

# Set Your Mind

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Colossians 3. Now we're in the third chapter of Colossians and we're hoping, if you've been here, you know it's our habit to go through, usually to go through a book of the Bible at a time. And so we're hoping to finish Colossians before Easter. And we're just now starting in chapter 3 this morning.

And chapter 3 is really important because you could almost think about it like you could consider it by itself. And the theme of Colossians 3 is it's all about what it means to grow as a Christian.

And so it really speaks to all generations of the church. And so we're going to read Colossians 3 verses 1 to 4 this week and we'll spend the next four weeks in chapter 3.

So hear God's word, Colossians 3 verse 1. If then you have been raised with Christ, 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. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

[ 1 : 0 8 ] When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. Amen. This is God's word. Some of you may have heard the story before of William Randolph Hearst.

He was the wealthy businessman who lived out west. And there's a story, I hope it's true, that he read one day in the newspaper about a very valuable piece of art.

And he was so taken by this piece of art that he read about that he sent one of his agents to look all over the world to try to find it. And so his agent spent months scouring the globe trying to find this piece of art.

And the story goes that the agent finally came back to him with good news. He had found the artwork. And he said, the good news is it won't even cost you a dime because it's already in your warehouse.

And he had the art and he was living like he didn't have it. And I think that that speaks to part of what it means to live the Christian life.

[ 2 : 1 0 ] And part of what we have to realize is that so many of God's blessings sometimes are things that God already has offered to us. And we haven't learned to live in the light of them. And if Colossians 3 has a single theme, it's this.

Become who you are. Become who you are. And more often than not, when the Bible talks about Christian growth, it doesn't talk about it in terms about reaching for something that you don't have.

It talks about it in terms of realizing the promises that God has already made to you and what you already have in Christ. And growth comes through learning to live in the light of what you already have.

It comes through, Christian growth comes through learning to become who you are. And in these first four verses this morning, Paul lays the groundwork for why that's true.

The groundwork for why you can believe that change is possible in your life. Because it's one thing to believe in Jesus. It's another thing to see him begin to actually transform your heart year by year and day by day.

[ 3 : 13 ] And the older you get, you know, change is hard. And it's easy to get cynical and to say, you know, maybe this part of myself, I don't even believe it's possible for it to change anymore.

You become cynical over time. And what the gospel says is, if you can see who you are, who you are in Christ, that's the grounds that you have for believing that change is possible in your life.

So we're going to look at the grounds for change that Paul gives us here. And then we're going to look at what he actually commands us to do in the light of that. Okay. So first, the grounds for change.

And the grounds for change is all really, it's based on this idea that you're in Christ. And it's something that's, we've been talking about that the past few weeks. But he really drives it home here with this kind of if then statement.

If this is true, he says to Christians. And what does he say? He says, if, if you've been raised with Christ. And if you're a Christian, he's assuming that you are. He's, you know, he's telling the Colossians, you have been raised with Christ.

[ 4 : 10 ] But he says, if you've been raised with Christ. Okay. And then what else does he say is true of them? He says, done in verse three, he says, for you, you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

So just think about what Paul's trying to say here. He's saying, if you're a Christian, what that means is you, you are so closely connected to Jesus that when he died, you died in a very real way.

And when he rose again from the dead, you rose again from the dead in, in, in a very real way. There was a theology professor in the last century who there's this famous story where a man came up to him and he said, Professor Torrance, are you born again?

You know, the kind of person who wanted to confront him by saying, can you tell me the date that you were born again? And, and Professor Torrance said, yes, I am born again. And the man said, well, tell me when it was, when were you born again?

And Torrance's response was, I was born again 2000 years ago. Um, what, what he was saying was what this passage is saying that he, when you become a Christian, you are so closely united to Christ that on the day that he died, it was as if you died.

[ 5 : 29 ] And on the day that he was risen again from the grave, it was as if you were risen again from the grave too. Um, and what, what that means is why does that matter? Well, one thing it means is he says, you know, if, if you have died and if you have been raised from the dead, then what must also be true is that you're actually with Jesus right now.

He says, your life is hidden. How does he put it exactly? He says, uh, you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

And he says here, Christ is seated at the right hand of God. So somehow, and this is kind of, this is mysterious, right? Like what is he actually saying here? He's saying you died. If you're a Christian, you died, you've been risen already.

