

Focused on What's Above

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Date: 22 May 2022

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[0:00] So we say thank you, and we look forward just to the time with you. I know you're preaching, but it's a time together to receive together from the Lord. So thank you. Thank you, Cameron, for that.

Yeah, I'm one of the deacons over at Canyon Bible Church of Prescott. I also work in the office doing administration, and I'm just so thankful for the opportunity to be here with you this morning. My family and I don't come over the hill from Prescott very often, but I'm glad now that we have it's to worship with you.

I also want to thank this church and your pastor for opening up his pulpit. And I also come with greetings from Canyon Bible Church of Prescott, where we're praying for you and we're grateful for you.

So if you turn in your Bibles to Colossians chapter 3, Colossians chapter 3 will be in the first four verses. of that chapter this morning.

Colossians chapter 3 verses 1 through 4, the Apostle Paul writes, If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.

[1:19] Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we're so grateful for you and your grace and your love.

As we study your word, Lord, just have our hearts and minds be open to what you have for us, that we might continue to live in a way that honors and glorifies you, that proclaims your son, Jesus. Thank you for this time. Thank you for who you are, all that you've done, doing, and will do in our lives. In your name. Amen. Number one or number two?

Number one or number two? Number one or number two? If you're not familiar with this cadence, it just means you haven't been to the eye doctor in a while. They pull that big contraption over your face, and you look through those little holes, and you're trying to see the words on the opposite wall.

[2:32] And the whole time, which is clear, one or two, if they're trying to bring things into focus, they're trying to get your prescription. The point is, you need to be able to focus to see what's down there.

It reminds me of when I was 12 years old, and I got glasses for the first time. And when I went to school, the teacher was writing on the blackboard, and I am old enough to still be in school when they had blackboards.

And I was so amazed that, I didn't even know I needed glasses, but I was so amazed at how clear things were. I would take my glasses off, and I couldn't read anything. It was blurry. I put them on, and it was in focus, and then blurry and in focus.

And it was just incredible how focused things were. And that's not unlike what the Apostle Paul is doing in this passage. After this, he's about to give a set of instructions on how to put off the old self and put on the new self, those sinful practices that are being put to death and those Christ-like aspects that we're to put on.

But before he gets there, he needs to make sure that his readers, or us, have the correct focus. What they need is what we need, and that's to focus on what's above.

[3:45] And that's the title for this message, Focused on What's Above. Our main point this morning, the big idea, if there's anything you walk away from this morning, I hope it's this.

Our focus is to be on Christ and the life that's above. Our focus is to be on Christ and the life that's above. And this morning, we're going to see three ways to be focused on what's above.

Focused on who you are, focused on what you do, and focus on why you do it. Let's begin with focus on who you are.

And we see this in Colossians 3, 1a, the first part of that verse. If then you have been raised with Christ. Now, Paul has spent much of the two chapters before this telling his readers of who Christ is.

He says that he is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible.

[4:52] So everything was created through him and for him. And Paul tells us that in Christ, everything is preeminent. He is preeminent. What Paul is meaning here is that Christ is of highest rank.

Because of his death and resurrection, Jesus is supreme. Jesus is sovereign. He reigns over the invisible world and the visible world. Jesus is sovereign over creation and he's sovereign over the church.

If you're a Christian, when you became a believer, you became a part of Christ's body. And as a member of his body, you are totally and completely dependent on Christ for everything and direction in life.

When we speak of the preeminence of Christ, it means that in everything, he should be supreme. He has first place in everything. First place in our marriages, our families, our professions, our ministry, even our recreation.

Everything he is to have first place. And that's just the first chapter. Paul goes into chapter 2 and in verse 6 he says, Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

[6:14] To walk in Christ is to stand firm against false teaching. It's to continue believing the truth about him and not waver from that truth. Walking in Christ means living in union with him.

It's about living a Christ-like life that our lives would be like his and to be patterned after his. 1 John 2:6 tells us, Whoever says he abides in him, in Christ, ought to walk the same way in which he walked.

Now, not unlike Paul's other works, there is a doctrinal section and a living section, a gospel doctrine and a gospel living. And at the beginning of chapter 3 is the transition into that gospel living or application of those truths.

Now, what are those truths that we're going to apply? Let's just take a look where Paul is going to help us better understand why we need to be so focused.

And let's start in Colossians 3, verse 5. Paul says, Put to death, therefore, what is earthly in you, sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

[7:31] On account of these, the wrath of God is coming. In these you too once walked when you were living in them. But now, you must put them all away, anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth.

Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices, and put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.

Here, there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free, but Christ is all and in all. Put on, then, as God's chosen ones, holy and the same beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another, and if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other.

As the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all, put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony, and let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body, and be thankful.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

[8:59] And whatever you do in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. What a beautiful passage of Scripture of where Paul is heading, and these are the things that we need to be doing.

But remember, right before this, these are focusing passages. He wants us to focus on something specific, a few things, so that we can better apply those things in our lives. Before we get to those putting off and putting on, he focuses our attention on those verses.

In other words, each person who's hearing this needs to ask themselves a question. Have I been raised with Christ? Am I a true believer in Christ? This is imperative because everything that comes after, it doesn't apply if you miss the most important part, and that's salvation.

Turn with me to Matthew chapter 7. Matthew chapter 7, verses 21 through 23. This is our Lord speaking, and he says, Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

On that day, many will say to me, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and cast out demons in your name and do mighty works in your name? And then I will declare to them, I never knew you.

[10 : 34] Depart from me. You workers of lawlessness. No matter how good we are at putting off those old sinful practices and putting on these good things, if we're not saved, it doesn't have meaning.

It doesn't save us. We're not saved by good works. We're saved for good works. That's Ephesians 2. If then, Paul says, you have been raised with Christ.

Now, video games are everywhere today. They're on our TVs, they're on our computers, they're on our tablets, on our phones, or even on our watches. And the interesting thing about video games, though, is kind of a basic structure that they work on.

It's an if-then structure. So, if I press the A button on the controller, then the character on the screen jumps. If I go in this direction, then that will happen.

An if-then structure. And that's how it's working here. Paul says, if then, you have been raised with Christ. If you have been raised with Christ, then this.

[11 : 39] If you have not been raised with Christ, it's something else. And ultimately, in an internal sense, that's a destination. almost the entirety of the rest of the Colossians is instructions given by Paul.

And we just went over some of those a minute ago, and he also has instructions about that for wives, and husbands, and children. And if somebody could do all those things of putting off those sins, those bad behaviors, and putting on those good behaviors, but without being in Christ, having been raised with Christ, it just, it'll do you no good.

For the unbeliever, they need to ask themselves the hard question. Am I in Christ? Have I been raised with Christ? Have I responded to the gospel? For the believer, you need to ask yourself the same thing.

Have I been raised with Christ? And even though the answer is yes, you need to be reminded of that because it's the foundation of what's to come. See, the gospel is essential.

It's why Paul spent so much time leading up to this speaking about Christ. Believer or unbeliever, the focus right now is the gospel. What is the gospel? You know this, it's God, creator of heaven and earth, you and me.

[12 : 56] He is perfect without sin. It means He's set apart. He's holy. And who are we? Well, we're sinful. We've sinned against a holy God.

We're separated from Him. We're not at peace with Him. His wrath is upon us. But then comes Christ. Fully God, fully man, living a sinless life so that His sacrifice on the cross would satisfy God's just wrath for our sin.

And we have a response to that. We have a response to recognize our sin. It's a confession of sin to God. It's a trusting in Christ as Savior and only in Christ.

And it's a turning away from that sin in repentance. Christ died, but He didn't remain that way, did He? No. He was resurrected on the third day. We just celebrated that a month ago on Resurrection Sunday.

What a beautiful time that is each and every year. That means that Christ has conquered sin and He's conquered death. And He rose. And so because He rose, we too can rise in a newness of life.

[14 : 07] That means sin no longer has dominion over us. And we are able to put off the old and we are able to put on the new. Just as we're commanded to do. That's why it is imperative that you focus on who you are in Christ.

Next, focus on what you do. Focus on what you do. We see this in Colossians 3, 1b, in verse 2.

Seek the things that are above where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.

Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. The Christian is to seek what's above. This is not in reference to some sort of physical aspect.

It's not about geography. It's about having to do with Christ and His sovereign reign over the universe. It's about His character. It's about His presence. It's not about seeking something physical.

It's about seeking the one who dwells there. Also, the verb here means that we need to seek and keep on seeking. It is a continuous, ongoing effort.

[15 : 17] This seeking, this heavenly seeking, it's what our lives are to be about. Matthew 6, 33 says, but seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

We should be seeking Christ in our friendships, in our families, in our work, in our studies, in everything we do. When we seek that which is above, that is a true source of contentment for us. Nothing else brings contentment like seeking Jesus. This is also about a mindset. Now, we have to live in this world. We have to work.

