

Colossians 3:1-4 – 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.

Introduction:

Colossians Chapter 3 is the peak of a very intense book. As we observed previously, the first imperative in the letter to the Colossians is in 2:6. There are a total of four imperatives in Chapter 2—four imperatives in seventeen verses (from 6-23). In Colossians 3, there are 20 imperatives in 25 verses. If we remove the chapter breaks from 2:8 through 4:6, there are 30 imperatives.

The next few lessons will drive the main point of the letter and provide believers with the desire of God for their lives. This provides a base answer for the question, “What is the will of God for my life?”

Historical Context:

Let’s remind ourselves of some important factors:

1. Very little influence from Judaism prior to their belief in Jesus Christ
 - a. “Jew” used once; “Israel” is not used
 - b. No Hebrew Scriptures quoted
 - c. Colossians 4:10-11
 - d. The Law and circumcision seem to have been introduced after they received Jesus
2. The primary influence comes from the immediate culture
 - a. Mysticism
 - b. Spiritualism
 - c. Legalism
3. Paul does know them directly – Epaphras
4. Paul is providing apostolic direction

Textual Analysis:

Verse 1 – The verse begins with a 1st Class Conditional Clause (just as previously in verse 20). It is appropriate to translate this “since.” The audience has been established as believers, saints, having believed in Jesus.

The word for *raised* is the typical word used with the prefix indicating with, “**συνεγείρω** *sunegeirō*.” This word is also used in Colossians 2:12 and Ephesians 2:26.

The main verb is “**ζητέω** *zēteō*,” a Present Active Imperative. The sense of a present imperative is current and perpetual activity. This is why the NASB translates this “keep seeking.” The word *seek* can be used literally, as in looking for a person or thing. It can be used not in a tangible item but still literally, as in looking for opportunities. It is also used figuratively: required, demand, try (as in to get to someone, kill someone).

The word for *above* is “**ἄνω** *anō*.” It can mean “up” (movement) or “upward.” In terms of location, *anō* means above. This can be “on earth” as opposed to the lower regions (of the dead); hence, it can also designate “the living.” Likewise, *anō* contrasts the heights of heaven with the earth below.

That which is sought is *the things*, which is simply a plural article used as a pronoun. What does it mean to seek the things above? Are these tangible things? The actual full phrase is “**τὰ ἄνω ζητεῖτε**.” The next phrase is “**τὰ ἄνω φρονεῖτε**.”

The “*ta anō*” construction is used in a few locations: twice in Colossians 3, Philippians 3:14 (the above call), Galatians 4:26 (the above Jerusalem), and John 8:23 (I am from the above). With this in view, we translate this without the added “things.” “Therefore, since you have been raised up with Christ, seek the above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God, think on the above not that which is on the earth”

The idea of seeking and thinking upon is not dealing with objects. I do not know what “the things above” are. I do know that we are to set our minds, have our thinking set upon, have our eyes set upon the spiritual realm where Jesus is.

Verse 2 – The word for *set your mind* is “**φρονέω** *phroneō*,” and means to have understanding, to have a frame of mind, to have a particular attitude, or to fix one’s thoughts upon. Colossians uses this word once where Philippians uses this word 11 times (mind, attitude, concern, lifestyle). I do not think all of these ideas are portrayed in Colossians 3:2, but it does give us the understanding that it is more than just think about it. We are to have our mental disposition set on “the above.”

Verse 3-4 – In verse 1, the passage begins with an “**οὖν** *oun*,” an inferential particle that draws upon the previous information. Here in verse 3, there is different particle, “**γάρ** *gar*.” This provides a reason for the instruction.

There are four verbs in verses 3 and 4 with no imperatives. There are two certainties and two promises.

You died – Aorist Active indicative

You have been hidden - **κρύπτω** *kruptō* – to lay one on the other, to keep something secret or protected. The verb is in the perfect passive indicative. This indicates a past action that has been completed that has lasting or perpetual effects that have been done to you. You died indicates that you believed and identified with Jesus Christ. When that happened Jesus acts upon you and covers you.

