

Set Your Mind On Things Above Colossians 3:1-2

One of the things we find continually in the New Testament is how Christians are to be different. It is to be at the core of who we are. It is based upon the fact that we are not of this world. When we speak of our citizenship being in heaven (Philippians 3:20), we are sojourners and pilgrims (1 Peter 2:11), being “not of this world” (John 17:14 as spoken of the apostles), concluding the “Sermon on the Mount” we find two paths described (Matthew 7:13-14) with the true path being narrow and difficult and traveled by few, and numerous other descriptions that explain WHY we are different.

In So Cal we are an immigrant society with all sorts of cultures. And those from various parts of the world bring those cultures with them. In many instances you can tell by mannerisms, what they eat & wear and how they speak that they come from some other place. Some can view these differences with prejudice (which is sinful), or you can realize where they are from and try to accommodate them (cf. 1 Corinthians 9:19-23 – a spiritual application). The point is, their differences are noticeable.

So what is it that makes a Christian different? One passage that addresses this is Colossians 3:1-2ff. This is a book where Paul is writing to the church at Colosse and expressing concerns about their understanding of Christ Jesus. In this book he seeks to establish the relationship a Christian is to have with Christ, and makes a defense of why. He addresses the relationship of Christ to God the Father, creation, the church and even redemption, and why a proper understanding of these things is important. He then challenges them with practical applications concerning that relationship.

That begins with the text we want to address in this lesson – Colossians 3:1-2.

I. **Seek those things that are above**

a. ***We are to be seeking.***

The word used here is not a casual glance, but someone purposely looking for something. Much like the parable of the pearl of great price (Matthew 13:45-36).

This is also the word in Matthew 6:33 – “seek first the kingdom of God...”

These passages ought to give us an idea of what it means to “seek those things that are above”.

The word “seek” in our text is **a present tense verb**, meaning this is ongoing action. As Christians, we must learn that we can never stop looking to improve.

Philippians 3:12-14 – we press on and we press toward the goal;

Hebrews 6:1 challenges us, “Let us go on to perfection”. Like the word “seek”, these too are present tense verbs.

b. ***Seeking also means we know what we are looking for***, or at least that we are looking for something. Many people today are searching for answers related to life and why we are here. Some have already made up their minds, but others (AND troublesome situations can increase this number) want answers and are seriously seeking.

Concerning this seeking, our job as Christians is two-fold.

i. ***We must keep looking*** – we can never stop seeking to improve or ensuring that we are right (cf. 2 Peter 1:10 – be diligent to make your call and election sure...).

ii. ***We need to be ready to help others who are looking*** – 1 Peter 3:15, 1 Peter 2:11-12, etc.)

c. **What are “those things that are above”?**

It would be things that originate and are associated with God and heaven. Let’s consider a few of these:

- i. God Himself – while this obvious, we remind ourselves of this fact.

Ecclesiastes 5:2 speaks of God being in heaven as we are warned to not be rash in making vows.

Matthew 6:9 at the beginning of the Lord’s prayer.

Matthew 5:16 as examples we seek to glorify God in heaven.

Mark 16:19 – Jesus sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. The implication is clear in that expression that God is in heaven.

It is BECAUSE God is in heaven that all other things originate there as well.

- ii. Jesus is there - our text – Colossians 3:1 – Christ is there, sitting at the right hand of God.

Hebrews 9:24, having completed His work on earth, Christ has entered into heaven itself, which is the true “holy place” (a reference to the inner chamber of the tabernacle/temple).

ARE we seeing to be with our Lord? (cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:17)

- iii. Heaven itself – our eternal reward – it does us good to from time to time remind ourselves of what heaven will be like to keep us seeking and striving for it.

2 Corinthians 5:1-2 – we have a house eternal in the heavens.

Paul began the letter to the Colossians by mentioning “the hope which is laid up for you in heaven...” (Colossians 1:5)

1 Peter 1:4 speaks of our incorruptible and undefiled inheritance which is reserved in heaven.

ARE we seeking a home in heaven when this life is over?

- iv. The word of God –

Psalms 119:89, “Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven.”

The fact that it is called the word of God implies that it originated in heaven. This is why we show such respect for His word, or at least we ought to.

1 Thessalonians 2:13, Paul commended these brethren because they received the word of God as the word of God and not from men.

1 Peter 4:11 – speak as the oracles of God, as if God were speaking Himself.

This is why we must study regularly (2 Timothy 2:15). 2 Peter 1:3, His word provides for us “all things that pertain to life and godliness.”

Are we seeking TRUE guidance from Him by studying His word on a regular basis.