We have to make a living. But that doesn't dominate our lives. It doesn't dominate our thoughts. We seek and we set.

There's a setting our minds on things that are above. And those things that are above, those Christ-like things, they are in stark contrast to the things that are on earth. One of those things, those are those possessions, those earthly possessions.

[16 : 26] Those things that we acquire. But it's also achievement. It's trophies, it's positions, it's titles. Not setting our minds on things that are on earth is more than just the material possession.

It's also things of the heart that we could seek out that's not that which is above. And there's more of this we don't focus on them. We also need to reject those things.

To reject the things on earth is to reject those earthly desires, to reject those temptations. We're also, not only to reject, but we need to refuse to participate in those things.

1 John 5, I'm sorry, 1 John 2, 15 through 17 says, Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in Him.

For all that is in the world, the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and the pride of life is not from the Father, but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

[17 : 39] Like I said before, this is about a mindset. Remember, yeah, we do have to live in this world. We have to make a living. And there's nothing wrong with pursuing a promotion. There's nothing wrong with pursuing a trophy as long as your heart is in the right place.

Remember Romans 12, 1 and 2, I appeal to you, therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

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 we think about, what we set our minds on, are things that are above. It's the person and work of Jesus Christ. Things above has to do with Christ's sovereign reign, his character, and his presence.

If you would turn to Matthew chapter 6, Matthew chapter 6, verses 19 through 21.

[18 : 55] Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. It's about where our focus is. What are you seeking? What are you setting your mind to?

And you know the saying, you can't take it with you. We're all familiar with that. Job understood that when he said, naked I came from my mother's womb, naked I shall return. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away.

Blessed be the name of the Lord. Also consider Psalm 49. Be not afraid when a man becomes rich, when the glory of his house increases.

For when he dies, he will carry nothing away. We are not to focus on earthly things, but to set our minds on Christ. Even though it's not the greatest, they're not the greatest right now.

[20 : 00] I'm a baseball fan. I'm an Arizona Diamondbacks fan. It's my home team. But a few weeks ago, another professional baseball player for the Detroit Tigers named Miguel Cabrera hit his 3,000th hit.

And in the entirety of Major League Baseball, there's only 35, or just around 35, ballplayers who have reached that milestone. So it's pretty significant and it's pretty rare.

And this took a lot of hard work, it took a lot of dedication, and many years of focused attention on his hitting. See, his mind was set on being a better baseball player.

He was focused on his hitting and he was setting his mind on constantly improving. And it paid off by reaching that milestone that very few ballplayers have. He's now set apart from the thousands of baseball players who have played over the years.

It's his constant seeking and setting that set him apart. Now, the focus of the Christian is to be seeking the things of Christ and setting our mind on his things and the result is that we are shown to be set apart.

[21:11] 1 Peter 1 tells us, be holy as I am holy. So what are you seeking? The things of the earth that will eventually be destroyed? What is your mind set on?

Is it something temporary that has no lasting significance? Or are you seeking that which is above? Is your mind set on Jesus Christ and his character so that your character is like his and your actions are like his actions?

So, we've seen how we focus on who we are in Christ. We focus on what we do by seeking him and setting our mind on him. And now, focus on why you do it.

And we see this in verses 3 and 4. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

Why do we do it? Why do we set our minds on things that are above? Why do we seek Christ? It's because our life is hidden with Christ in God. The Christian is in Christ and Christ is in God.

[22:18] This means that we are inseparable from him. It also means that we are secure in him. Hebrews 13:5 says, I will never leave you nor forsake you.

And this verse from Hebrews, it's in the context of keeping oneself from the love of money because we are to be content with what we have. We are to be content in Christ.

The love of money is a form of coveting. The love of money is the love of material possessions. We want money so we can get those material possessions that don't satisfy.

These are earthly things and we're not to focus on those things. The love of money is sinning against God but by placing our focus on Christ, we have a certainty that no amount of money or material possession can provide.

Let me say that again. By placing our focus on Christ, we have a certainty that no amount of money or material possession can provide. Having been raised with Christ, knowing that we're hidden in Christ with God, that's more than just an association.

[23:24] As a believer, our identities are found in Christ. The Christian needs to remain focused on who we are in Christ.

Galatians 2:20 says, I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me. In 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.

The old person is dead. It was crucified with Christ and now the new person lives and that person is hidden in Christ. Now concerning the life of the believer being hidden with Christ in God, verses 3 and 4 include a past, a present, and future aspects of what it means to be in Christ.

