

Things That Are Above: Colossians – Week 8

HOOK

Who has ever been in a car accident? Car accidents are common, very common. 77% of drivers have been in at least one car accident. Someone dies in a car accident every 15 minutes. Statistically, the average person will be in a vehicular collision 3-4 times in their lifetime.

Think of all the things which cause them. (drunk driving, speeding, weather related, running stop signs/red lights, aggressive driving, fatigue, people being idiots = “reckless driving”).

1.6 million crashes every year are from phone use while driving. 14% of collisions where someone dies is from drivers distracted from their phones. You are 23x more likely to be in a car accident when on your phone. **Why?**

It’s obvious. Because the driver’s eyes are not where they should be. Being on your phone increases the amount of time **a driver’s eyes are off the road** by 400%. A driver’s attention is diverted, unfocused, broken... enslaved to distraction.

- **The same is true spiritually.** When our focus is misplaced – and we’re blessed that scripture is clear where it should be – it causes spiritual destruction with short-and-long-term effects... and even spiritual fatality.

INTRO

Paul set the tone in Colossians by praying they would be “filled with the knowledge of His will” and living in a manner that pleases God. He also acknowledged that any power they have would be from God and only limited to His divine strength. He has confronted several heresies trying to invade the church, but false He has repeatedly – and will again tonight – remind his reader what God has done for them through Christ. Why does Christ have the power to transform people from death to life, in debt to forgiven, alienated and homeless to adopted and chosen, and fruitless to fruitful? Because He is the visible image of the invisible GOD, supreme over all Creation, and all-powerful to raise the dead with new life. This is Jesus, and He offers what is real, lasting, and free.

BOOK – Thesis:

OUR IDENTITY

Beginning out of order: **Colossians 3:3** - *For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.* **Colossians 3:1a** - *If then you have been raised with Christ...*

“IN” Christ Theology:

What Paul doesn't say: “We were saved by Christ.” What Paul DOES say often, very often, is “in Christ,” “in Him,” “in God,” “in the Son,” “with Christ,” or “with Him.”

- **The Greek word for “in” (en) denotes a fixed position.** This is where you are.
- **Illustration:** 1 Pet.3:20-22 paints the picture of our being “in Christ” similar to Noah and his family being saved by being “in” the ark.
 - JESUS is our ark and we are IN Him.

THE POINT: Eph. 1:3-4 - *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him.* – Praise break!!!

- Believers become inheritors of ALL of God's graces and blessings at the moment of salvation!!! – Praise break Pt. 2!!!

Gal. 3:27 – *For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.*

- Imputed righteousness! “Hidden in Christ” (Col.3:3)

Gal. 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 loved me and gave himself for me.*

Rom. 6:3-8 – *Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.*

Reread: Col. 3:1-4 - We are IN Him.

- When He died, our old selves died with Him. When He resurrected, our new identities were born = “raised with Christ” = “Co-resurrected”
- 2 Cor. 5:17 - *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.*
 - ... and the new includes every spiritual blessing God has to offer!
 - Coheir of heaven, assurance of salvation, freedom from the power of sin, supernatural love, the indwelling of the H.S.

Application: Start a list. Everywhere you recognize “IN Christ” theology in a text, jot down the blessing, mercy, or grace.

OUR RESPONSE

Colossians 3:1b - ...*seek* (pursue/chase/prioritize) *the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.*

Despite being a Christian, do you still pursue the same things you did when you were a sinner? Do you chase the same things as your unbelieving peers? This is the spiritual version of a preoccupation with your phone while you’re driving. Paul is challenging them to take their eyes off of their old distractions and obsessions, and place them on something new... someone new!

- **Does a butterfly return to the dirt to crawl beneath the grass or slowly climb the rough bark of trees?** Does it hope the caterpillars don’t notice that it’s any different?
 - **Note from Butterfly:** “What’s up my 1,000-legged worms? I won’t be seeing you in the same places or doing the same things we used to do together. Everything is different for me now! I have a new view of the world and it’s beautiful. – **Sincerely, Butterfly** PS. I highly advise you spend some downtime in a cocoon. It’ll do wonders for your vertical.”

