

Hearts Set On Heaven - Colossians 3:1-10

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[0 : 00] Paul writes, Since then you have been raised with Christ. Set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.

For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. Now put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature.

Sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires, and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. You used to walk in these ways in the life you once lived.

But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these. Anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. Verse 9, And do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices, and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge, in the image of its creator.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you for your word, your word that we know is true. We confess, Lord, that we have failed at least once in most of these sins that Paul just listed.

[1 : 22] And yet we acknowledge how gracious you've been towards us. That you have sent Christ. That you have saved us through His work. That you have imputed His righteousness to us.

And those of us who call you Lord and Savior have a life that is hidden in Christ. A life which is Christ. We thank you for these truths. We ask that you would apply them to our lives and sow this truth deep in our hearts today.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. Well, why do we sin? And how do we stop? That's our question here this morning.

Why do we sin? And how do we stop? I mean, we just read God's word in which Paul essentially said, Stop sinning. He's speaking to a church in Colossae in the first century.

He says, Put your sins to death. Stop sinning. And I don't think any of us would really disagree with this command. I don't think any of us really want to keep on sinning.

[2 : 29] But the reality is that we do. And this was true for the church in Colossae. And it's true for us today. And I have to say that globally, we as Christians, to a large degree, have failed in our well-meant efforts to equip each other to wage war against sin.

And here's what I mean by that. Typically, today, as well as throughout history, the approach to getting people to do what is right is telling them in a very loud, angry, threatening, maybe pulpit-pounding voice, Don't do what is wrong.

Stop sinning. We've operated under the assumption that if we portray the terrible consequences of sin in sufficiently graphic and revolting terms, then maybe we'll succeed in motivating the human heart to turn from it.

Now, I'm not suggesting that sin doesn't have terrible and devastating consequences. It does. Nor am I suggesting that we cease telling people to stop sinning or that we turn down the urgency with which we warn them that has to be a part of our understanding of our lives in Christ.

But if all we bring to bear against the incredibly powerful allure of self-indulgence is a just-say-no campaign, then we don't stand much of a chance against sin.

[3 : 54] And so I think we need to pause and ask, why do we sin? And I would argue, we enjoy it. At least in the moment.

In the moment, sin usually feels good. In the moment. What did Eve see in the garden?

She saw that the fruit was good. It looked good. It was desirable. It was pleasing. Again, I would argue that sin appears good.

It feels good in the moment. And really, nobody would do it otherwise. I doubt you have had to sin out of duty. If you know what I mean. I doubt you've had to wake up in the morning and look at your list of to-do and go, oh, I better add some sin just in case I forget to sin. It's probably not something you have to focus on. It just happens. Again, I would say it's because it feels good.

[4 : 58] And the Bible consistently holds the same view of why we do what we do, and that is that we typically only do what we want to do. We only do what we desire. I'm not saying we only do what we like or wish or prefer.

There's a difference because you can make someone do something under coercion, right? So if someone holds you at a knife point and demands your money, your desire to live will outweigh your desire for money.

And so even though you don't want to give them your money, you will out of your desire to stay alive. Everything we do flows from our hearts. And the bottom line is this.

When faced with temptation, the immediate gratification of sin will almost always triumph over the fear of its long-term consequences. If we're really honest with ourselves, the immediate gratification of sin will almost always triumph over our fear of its long-term consequences.

And I would propose that the best way to defeat the power of sin's promise of pleasure is by faith in God's promises of superior pleasures.

[6 : 07] In other words, the only way to fight the pleasures of sin is to be so reoriented to the gospel that our desires rise above our sinful desires of this world.

And that's Paul's main point in the passage today. His main idea is that our pleasure in our promised future with God is the power for our purity in this life.

And I'll say it's one of the powers for our purity in this life. That is our pleasure in the promised future, our promised future with God, is one of the powers for our purity in this life.

And this is Paul's goal as stated in verses 5-10. He says he wants to see us Christians put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to our earthly nature.

And then he lists out some sins. And in verse 6 he says, because of these sins, the wrath of God is coming. Verse 7, you used to walk in these ways. And he's speaking to Christians.

[7 : 07] You used to walk in these ways in the life you once lived. But now you must rid yourself of all such things. Anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips.

Verse 9, do not lie to each other, since you've taken off your old self with its practices. And put on the new self, which is being renewed in the knowledge and the image of its creator.

In a nutshell, Paul wants to see purity in the church in Colossae. He wants to see purity in all of Christ's churches. That's the goal, is to have churches that are pure.

And I think most of us would agree that we don't want these lists of sins to define who we are.