For you have died, the apostle writes. For the true believer, we died when we were baptized into the body of Christ by the Holy Spirit. That's 1 Corinthians 12:13.

This means that our life is now hidden with Christ in God. This is the past and currently we are still that way. Since we are inseparable from Christ in God, this is something that is ongoing.

[24:37] It is a past but also a present reality. And verse 4 says, when Christ who is your life appears, then you will also appear with him in glory.

When Christ appears. This is a future aspect. When Christ is revealed, we also will be revealed. As Christ's glorious body appears, so we will with ours.

Philippians 3:20-21 says, but our citizenship is in heaven and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ who will transform our lowly bodies to be like his glorious body.

The power that enables him even to subject all things to himself. Why do we do it? Because of what Christ did, is doing, and what he will do in the future.

this idea of past and future, kind of like this idea of time travel, kind of a curiosity to a lot of people. I find it fascinating, the concept of it.

[25 : 40] The idea of going forward and seeing what's going to happen in the future or going back in time and reliving an event, it's just a fascinating concept. And probably one of the best movies about time travel is Back to the Future.

Teenager Marty McFly ends up going back in time to where his parents first met and chaos ensues and his actual existence is in jeopardy and he ends up fixing everything and going back to the future, back where he came from and not only his parents together but his life is actually better because of it.

He changed things in the past that changed the future. And that's not something that's foreign to us. How many times have you said or you heard somebody say, if I could just go back and do that differently?

If I could take the knowledge and the experience that I have now and go back 5, 10, 20 years, I wish I could do that differently. So we think about that.

We think because of the wisdom we have now we could maybe change things in the present. But that's not here. That's not in this passage. See, we know what Christ has done.

[26 : 50] We know what he's doing and we know what's going to happen in the future. God's faithfulness to us in the past helps us today but it also reminds us and tells us that he's going to be faithful to us in the future.

And that future, it's set. It's fixed for those who are in Christ. We may not know the timing or the details but we know what's going to happen.

We don't need a time machine because we already know what's going to happen in the future and it is the best possible future that could ever come to pass. But let's take a time machine and go back just a couple of minutes.

We talked about who we are in Christ and what we do. We seek him. We set our minds on him. But the focus is on why we do it and that's a matter of the heart.

We can be thinking about Christ all day long and listening to sermons and reading scripture and having those godly conversations but if our heart isn't right with God then our focus is not in the right place.

[28 : 02] Jesus Christ is to be our heart's focus. I want you to consider the Christian, the person who would say they're a Christian but they're clearly not. They might say all the right things and do a lot of the right things but their focus is on themselves.

To these Christ will say that he never knew them. Consider the actual Christian, the born again Christian who says all the right things, does all the right things but their focus is on themselves. God is not pleased with that person. They're not living to his glory. That fellowship with him is not broken but it is not in close fellowship as it could be.

Consider the unbeliever who never goes to church and has rejected God and whose focus is on themselves. God's wrath is upon them. But the response to all of them is the same.

Confess, repent, believe, and turn to Christ. In the verses that follow this passage, as we talked about before, Paul is going to launch into those instructions and how to set our minds on things that are above and not things that are on earth.

[29 : 18] By taking these things to heart, we recognize these are good things to put off and good things to put on. However, if we don't have the right focus, if we're not focused on the right thing, the person and work of Jesus Christ, then our efforts to do those things, to put off the old and put on the new, it has little meaning.

Yet, when we remember who we are, hidden in Christ, and our hearts are focused on Him, then we can confidently proclaim with the Apostle Paul when he says, let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

in whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him. Let's pray.

Lord, thank you so much for your word that we know who you are because of it. We know how you've been faithful to love your people.

We know about Jesus Christ and His sacrifice for us because of your word. Holy Spirit, thank you for guiding us and illuminating our hearts to the word and giving us understanding of it.

[30 : 42] I pray that as we go forth from here that we seek and set our minds on you, Lord Jesus, that our focus is on what's above and that we take what we have been given and proclaim it to this

dark world, that we are salt and light in this world.

thank you for the privilege of being able to be messengers of the gospel. We pray for opportunities to take your word and to share it to others that others might come to know the truth of who you are, Jesus, our Savior.

And it's in your name we pray. Amen. Amen. Go ahead and take this time that we want to do to reflect on what we just heard, what we just received.

you know, if you've got notes and all the words, but just taking a moment to maybe respond in your heart to what you've seen in the Word, just a moment to reflect on that and when we're done and just some songs, but just take a moment.

Thank you.