

Good morning. The Lord bless you and give you peace. We are continuing our message from last week. You may remember that we were concerned with the implications of Paul's charge to seek the things that are above. We are motivated to this because of who we are. True Christians are those who have been raised with Christ, spiritually speaking, we have put to death the self that seeks sin. We find, then, language in the scriptures like Galatians 2:20, **I have been crucified with Christ, it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who lived me and gave himself for me.**" And in our own context of **Colossians, 3:3 "For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God."** Paul is speaking to Christian people who were physically alive, conscious, and so we must understand that this conversation is one that is spiritual with eventual physical implications. If you want more information to consider this concept and biblical teaching, spend some time considering **1 Corinthians 15:35-58**. For today, I simply want to make the point that there is a spiritual experience in us at salvation that can be described as having died with Christ, and when we repent of our sins and believe, we are made alive in Christ. We are changed. We are given eternal life. Consequently, we seek Godly things, and we look for ways to magnify God's purposes.

Last week we worked under the point, **"Seek the things that are above"** and considered **verse 1**. This week I want to tackle **verse 2**, which challenges us to set our minds on things above, not on things of this earth. But in order to prepare our minds for this consideration, just consider a couple of analogies that give a broad picture of what Paul is trying to do in these exhortations.

There is a common human experience, irrespective of culture, and that is the feeling of anticipation, joy, and nervousness for special days. It may be a vacation that we have saved for and meticulously planned that just looms around the corner of a few months. It may be the feeling of being just days from receiving certification for a job you wanted, or a degree for which we have worked very hard. It is such an odd time. There are still very many and important things that must take place before we can enjoy the completion of that planning, but, to borrow a good colloquialism, it is so close we can taste it. That is the emotion behind this charge of seeking the things that are above. Heaven is so close we can taste it, so stay focused. Live as a tourist in this world by living in light of the fact that this is not our home, heaven is.

Here is another example. How many of you have ever been to a pre-school, or even grade one or grade 2 T-ball game, or soccer game? It is great entertainment, especially if you notice the ones that are there because mom and dad needed something to distract the kids for a couple of hours. These are the kids in the outfield that lay down on the grass or start trying to catch a grasshopper in the middle of the game. Jokingly, I think God created those kids in part to sear the intensity of T-Ball coaches who coach the kids like they are interviewing for a MLB position. Have you ever known any coaches or parents like that? How about the kids playing goalie in soccer that walk away from the net, then look disarmingly at coaches and parents screaming for them to get back? Their little buddies are moving about like a blob on the field and they are lonely, so off they go. This is a funny experience when the kids are little, but even our culture groans at the listlessness of people as they get older. Part of this exhortation is not only to be mindful of the amazing glory that is still coming for those who believe in Jesus Christ as their Savior from sins, but that we be ready to combat false Christianity that was leaving Christians listless and robbed of the truth and engaging in sinful things.

I am reminded of an O.T. story that is very helpful with this. Several generations of kings had passed since the time of King Solomon, King David's son. Israel was in constant civil war, and the nations surrounding Israel were constantly looking to take advantage of the chosen people of God. But these were not faithful people, for the most part, and that was the reason for the divided kingdoms and constant warring with other nations. At one point in Judah's history, and with one of a very few of its faithful and God honoring kings, Josiah, repairs to the Temple had been ordered. In the midst of the repairs the High Priest found a copy of Moses' Pentateuch, which outlines the Law of God. They read it, and when it was read before King Josiah, the king tore his clothes because they had been

unfaithful to God's teaching and did not know it. When we lose sight of God's teaching and purposes, we will put our hands out towards sinful things. Paul is exhorting us to stay focused.

As a side note, isn't it sad that not even the High Priest had a copy of the Law until it was found? How desperately anemic we can become as God's people! What were they teaching? The state of God's people will always be anemic when God's written Word is disdained and minimized, and it will soon find itself lost to the very ones that say they believe. How much influence does God's Word have in our lives, my friends?

Paul is exhorting us to a faithful pursuit and vision of that for which God is concerned. Last week we considered this under the point:

.I. Seek the things that are above: 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."

This week we move to the second verse:

.II. Set our minds on things that are above, not on things of this earth. Colossians 3:1-2 "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."

.(A. On the Quiz) Both of these verbs, seek and set, are in the **imperative mood** in the original language. They are commands, and in a sense, I believe that they function almost as a **Hebraic literary tool of repetition**. These are the **easy parts of knowing God's will**. It's like a teacher telling you during class that the five questions that were just reviewed will be seen again. Those are no brainer points. This is a "will be on the quiz," scenario.

.(B. Set – Frame of Mind) In our American English usage, and perhaps in other English-speaking contexts, when we say that we are setting our minds on something, we use it to mean that we are **completely engaged and committed** with all of our faculties to whatever **task** or desire that we have embraced. This is not so different from the usage in the original. **To be intent on something, or to be committed to someone's cause**, are the **general uses** of this word translated "set." Paul's charge, then, **considers the frame of mind that the Christian is to have. Christianity is not just experienced, it is considered, it is meditated upon, it is learned**. Do not the scriptures teach this? We fight conformation to the world, not by all these different experiences in the Christian life, but because of the **renewing of the mind**, says Paul, in **Romans 12:2**. It is with the minds that we **test all things and discern what is the will of God**. **Ephesians 4:23** challenges us to be **renewed in the spirit of our minds**. The Great Commandment, and recorded in **Matthew 22:37, Mark 12:30, and Luke 10:27** demands that we **love God with all our mind**.