Again, I doubt we wake up in the morning and go, oh, I can't wait to just be an angry, vengeful, malicious person today.

I doubt as Christians we wake up in the morning and go, I can't wait to go slander somebody. We want to be pure. We want to be rid of our sin nature.

[8 : 14] But how? How do we truly wage war against sin? Paul proposes that one of the ways in which we do this is we find ourselves looking forward to our promised future with God.

And this is what he does in verses 1-4. He gives us the foundations, the weapons, if you will, to wage this war. In verse 1 he says, Since you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.

Some translations might say, Seek the things above. It's find your desires in Christ, in God, in our future with Him.

Verse 2, Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. It's interesting to note, even Paul recognizes, our minds will typically follow our hearts.

Set your hearts on things above, and then think and dwell upon heaven. Set your minds on things above. Verse 3, Recognize there is more than our life here on earth. Your life is now hidden with Christ in God.

[9 : 30] The life we are living is but a shadow of our true life, which is hidden in God, which in verse 4 he says, is Christ. When Christ who is our life appears, then we also will appear with Him in glory.

In short, our pleasure in our promised future with God is the power for our purity in this life. Now there's an old saying that says, you can be so heavenly minded that you're no earthly good.

Have you heard that saying? You can be so heavenly minded that you are no earthly good. And let me tell you, I couldn't disagree more with that saying. I absolutely disagree with that.

In fact, I would argue that most Christians are nowhere near as heavenly minded as we should be. Just think to yourself for a moment, when is the last time I seriously sat down and considered my future life, which is hidden in Christ, with God, eternal life in paradise?

What does Jesus say to one of the thieves next to Him on the cross? Today you will be with me in paradise. If we're honest with ourselves, we rarely sit down and set our hearts and our minds on things above.

[10:46] I would guess that none of us are truly at risk of being so heavenly minded we are no earthly good. C.S. Lewis once said, in history you will find that the Christians who did the most for this present world were those who thought the most about the world to come.

That they were so fixed on where life was truly headed. The Pilgrim's Progress gives a great snapshot of this in a story. It's a reason it's a best selling book still.

Again, in history you'll find the Christians who did the most for this present world were those who thought the most about the world to come. And so I would argue it is utterly impossible to be so heavenly minded that we are no earthly good.

Because the Bible teaches and Paul just taught right here that in order to be any sort of earthly good we must become absolutely heavenly minded. We must set our hearts and our minds on things above where Christ who is our life has our life hidden with God.

The more heavenly minded we are the more earthly good we will be. That is, the more we delight in God the more we delight in where He dwells and the place that He is preparing for us and the eternal life that we are promised that we will live in Christ then the more we are stirred by these realities the more our affections are caught up in the world to come the more our thoughts are captivated by heaven and then the more we will naturally do what Paul commands us to in verses 5-10 the more we will naturally begin to put to death the things of this world namely our earthly natures.

[12:33] And so today I just want to spend a little bit of time looking up and looking forward if we could. And I am just going to go through a few attributes of God and this is how I have learned to study heaven is to look at an attribute of God in a way that He has explained Himself to us and then recognize that when we say heaven we mean the world to come or the new earth and that in that world to come God will dwell with us and because of who He is we can expect heaven to be certain things.

We are just going to look at three of them today and then Wednesday night we will look at a few more because I firmly believe that the best way to do what Paul has said to do in verses 5-10 which is what all of us want to do is to do what he says in verses 1-4 to set our hearts and our minds on things above.

So first I want us to see that God is holy God is holy so heaven will be without sin God is holy so heaven will be without sin and we have seen a few times already in the letter of Colossians that God is holy Colossians 1-2 Paul is writing to God's holy people God's holy people are holy because they belong to Him we have been made holy in Christ verse 12 of Colossians 1 he has qualified us that is His holy people to share in the inheritance of His holy people in the kingdom of light Colossians 1-22 we have been reconciled by Christ's physical body which we will celebrate in the Lord's Supper later on today through death so that we might be presented holy in God's sight God is a holy God we are His holy people and therefore to dwell in His presence will be to live life in a world that is absolutely without sin

I don't know if you've ever just thought about that for any amount of time it can be life changing if you just think what is life on planet Earth like without sin I think we would all agree there's good stuff on planet Earth there's beauty all around us my goodness Ireland it's gorgeous I thought San Diego was pretty I came to Ireland I dread going back to Southern California how weird is that it's gorgeous there's beauty relationships are beautiful food tastes good there's so many good things here in this life on this Earth yet there's sin all around us I made a special effort this week to watch the news every day and read more news than I would usually read and it's just depressing oh it's awful two shootings in America this week 23 people killed this week because of anger and rage and malice lives that have been turned upside down because of sin the immorality around us the greed can you imagine doing business in a world where there's no greed can you imagine walking streets where people aren't harboring anger

