

Sunday, February 21, 2021—Colossians 3:1-2 Set Your Affection on Things Above

Outline of the Book

- The book of Colossians is a four-chapter powerhouse. The first of its four chapters are doctrinal and the second two are practical.
 - “In its doctrinal half the one is polemic, for Paul is combating the semi-Judaistic mysticism and asceticism which we have described, with its false cosmogony, angel worship, and supposedly penetrative insight into spiritual secrets. . . The dominant theme here is the fullness and pre-eminence of Christ, and the full completeness of Christian believers in Him, against the mysticism and asceticism enjoyed by the philosophies and tradition of men.” (Baxter, 202)
- Colossians 1:9-10—present the outline and structure of the book.
 - Verse 9—“that ye **might be filled** with the knowledge of his will”
 - Verse 10—“that ye **might walk worthy** of the Lord unto all pleasing”
 - Knowledge of what God is doing produces a worthy walk in the believer. Therefore, Colossians is both doctrinal and practical. It presents the doctrine of what God is doing in the most pointed manner and then instructs us how to walk that doctrine out in our lives.

THE EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS

Christ the fulness of God to Us

Introductory thanksgiving (1:1-8)

Opening prayer for “fulness” and “worthy walk” (1:9-14)

- DOCTRINAL—“THAT YE MIGHT BE FILLED” (Cps. 1-2)
 - Christ the fulness of God in the creation (1:15-18)
 - Christ the fulness of God in redemption (1:19-23)
 - Christ the fulness of God in the Church (1:24-2:7)
 - Christ the fulness of God versus heresy (2:8-23)
- PRACTICAL—“THAT YE MIGHT WALK WORTHY” (Cps. 3-4)
 - The new life—and believers individually (3:1-11)
 - The new life—and believers reciprocally (3:12-17)
 - The new life—and domestic relationships (3:18-21)
 - The new life—and “them that are without” (4:1-

Personal addenda (4:7-18)

Practical Section

- The order of teaching in all of Paul’s epistles is doctrine first then practice. How we live is always determined by what we believe. Doctrine is the basis of practice.
- Paul begins the practical section of Colossians by presenting Christ as the highest of all inspirations for the believers conduct and the basis for a worthy walk.
 - Colossians 3:1—“. . . seek those things which are above. . .”
 - Colossians 3:5—“Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth. . .”
- Notice the three tenses in Colossians 3:1-3 that serve as the basis for our life and service to Christ.
 - Past Tense—“If ye then be risen with Christ. . .”
 - Present Tense—“For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.”
 - Future Tense—“When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.”

Colossians 3:1

- **If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.**
- **If ye then be risen with Christ,**—Paul is not questioning the reality of this teaching he is setting up a logical argument. Just as in Colossians 2:20 we have the condition “if” followed by a verb “be risen” in the indicative mood. This is the logical use of the word “if.” If some such thing than some such thing.
 - Colossians 2:20—the grammatical structure is the same as in Col. 3:1.
 - Colossians 2:11-13—established the fact that believers were buried, risen, and quickened together with Christ, “through the faith of the operation of God.”
- Colossians 2:12—clearly establishes that believers are dead, buried, and rise with Christ through the process of Spiritual identification.
 - Romans 6:3-5

- Ephesians 2:5-6—believers are raised up with Christ and seated with him in the heavenly places. That is where you are right not spiritually in Jesus Christ.
- So, the first phrase in Colossians 3:1 is not doubting the reality of our being “risen with Christ,” rather Paul is setting up a logical argument.
- On the basis of the established fact that believers “are risen with Christ” we are to seek those things which are above.
- **seek those things which are above**—the word rendered “seek” in Col. 3:1 is also translated “desire” in other places. It carries the idea of pursuing after, striving for, or endeavoring to attain. Taken together Paul is saying that believers should continuously seek the “things which are above.” What things are those?
- **where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God**—the next phrase gives us detail about what the above things are that we should be seeking. They are the things which are consistent with where Christ our Head is seated i.e., “on the right hand of God.”
 - Ephesians 1:20-23
 - Ephesians 2:6
- Where is Christ seated on the right hand of God? In heaven the heavenly places. So, because believers are raised with Christ and seated with Him in the heavenly places we are to “seek” those heavenly spiritual things “which are above” that we possess because we are seated with Christ.

Colossians 3:2

- **Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.**
- **Set your affection on things above**—the phrase “set your affection” is in the imperative mood. Paul is commanding the Colossians to “set” their “affection” in a particular direction i.e., “on things above.”
- It is interesting that Paul would begin Chapter 3 by using the imperative mood in verse 2 after how he ended Chapter 2. Note the contrast between “why as though living in the world” in Col. 2:20 with Col. 3:2. The “rudiments of the world” focuses one’s attention “on things on earth.” In contrast to the believer’s “affection” being “set” on “things above.”
- Just because believers are “dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world” doesn’t mean that Paul doesn’t have an imperative command for the body of Christ. In fact, Colossians 3 is full of them.
 - Colossians 3:1—“Seek”
 - Colossians 3:2—“Set”
 - Colossians 3:5—“Mortify”

- Colossians 3:9—“Lie not”
- Colossians 3:12—“Put on”
- Colossians 3:15—“And let the peace of God rule”
- Colossians 3:16—“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly”
- Colossians 3:18—“Wives, submit”
- Colossians 3:19—“Husbands, love your wives”
- Colossians 3:20—“Children obey”
- Colossians 3:21—“Fathers, provoke not”
- Colossians 3:22—“Servants, obey”
- Galatians 5:16—“Walk in the Spirit”
- II Timothy 4:2—“Preach the word”
- Romans 12:2—“Be not conformed” “Be you transformed”
- I Corinthians 11:2—so did Paul deliver “ordinances” to the body of Christ in that he established and “appointed” by his authority as the Apostle of the Gentiles “rules of action” for the body of Christ to “observe?”
 - II Thessalonians 2:15; 3:6
- Colossians 3:2—Paul tells us that we are to “set” our “affection on things above i.e., heavenly things “not on things on the earth.” To set your affection on something means to think about something. It deals with the action of the mind in thinking, reasoning, reflecting, and contemplating.
 - Philippians 2:5
 - Philippians 3:19
- Colossians 3:2—in other words, our minds are to be actively engaged in thinking, intellectually comprehending, and reasoning through the things which are above, on an intelligent, objective, and non-emotional, continuous concentration on the revelation of truth pertaining to Jesus Christ, the Head of the Body and all that we are in him.
 - II Corinthians 4:17-18—The things which are seen are earth not the things which are not seen are above, heavenly, and eternal.

- II Corinthians 5:1
- II Corinthians 5:15
- Ephesians 1:3, 2:6, 3:10, 6:12
- Philippians 3:20—our conversation and manner of life is in heaven.
- Colossians 3:2—we need to set our affection on and seek after those things.
- The argument of Col. 3:1-2 is that our strength is found in entering experimentally into that identification which is already an accomplished fact.
 - The Accomplished Fact—“If ye then be risen with Christ”
 - The Experimental Appropriation—“Seek” . . . “Set” (Welch, 230)