When Christ, our life, should be made manifest – the verb is in the Aorist Subjunctive – This form is close to the future indicative and some have indicated that the forms melded. The verb “**φανερῶω** *phaneroō*” in this form points to the return of Jesus (1st Peter 5:4; 1st John 2:28-3:2).

When Christ appears then we will be made manifest in glory. This is the same verb but this one is Future Passive Indicative. Notice the only thing that is in active voice in these two verses is “you died.” The basis for the instruction in verses 1-2 is the fact that you died, the fact that Jesus covers and protects you and promises that you will be made like him in glory when He appears.

Colossians 3:1-4 – 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.

Introduction:

In the previous class we analyzed these verses in detail. Do we understand what it means to be a believer in Jesus Christ? To begin we need to take a trip through some verses that parallel Colossians 3:1-4 in a particular understanding.

Romans 6:1-11

Romans 7:1-6

1st Corinthians 15:20-23

2nd Corinthians 5:14-15

Galatians 2:19-21

1. *Crucified with Christ* and *died with Christ* are synonymous
 - a. This is accomplished when we believe
 - b. When we believe, we are identified with Christ
 - c. Being identified with Christ, we are identified with his death/crucifixion
2. Identification with His death/crucifixion is used to indicate separation
 - a. From the Law
 - b. From the flesh
 - c. From sin
3. *Raised up with Christ* and *made alive together with Him* are synonymous
 - a. This is accomplished when we believe
 - b. When we believe, we are identified with Christ
 - c. Being identified with Christ, we are identified with His resurrection/life
4. Identification with His resurrection/life indicates a guarantee of
 - a. Eternal life
 - b. Glorification – new body, be made like Him

These are all eternal things. This is both true and vital to understanding who we are in Jesus Christ.

Most of us are casual believers. We believe that God exists, we believe that He created the world, we understand that we broke this world and He will fix it, we take Jesus at His word that He provides eternal life as a gift for all who believe in Him, we believe that we will live forever in a perfect eternal state, and we even look forward to having a glorified body. However, all of this is just surface information.

John 10:10 – I came so that they may have life and have it abundantly

2nd Corinthians 1:5 – Abundant comfort

2nd Corinthians 9:8 – God has the ability to provide grace in abundance

Ephesians 1:7 – Redemption and forgiveness are ardently given to us by His grace

Ephesians 3:20 – God has the ability to do all things in super abundance beyond what we ask or think.

If the only provision is eternal life, a promise of eternal glory, that would be a great thing.

Romans 8:18 – For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

2 Corinthians 4:17-18 – For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

1 Peter 1:3-6 – Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to *obtain* an inheritance *which is* imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials.

But we have been granted much more than that. We have been granted provisions.

Romans 5:8-11 – But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath *of God* through Him. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

Romans 8:34; 1 John 2:1-2 – My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for *those of* the whole world. – Intercede, advocate

We have been granted the ability to live under any circumstance and be content and happy.

Philippians 4:11-12 – Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need.

5. Identification with His resurrection/life indicates ability:
 - a. To walk in life
 - b. To live in continuity with Him, alignment
 - c. To please Him
 - d. To live in peace (Romans 5:1; Philippians 4:4-7)
 - e. To have love, joy, peace, and more (Galatians 5:22)
 - f. To serve in His administration (Romans 11:11-25)
 - g. To be eligible for rewards in the Kingdom/Eternity

Colossians 3:1-4

What is the connection between this lesson and Colossians 3:1-4. Keep seeking the above, set your mind on the above. From the previous lesson we have developed the understanding that “we are to set our minds, have our thinking set upon, have our eyes set upon the spiritual realm where Jesus is.”

The only way we do this is to focus on His revealed truth found in Scripture. When our focus is on the above (the spiritual realm) and the person of Jesus Christ, we are able to enjoy these potentials. Some benefits are automatic based upon our position with Christ; these are mainly eternal.

Some benefits are potentials depending upon our focus and continued belief in Jesus Christ.

Next week, we will deal with the struggle of legalism contrasted with the 20 imperatives in Colossians.