I think of traveling every time we go through those ridiculous security checkpoints and they're good we need them why do we need security everywhere because we live in a fallen world you know we're told that God is holy and we're told in Revelation 21 and in 22 that in the new Jerusalem nothing unclean will enter no evil no darkness will be allowed to be in God's presence because God is holy and so life in the world to come will be without sin that alone will be shocking it will be absolutely shocking to see ourselves without sin to know ourselves without sin to know others without sin getting in the way and that's the second thing I want us to look at is God is triune He's a trinity and so heaven will be lived life lived in perfect community

[17:14] God is a triune God He exists as three in one He's truly one God truly Father truly Son truly Spirit and if you have a difficult time understanding that that's okay the Bible says that's the truth it's hard to wrap our heads around I've tried to explain it to my kids at least a hundred times usually I end up more confused than them and I'm going okay so it's one God and it's truly Father and truly Son and truly Spirit and truly one God and yeah that's just what the Bible says it's hard to wrap our minds around but the important thing to grasp in there is that God has always eternally existed and will always eternally exist within perfect community within Himself we saw in Colossians 1-3 we saw that Paul says we thank God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ so we see the Father and Son and then in Colossians 1-8 we are told that Epaphras has told Paul of the Colossians love in the Spirit so we see Father

Son Spirit it's proclaimed all throughout all throughout Scripture Old Testament New Testament you can't get away from this fact God exists in perfect community with Himself He didn't create us because He was lonely but He did create us to live like Him in community and we see in Genesis 1-2 that man and woman before their sin they're in perfect union they're unclothed and unashamed they're not fighting against each other they're not blaming each other they're not trying to outdo each other and that they're told to be fruitful and multiply that God's plan is for His people to inhabit planet Earth in perfect relationship and He sets the example for what that's like by existing Himself in perfect community and so when we think about the world to come we can look back at original creation and we can look up at God and we can go

God exists in perfect community He created us to exist in perfect relationships without sin between us and then we can look forward and go heaven's going to be perfect relationships with no sin between us and I think of meals together with friends and relatives who've passed before us with saints of old sometimes I'll get so caught up thinking about who I can't wait to go for a walk with in heaven I'll forget that I'm here on earth at times and I think about some of these guys that we read or some of these ladies in scripture that are just we would say heroes of the faith and we'll get to spend eternal life with them in perfect relationship with Christ Himself in perfect relationships Anthony Hockman says God's plan for relationships does not stop on the new earth it continues He doesn't abandon

His purposes He extends and fulfills them relationships begun or even hope to have begun on earth will continue in heaven getting richer and more close than ever Jonathan Edwards says every Christian friend that goes before us from this world is a ransom spirit waiting to welcome us in heaven there will be the child of our youth that we've lost below through grace to be found above in heaven our relationships with our Christian fathers and mothers and wives and children and husbands and friends which was interrupted by death here shall be commenced again in the upper sanctuary and shall never end and the template for life in perfect community is God Himself who exists eternally in perfect community and in heaven we will get to experience relationships at a level that we cannot even fathom I know Cassie and I have thoroughly enjoyed getting to know Karageline Baptist Church and we've had meals with some of you we've had small group with some of you we've gone on hikes and literally climbed mountains with some of you and it's just been a blast to get to know you guys and there's part of me that looks forward to September like I said and goes

I don't want to go back to Southern California I feel like I have this whole new family that I'm just getting to know and I can look forward to heaven though and go we'll just pick up right where we left off and our relationships will be more rich and more deep because there will not be sin between us anymore so God is holy heaven will be without sin God is triune heaven will be life lived in perfect community and then I want us to see that God is a personal God therefore in heaven we will be perfectly known God is a personal God therefore in heaven we will be perfectly known Colossians 3:3-4 for you died and your life is now hidden with Christ in God when Christ who is your life appears

then you also will appear with him in glory at some point Jesus Christ will return in person it's not some sort of mythical or magical thing

[22 : 39] Christ himself will descend from heaven in person and then we too who are Christians will exist with him in person in glory and our glorified bodies we will be more truly ourselves than we have ever been we will truly know ourselves better than we know ourselves now and we will truly know that we are truly known we kind of get it right now but we don't truly truly understand yet maybe maybe you could ask have I ever felt misunderstood or I felt like someone didn't completely just get me and I can say yeah I have so many times I felt so misunderstood and I think if you only knew me if you just really knew me you would know that's not who I am or that's not what I thought about you if you think