And your life is already with Jesus who is at the right hand of God, the father. And part of what he means, there's several things he means. Part of what he means is you're so closely united to Jesus that when God looks at Jesus, he sees you.

When God looks at Jesus's righteousness, when he looks at you, he sees Jesus's righteousness. And when he looks at Jesus's righteousness, he sees you. You know, we just talked to these kids about this idea of a substitute.

[ 6 : 37 ] And usually what we talk about is how Jesus went in our place to the cross. But the opposite is also true, right? We received all the benefits that belong to Jesus.

So we, we already are as loved by God as Jesus is. Have you ever thought about that? That, you know, I heard one, one professor say a long time ago, he says, he was talking about the father and the son.

And he says, you know, think about it. There was never, there's never been a father that was more loving than God, the father. And there's never been a son that was more lovable than God, the son.

And if we're in Christ, then when, when God looks at you, he loves you as much as he loves his own son. Do you believe that?

And you might say, how is that, how can that even be? Because I'm, I'm a sinner and I still, you know, God, if God saw what I thought in my mind today, how could he love me? And yeah, that's the wonder of the gospel that when, when God looks at you, he sees the righteousness of Christ.

[ 7 : 45 ] And, you know, of course, what we're going to go on to talk about how God still calls us to change. But the starting point, you know, Paul says, you have to first know what's true of you already, which is that you're so united to Christ that your life is hidden with God, hidden with Christ on high.

God could not love you more than he loves you right now. If you're in Christ, he can, he can still confront you with your sins. You can still, you know, struggle with your sins.

And he can still, you know, show you, he can still hold you accountable for your sins in this life. And he can't love you any more than he does right now because he loves you with the same love that he loves his son with.

But then, so there's this word that he uses to describe us. He says, your life is hidden with Christ on high. And what does that mean to be hidden with Christ? And there's, I think there's two ways of thinking about it.

And they're both true. Part of what it means for you and me to be hidden with Christ is the life that belongs to us is something that we can't yet fully see.

[ 8 : 54 ] And you know this, right? Because we're still struggling with sins. And, you know, I want Jesus. I want him right here with me. I want to be able to look at him and talk to him. I want to be closer to Jesus than I am right now.

And I want him to finish the work that he started to make me truly pure, to wash me completely clean so that I am as righteous as the Bible declares that I am.

That's what I want. And part of what it means for our life to be hidden is to recognize we're living in what the Bible calls the already not yet. You know, I'm not satisfied with this life.

And I'm not satisfied with who I am yet. I'm God's still working on me and he's still working on you. And part of what it needs to be hidden is to say we can't fully see the glory that's going to be revealed.

And you know that from the last verse, you see, he says in verse four, when Christ, who is your life appears. So you were hidden and then Christ appears when Christ, who is your life appears, then you will also appear with him in glory.

[ 9 : 56 ] So that's part of the hope that he lays out for us as he says, listen, you can't see how good it is yet, the blessings that Christ has for you, but you've got to hold onto it because when Christ finally appears, you're going to be there with glory and you're going to have all of his glory.

Okay. There's another part of being hidden because sometimes when the Bible talks about being hidden, it's not so much about not being able to see it. It's about being protected. You know, we're, we're, we're hidden under the shadow of his wing.

Uh, what part of what it means to be hidden is to know that you're safe. Um, and Paul, you know, Paul's looking at these Colossians and we've seen how so often they're going to other places to find what only Jesus can offer.

And the only reason you would do that is if you don't actually think that you're safe. If you think that you still got more to prove to God and Paul saying, listen, if you're, if you're hidden with Christ, then your soul is as safe as it could be already because no one's going to snatch you away from Christ's hands.

He's too powerful and your, your, your life is already hidden with him. So that's what it means to be hidden. And, um, so what, what do we do with all that? What are we trying to say here? We're trying to answer the question, what grounds do you have to believe that you can change, right?

[ 11 : 15 ] Cause we all know that change is hard, you know? Uh, and the grounds that we have to believe that we can change is because we're already hidden with Christ. He, he is already, he, we're already attached to him.

