart and life.