I felt misunderstood before you're probably right you probably weren't totally understood because even in our relationships with each other and even trying to get to know ourselves sin is still in the way still in the way and so we're left in this life often feeling unknown misunderstood and misrepresented in the world to come we will dwell with God who knows us more truly than we can ever imagine and recognizing that God knows us more truly than we can ever imagine I think we will be shocked to see how truly He loves us each of us individually scripture says not a not a flower fades or not a hair falls off a head and God doesn't know it He knows us intimately and deeply and even sin right now gets in the way of our ability to understand how true God's knowledge is of each of us

I love in Revelation 2 it says that that God has a name written on a stone for each of us that only He knows I always think of that like a like a personal nickname that will perfectly describe you I've noticed that when people refer to me in different ways they know me in different ways you've probably noticed that too if someone calls me Alan they know me better than the person that just says hey dude or hey guy if someone calls me Alan Giles I know they don't really know me because it's Giles right so when I answer the phone and say is Mr.

Giles there I say you're a telemarketer you don't know me if someone calls me Pastor Alan and the states will use titles a little bit more so if someone calls me Pastor Alan I know that I've shepherded them there's a relationship there that's different my family I'll trust you with a secret my family calls me Bubba just my close family and they're not being goofy like I know some of you will do later on in the next month but if someone says hey Bubba I know that they know me much more intimately they're a brother or sister or one of my wife's brothers or sisters or a very close friend someone says daddy well I know it's one of my children that's a different relationship and in Revelation 2 it says God has a name for us that only he knows and again I just imagine it's the name that most truly describes who we are that when God looks at us and speaks to us and calls us by name we will instantly recognize this this

God knows me he gets me and yet he still loves me and as we understand how much God gets us and knows us and loves us we will truly be who we are we'll begin to take off the masks that we wear throughout the weeks God is a personal God and in heaven we will be perfectly known we'll be known we'll know that we are known and loved and I'll just say these are just a glimpse of heaven it's just a glimpse of what Paul says to set our hearts and our minds on it's a glimpse of what's truly waiting for us but it's what Paul calls us to dwell on it's what Paul calls us to to be a people who whose minds and hearts are flooded with these thoughts and these desires and that these desires for this life with this God will push out our earthly desires as I set my heart and my mind on things above where

[27 : 47] Christ is seated as I remember who I am in Christ as I dwell on the life that he's bringing me into I find that I'm just propelled through this life and this is the hope that we have before us as Christians let me just ask do you believe this do you believe these things if you don't believe this if you don't believe that your life is hidden with Christ who is your Lord and Savior then I have to be honest with you this life is the best thing you have to look forward to if your faith is not in Christ then this sin filled world these broken relationships this life in which you might not ever truly be known by any other human being is all we have to look forward to if we don't have Christ and if we're honest it's all we deserve without

Christ this life would be all we deserve we've perpetuated sin we're all guilty we've broken relationships with other people we haven't been perfect in our relationships we've failed to truly see others as God sees us we have forgotten that each of us were individually knit together by God each of us bear his reflection the image of God and each of us has an eternal soul which he desires

to have with him in paradise forever the amazing thing about the gospel or the good news of life in Christ is that there is hope beyond this life and there is hope for this life because if you just try to do what Paul said in verses 5-10 and you just try to wrestle your sin nature to the ground it might work for a bit it's going to come back and get you and the only hope we truly have in this life is to continue to fix our minds on the hope that we have in the world to come the hope that we have seated above in our life which is in

Christ forever his plan is that someday there will be no more sin to contend with no more broken relationships no more misunderstanding of who we are nothing but eternal life in the presence of God it is the unstoppable plan of God it is where history is headed someday when we speak of paradise it won't be something we hope to experience or something that we're having to set our hearts or minds on but something that we are currently enjoying and life will be radically different and I truly believe what Paul says here in Colossians 3 that as we set our hearts on these things as we set our minds on these things this future with this God then our old self it just simply won't fit anymore we will naturally see it put to death and shed from us and it won't ever be perfect in this life you are not going to perfectly conquer sin

Christ has done that you won't be perfectly sanctified he has imputed his perfect righteousness to us but he offers us the hope of a promised future with him in paradise and that is the power for our purity in this life we set our hearts and our minds on things above and as we do so we will be renewed in the image of our creator so I encourage you this week this month as you work through the year as you have time as you have things to think about set your hearts on things above set your minds on things above think about who God is and what it will be like to dwell with him forever let's pray