And so he's promised to finish what he began. Okay. But then that's, that's him giving us the grounds for how we believe we can change. But then the second part is how do you actually pursue that change?

You know, God doesn't just say, uh, just sit back and let the Holy spirit do its thing. Now what he says is work out your salvation with fear and trembling because it's God who works within you.

So it's this both and believing that you can only do anything by the power of the Holy spirit and God saying, work at holiness, work at it. And in your work, you'll see the Holy spirit is the one that's really giving you the power.

So how do you actually pursue growth? And this is just the first part of the answer here. But he says, he says two things, but they go together. First, he says, seek the things that are above. And then he says, set your mind on them.

[ 12 : 18 ] Seek the things that are above and set your mind on them. Now, uh, I think if you read this out of context, because he, he, he contrasts seeking the things that are above with what he says, set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are on earth.

And if that's all that you had was just those words, you might, what you might be hearing him say is stop caring about this life. Stop thinking about baseball.

Stop thinking about your job. You know, don't care about any of those things. The only thing that you need to think about is God. And, and that's not what he's saying. Uh, God made creation beautiful.

You know, he, he made the world to be beautiful and he made us to enjoy his creation. Uh, and the Bible never comes and says, forget about this world completely. Just ignore it.

And just think about Jesus. Um, what he's saying here is if he's picking up a line that he used in the last chapter in, in verse in chapter two, verse 20, he says, if with Christ, you died to the elemental spirits of this world, why do you live as if you were still alive to this world?

[ 13 : 28 ] Um, he's, he's talking about the Colossians and how often they, in, from his perspective, they tried to use things in this life to prove themselves to God.

Uh, we talked about how they had these visions of angels, uh, and how they would, uh, be, they were aesthetics. They would do things, uh, you know, they would, they would punish their bodies to try to get closer to God.

And that's what Paul's saying. He says, don't, don't set your mind on these earthly things, set your mind on Christ and what Christ has to offer to us. Because he's saying everything that you need, uh, that you're looking for from somewhere else, you already have in Christ.

Now we could say, you know, your work can become the thing, can become the earthly element. Your work can become the thing that you use to, to justify your existence. And, you know, the sport you play can be the thing that becomes so important to you that it becomes your idol.

Um, you know, anything can become an idol, uh, because, you know, uh, John Calvin used to say, our hearts are idol making factories. You know, it's, it's amazing what we can turn into an idol, the thing that we can love more than anything else.

[ 14 : 39 ] Um, but, but, but Paul's point is what, wherever you're looking somewhere else for, for true satisfaction, you're only going to find it in Jesus. And so therefore he says, seek the things that are above.

And there's just a couple of things to say about what it means to think, seek. Um, number one, seeking is a process. You know, when you, uh, the, the Bible, uh, what, what Paul actually says here is think about things that are above, but they translate it as seek because Paul's talking about a journey here.

He's talking about something that's hard. And, you know, sometimes you come to church and the pastor makes such great promises about the power of the Holy Spirit that you walk away thinking, all right, well, why can't I just be totally fixed right now?

Right. And sometimes people, you have these, um, I remember you used to call it a two week high. You go to camp, you have a two week high and you, at the camp, you think everything's going to be different now.

I am a changed person. And then two weeks later, you fall back into all your old patterns. And all that shows us is change is hard, right? And if change is hard, then Paul's saying, well, of course it's hard.

[ 15 : 49 ] That's why you've got to seek the things that are above because it's a process. Um, it's not, there is no quick fix to growing in holiness. Uh, in fact, you know, when Paul talks about growing in holiness, a lot of times he'll use illustrations of things like working out, you know, no one goes to the gym thinking it's going to be easy or maybe they do.

And then they realize very quickly, it's not easy. Uh, Paul in first Timothy, he says this, he says, train yourself to be godly. And he says, physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.

That's why we labor and strive because we've put our hope in the living God. All I'm trying to say is we all know that if you want to become strong, if you want to take care of your body, it takes work.

And why would the same principle not be true with our spiritual lives? Why would it not also be true that God says, if you're going to grow, you've got to dedicate yourself to it. You've got to bury yourself in the word.

You've got to meet with the people on Sunday so that you can grow. You know, sometimes we think about, we think because faith is spiritual, it should just come naturally, it should just come easily.