- v. His church – Ephesians 3:10-11. The church was a part of God’s plan from the very beginning. He intended it to be a spiritual sanctuary where we meet with God and worship Him (according to His will), and with our brethren as we assemble to exhort and edify one another (cf. Hebrews 10:24-25, 1 Corinthians 14:12).

If we are seeking things from above, we are going to be looking for the church that pleases God and not ourselves. That is why studying and following the pattern of the NT is so important. This will affect HOW we worship, what we do as the church, how we are organized, and how we become a part of her, etc.).

- vi. Wisdom – A constant theme of warning in scripture is to not be caught up in the wisdom of man. Man’s wisdom seeks to dismiss God, change His will, and solve problems without putting their trust in Him. How tragic.
James 3:17-18 describes the character of the wisdom that is from above AND contrasts it with the wisdom of this world.
1 Corinthians 2:1-5 notes that Paul came declaring the testimony of God and not his own or the wisdom of men.
IF we are seeking things above, we will want to follow what God says is wise rather than men.
- vii. Our calling – Hebrews 3:1 speaks of how we are partakers of the heavenly calling. To us that means, our invitation to be with Him. ***This is about obeying the gospel,*** and accepting the invitation of our Lord (Matthew 11:28-30, Acts 2:38-40). This is about being baptized into Christ (Romans 6:3-4, Galatians 3:27) as we obey His plan of salvation.
- viii. How to live your life – Ultimately, seeking those things which are above, means we are seeking to live a life BASED upon those things.
James 1:17 notes that every good and perfect gift comes from above. This is in a context dealing with our need to resist temptations. The point being when we seek those things from above, it will direct HOW we live our lives.
Romans 8:5ff addresses how we live a life guided by the Spirit of God – we let Him and His will direct all that we do.
Friends, if you are seeking those things that are above, it needs to be with the intent that it will change you and govern how you live your life.

II. **Set your mind on things above**

- a. It is not enough to look for what originates in heaven. What do you do when you find it? That is what Paul said next – SET YOUR MIND on things above. What does this mean?
- b. Make up your mind. You now have a goal to reach for. It is like the one running the race and he looking to Jesus at the finish line (Hebrews 12:1-2).
Consider again the pearl of great price (Matthew 13:45-36) – what does the merchant do when he finds it? He goes and sells all that he has so that he can obtain it. IT becomes his goal.
- c. We need goals – one who has set his mind on something has a goal in mind. A target that he is aiming for. This is key to living the Christian life.
 - i. One who is wandering about aimlessly will accomplish very little. 1 Peter 1:18 – warns about “aimless conduct” which I believe applied to their former life.
Ephesians 2:11-12 notes their former life being without Christ, aliens and strangers (which can involve wandering), also they had no hope and were without God in the world.
CHRISTIANS have goals – it is to be part of who we are.
Motivational speaker, Zig Ziglar once said, “If you aim for nothing, you will hit it every time”. How do we typically describe one who is not saved? As LOST! (cf.

Matthew 18:11).

That is what happens when one has not direction.

- ii. Hebrews 12:1-2 – we are looking to Jesus, who is in heaven and at “the finish line” of this race we call life.
I press toward the goal – Philippians 3:12-14. That was his life!
2 Corinthians 5:9-10, We make it our aim – to be well pleasing to Him.
- iii. We need to be serious about our goals – Hebrews 2:1 – give the more earnest heed.
Hebrews 10:23 – without wavering...
There are many who have things they would love to have. They have dreams and would love to see changes. But how serious are they about it? Are you serious enough to make changes and sacrifices to achieve your goal? Serious enough to make it a priority?
- iv. Can others see where you are aiming? We are to be examples. It ought to be clear that we are striving for heaven. Consider Timothy – 1 Timothy 4:12-16
- d. Not the things of the earth – this is the man that is focusing upon himself (2 Timothy 3:2ff, Romans 12:3, Philippians 21), material gain (Matthew 6:19-21), pleasures of this life (2 Timothy 3:4, Luke 8:14), pride and lusts (1 John 2:15-17), carnal things (Romans 8:13, 6-7). This is the one who is putting his trust and hope in what this world has to offer. Solomon did this and realized how vain it was. That is the message of Ecclesiastes. We see what can happen when we put our trust and seek after the temporal things of this world. Remember the warnings of Jesus – no one can serve 2 masters – Matthew 6:24. We have to make a choice!

So, what have you set your mind on? When we are focused on spiritual goals, it helps us address whatever struggles we are facing. If you continue reading Colossians 3:1-17 you find a practical blueprint that can help you get where you are striving to arrive – IF you are a Christian. Next week I want to look at what these verses say. In the meantime, let me encourage you to make up your mind that no matter what happens this week and, in this world, you are going to set your sights on an eternity with God. Is there some way that we can help you with this? If so, let me know.