Consider the calls to meditate on the Word of God. **Psalm 1:2**, that man or woman is blessed when his or her delight in in the law of the Lord, and it is meditated upon day and night. **Psalm 119:97**, "Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation day and night." And what of Christianity being learned? **I Corinthians 11:1**, "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ." In Ephesians Paul rebukes them for function in a way contrary to the way they were taught, the way they learned. **Ephesians 4:20**, "But that is not the way you learned Christ!" Dear friends, there is no excuse for not knowing the Word of God.

.(C.) Why is the mind so important to redeem? Well, there is another passage of scripture that displays in action form what we have been considering this morning. You may remember this passage. Jesus is quite close to the time of His passion and He began to teach the disciples very clearly that His next experience was to be His crucifixion. Peter, who had just been commended for discerning through the Holy Spirit that Jesus was the Christ the Son of God, now took on the role of director and rebuker of Christ. And as quickly as Peter was commended, he was rebuked for being a roadblock to Jesus' faithfulness. Jesus says to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a hinderance to me. For you are not **setting you mind** on the things of God, but on the things of man," **Matthew 16:23**. **The mind is a pivotal place for right action, and it will either be trained upon the lines which trace the graces of heaven, or it will be employed to legitimize our selfish and sin-filled passions.**

.(D. How Satan works to blind the mind.) Since Jesus rejects Peter's actions as being Satanic in nature, we can consider how Satan worked to supplant the works of grace. When God created, **Genesis 3**, Eve is beguiled in her mind. **"When she saw the tree was good for food, and a delight to the eyes, and made one wise, she took and gave to her husband."** Her line of thinking was initiated by the evil one, and her mind played out the whole scenario. Adam shows the twists the mind takes when he took the fruit from Eve's hand and then essentially blamed God for a faulty creation with Eve. The thinking might be seen in something like, "she has given me this fruit, and God gave her to me, so I guess it's okay." Many thousand years later, when Christ is being tempted by Satan, Satan used the Word of God and twisted it in the hopes that Jesus' mind would be moved to fulfill his diabolical plans. But Christ defeated Satan.

This is still a tactic used by the evil one. Have you heard anything like, "God has created me with sexual desire, so obviously he wants me to explore it, therefore its ok to have these sexual experiences the way that make me feel good. After all, God also wants us happy." It is twisted thinking. God's commands do not contradict one another.

How about a recent one that is being promoted by people that despise Christianity, and that is that it is not loving your neighbor to limit abortions. California governor Newsom recently displayed this kind of message on billboards in states that have restricted abortions. But just work through his thinking. Essentially, he is saying that it is not loving not to let your neighbor kill their closest neighbor, their child, because your choice is greater than the one who has no voice. These are battles of the mind. Incidentally, the country of my birth has been happily sliding down the slippery slope of thinking. Once you start going down this path of choice for death, there is no one who is safe. They have legalized medically assisted euthanasia. One need only apply to a select board to have their case for euthanasia approved, and then they can be killed through clinical aid. It has gotten so bad that an even liberal countries like England are calling out the direction that Canada is taking (<https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/why-is-canada-euthanising-the-poor->).

But lest we feel too proud as Christians by looking at the sin of others, consider that too often we presume upon grace with our minds. "I will choose to do this thing I know is wrong, and then ask God to forgive me, after all, we live under grace, not law." This kind of thinking is too common, and it is a manipulation of the things we know about God in order to make room for our sin.

Setting our minds on things above demands a constant consideration of information from this world against what the Word of God says. What does Paul say in **2 Corinthians 10:5** but that we **"destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ."** **Are you a biblically thinking Christian, my friend?** We can't reach a culture with Jesus if by our thinking we are taking action that celebrates what Jesus hates.

But we can take this a step further and consider that setting our minds on something can therefore extend to the idea of goal setting, or a target that we are trying to hit. In a few messages we will see that the things of the earth that are in Paul's mind, the life of sinful pleasures, and selfish ambitions etc. But ask yourself the question, what are my goals as a Christian and do they line up with this command? You see, as we saw last week, setting our minds on things above, like seeking that which is above, **is a commitment of all my faculties, abilities, and desires to fall in line ultimately in such a way that we are serving Christ first.** It doesn't mean we all have to be pastors, or missionaries on foreign fields. God calls us to be carpenters, bankers, electricians, teachers, moms, dads, siblings, etc. We just need to make sure that our callings display the redemptive power of Godly and biblical thinking.

There is much that can be drawn from the statement of "things above," but remember that it is in contrast to the things of this world. Our passion as Christians, our hopes and aspirations are ultimately seen in Jesus Christ and in the home that is to come.

I close with a story of Moses. Moses was so faithful in his labor for the Lord in leading God's people. But Moses acted presumptuously and was denied entrance into the Promised Land. Yet, one of the most amazing gifts of scripture is to show us Moses again. This time he is before Jesus at the Mount of Transfiguration. Peter, James, and John quivered in fear at the display of Christ's glory and the glory of Moses and Elijah, who was also there. But consider what we see. Moses who once had his sights on the earthly Promised Land now stood in front of the one who would bring rest to us. This is Jesus, the incarnate Word of God, and as such can heal our bodies, our souls, and our minds. Rest in Christ and set your mind to seek Him and His glorious cause of the gospel. His beckoning to those who do not know Him is so amazing, **Matthew 11:28 "Come unto me all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest!"** Amen.