[ 17 : 03 ] And when it doesn't come easily, we get disillusioned and we walk away. And, and Paul saying, no, expect it to be hard. Seek the things that are above. You know, if you think it's going to be easy, you don't know what kind of a sinner you are.

And the Holy Spirit's going to come and he's going to work with you, but it's going to feel like going to the gym some days. It's going to be hard. But the promise is, if the Holy Spirit's with you, which he promises he will be, you'll grow.

You've got the promises. Become who you are. So Paul's talking about a life process and setting your mind. The other point to make is setting your mind is not about reaching out for something that you don't have.

Setting your mind is about seeing what you already have. That's, we've already talked about that. When you set your mind on the things that are above, what you're doing is you're telling yourself the gospel. You're saying, all right, well, my life is hidden with Christ on high.

God has made these promises. I have the power of the Holy Spirit abiding in me. I'm going to set my mind on that so that that's what that will be, the center and the ground of who I am.

[ 18 : 12 ] And it's a process. You know, Sinclair Ferguson, he's a famous pastor that kind of runs in the circles that our church is in. And he used to say that when he, when he was a pastor, he would meet with young, young people who were coming through the communicants class or the confirmation class.

And one question he would always ask the, the, the young people is when you have nothing to think about, what do you think about? Uh, and he's not trying to, to test the kids, whether they're really Christians or not, but it's a really, it's a revealing question.

When you have nothing to think about, what do you think about? Because that may show what you care about the most, right? Uh, when our minds wander, where do they wander? That's a good indication of, of where our hearts are.

And the hope is that if you grow in, in faith, uh, as you grow in grace more and more, when, when you have nothing to think about, your mind begins to drift more and more towards who God is and what he's done for us.

Uh, and simply being thankful, um, just remembering Jesus and setting him at the center of who you are, uh, setting your mind. What, what else does it mean? Well, it means, it means recognizing that you're already empowered.

[ 19 : 23 ] You know, so often we, we say, all right, God tells me I've got to do this, this, this, and this. And we say, all right, well, I'm going to do it. And we never think about the fact that he also says, you can only do it in my strength.

You know, God says, pursue holiness, but you've got to pursue it saying to God, I can only do this if you're helping me. Please be with me as I struggle against my sin. Uh, the last one I'll mention is setting your mind above means a lot of things, but part of it means realizing how loved you are and that that's actually an impetus to change.

Uh, Gene Hackman passed away this week. Uh, one of my favorite actors, and I'm sure someone that, that you like as well. And to me, Gene Hackman was, as an actor, he was the man's man. He was the guy that would come in and just be the tough guy in the movie.

Uh, and I saw an interview with him this week on Actors Studio. And, uh, the, the guy was not, the, the, the interviewer was not trying to trap Gene Hackman, but he, he just asked him about his dad.

And, uh, he said, I, I heard that your dad, uh, left your family when, when you were young. And, and Gene said, yeah, he, um, Gene said that he was playing outside with his friends and his dad just drove by one day and just waved and never came back.

[ 20 : 37 ] And as Gene was telling the story, what made it so powerful was Gene was probably 80 years old in this and he couldn't tell the story without crying. And he kind of laughed it off and he said, well, it was only 65 years ago.

Uh, but, but it was, you could see that there was a wound there that had never healed. And all I want to propose to you this morning is, you know, we know the power of broken relationships, but do you know the power of healed relationships?

The power of really knowing and believing that the God of the universe has set his love upon you. Um, that changes you when you really see that Jesus Christ loves you so much that he would go to the cross to take your place.

Um, what, you know, we, we sing it. What wondrous love is this? Um, and the more you seek that, the more you set your mind on that, it has to change you.

It has to change you. Um, Jesus told his disciples, abide in my love. So we're going to come to the communion table. And what we're going to do is we're going to seek the things that are above.

[ 21 : 44 ] We're going to remember who Jesus was for us. Uh, let me pray. Heavenly father, we praise you for the gospel. Uh, we know that you've called us to something so hard when you've called us to become holy.

And we know that we can't do it without your strength. And so we pray that you would help us to set our minds on the things that are above so that you might be transforming us more and more into the image of our great savior, Jesus Christ.

In your son's name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.