A new life has new priorities. A new life has a new way of speaking and acting. A new life has new purpose. A new life has new pursuits. **But what is it we seek, focus on, keep locked in our vision?** The verse includes the answer! “...**where Christ is...**”

- Heaven isn’t the goal. It’s the venue where we get to be with Jesus.
- **John MacArthur** – “To be preoccupied with heaven is to be preoccupied with the One who reigns there and His purposes, plans, provisions, and power. It is also to view the things, people, and events of this world through His eyes and with an eternal perspective.”
- **Matt. 6:33** - ...*seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.*

“At the Right Hand of God”

- Expression of position, power, authority, and role in the life of the believer.
- **Eph. 1:20-23** – *[God] worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and*

dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all. (cf. Luke 22:69, Acts 2:33)

- **Rom. 8:34** - *Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.*
 - The King of all authority is on our side. God, Himself, is our advocate.

Colossians 3:2 - *Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.*

- **V.1** – “seek things that are above,” now “set your minds on things that are above”

Begin: What are the “things that are on earth”?

- **Things that are temporary.** Trials and pleasures, pain and happiness, failures and successes are all temporary and limited to this earthly life. Focus on what has purposeful value for eternity.
- **Things related to sinful flesh and corrupted culture.**
- **James 1:14-15** - *But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.*

What does it mean to set our minds on things that are above? Paul is challenging us to take our attention off the things of the earth, society, sin, and etc. **A believer’s thoughts, NOT JUST ACTIONS, should be transformed to a heavenly focus.**

- **Rom.12:2** - *Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*
- **What’s our focus? Colossians 1:9-10** - *be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;*

Application: What about everyday life stuff that distracts (**phone while driving intro**)? It may be time for a social media fast, a secular music fast, an unbelieving friend fast, a phone fast, a movie/show fast, a politics fast, or a boy/girlfriend fast. What has enslaved your attention? Ask the Lord if He’s asking you to take a break.

- **Phil. 4:8-9** – *Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.*
 - “think about these things” and “practice these things.”

OUR FUTURE

Colossians 3:4 - *When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.*

- So far, **Paul has been encouraging believers to look upward in our focus and now forward in our hope.**
- “**who is your life**” - No longer I who live but Christ in me. (**Gal. 2:20**) Jesus doesn't just give life as an abstract gift. He, Himself, IS life, and He gives Himself to us. HE becomes our whole lives.
- Just like we spiritually died, buried, and resurrected in Him, we will also be physically glorified with Him. Our physical death is not the end. It's a promise.
- **Rom. 8:16-17** – *The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.*

What does it mean to be glorified? Let's begin with what does it mean to be converted?

Illustration: Tozer's story about boy who was taken from streets to a mansion. He stole all he could carry and returned to the streets. But he took his old rags-of-clothes with him. He was miserable in that life and accustomed to living on the streets. – **The Attributes of God Vol. 2 pg.211-213, A.W. Tozer**

A sinner, who's heart is hard against God, would hate living in heaven.

Like making a file on a PC fit to be used by Mac, it takes being “converted.” At salvation, God converts a sinner, a child of hell, into a child of heaven. God will spend their life sanctifying them, conditioning them to be in the holiness and majesty of the undiluted presence of Holiness Himself.

1 John 3:2 – *Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.*

Romans 8:29-30 - *For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.*

- **Upon death, God will complete our sanctification fully and finally, fitting us for heaven, – that’s glorification.**

TOOK

This verse (v.4) looks forward to the end times:

Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43 – **The Parable of the Weeds**

V.41-43 - *The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.*

If the sanctuary was suddenly translated to heaven, what would we see? If we were all spontaneously there, how would we respond?

If this room was divided between those who followed Jesus and made the King of heaven the master of their lives AND those of you who have merely lived your life for yourself – rejecting the authority of God and making yourself your god, where would you stand?

Have you been preoccupied with your life, with worldly priorities, with your own desires? OR, do you seek the things that are above and is your mind on things that are above? Do you love the righteousness you once hated and hate the sin you once loved? Are you IN Christ? Is He your life?

It's a peaceful thing to wrap your arms around the feet of your heavenly Father. It's a terrifying thing to bow at the feet of your Judge.

RECAP

- Those who are IN Christ receive every spiritual blessing of God.
- Those who are IN Christ have shifted their priorities and focus from the things of earth to the things of heavenly importance.
- Seeking and setting our minds on “things above” means seeking and focusing on Jesus – the Crown Jewel of heaven.
- Those who are IN Christ have a future to look forward to. We will be glorified with Christ... fitted for heaven.

Challenge 1: What is it you need to fast from?

Challenge 2: Begin an “IN/With Christ” list. Go back and reread Colossians Ch. 1&2.

~ Soli DEO Gloria