

We have been working our way through the book of Colossians for past couple months and one of the main reasons it was written was to point people to the greatness of Jesus Christ, but also to address heresy that was creeping into the church. Last week we looked at a portion of scripture where Paul addressed the sinful ideas that some were attempting to pass off as a higher form of spirituality. These false teachers were looking at life from a completely earthly perspective, which led to them to develop their own religion, their own set of rules, and their own set of standards for godliness. Their identity was not flowing out of a relationship with Jesus Christ, it was determined by what they themselves thought was best.

So Paul attacked the emptiness of the philosophies there being proclaimed as truth there in Colossian church. And were going to see today how he loving comes alongside of the young believers in that church to tell them of their *new identity* that they now have in Christ. You don't have to live how those false teachers are telling you to live, but there are some changes within your life that you should be pursuing. Your new identity in Christ leads you to a different way of living. What you will see as we study the next couple of chapters is a lot of commands that flow out of the relationship that we have with Christ.

If you've been paying close attention over the past eight weeks as we've gone through Colossians verse by verse, you may have noticed that Paul has not given very many commands at all. He's been laying the groundwork of who Jesus is, what Jesus has done, what we have been given through faith in Christ. He's been laying out the facts. For all you fans of grammar, we call that the indicative mood. He's been making a lot of statements *indicating* what is the truth.

For a simple example: If I were to pull a chair out and make the statement, "This is a chair." That's a statement in the indicative mood. But the mood changes (and I'm talking about an emotional attitude) when I make a command, and that's called an imperative.

For example: If I were now to say, "John, please get up and come sit in this chair." That's an imperative. It's a command.

Some of you may be asking, "Why are we doing a grammar lesson at church on Sunday morning?" It's because it's important. I hope that we are able to develop within our church bible students –people who love God's Word and know God's Word thoroughly. And grammar plays an important role in coming to a better understanding of the Bible. And what you will see with imperatives (the commands) is that they flow out of the indicatives (the statements). The Apostle Paul in his writing of Colossians (and any of his books of the New Testament), he never gives a command to follow without grounding that imperative in a gospel indicative.

The commands of God are good and holy, but apart from the good news of life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ they can only condemn and kill. So Paul spent

a considerable amount of time talking about that. But then in Colossians 3, Paul makes that turn towards the imperatives, towards the commands. So without further delay, let's pick up our Bibles and read together.

READ COLOSSIANS 3:1-4

This passage that we just read proclaims that the Christian has A New Identity in Christ and that new identity need leads to a new way of life. If you are saved, your life begins to look different after coming know Christ. Today, I want to unpack these verses by giving you 3 Results of Your New Identity in Christ.

First, Your New Identity in Christ Declares a New Reality.

READ COLOSSIANS 3:1

Paul begins by saying "if," and he's not calling into the Colossians salvation, he's emphasizing that a shift has already taking place. Just like he says in Colossians 2:20, "If with Christ you died..." The word "if" expresses a reality, and is probably better translated "since." *Since you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above.* Believers in Christ have been raised with Christ and there is no doubt about that. It is an accomplished fact. The Christian, spiritual entered into Christ's death and resurrection at the moment of their salvation.

The new life that is given to us opens our eyes to an entirely new reality. Don't be stuck in the past looking back at what you used to be.

For an example, what if I hung around you guys and I was always wearing my letterman jacket. I always talking about the "good 'old days" and I couldn't stop telling you stories from when I was on the football team and I was on the swim team... Some of you might be like, "I think I've heard all of those stories." But eventually, you'd say it's time to move on, it's no longer the 1900's. You're married, and you've got kids... That was your OLD life. Get over it. You've got something better right here in front of you.

And that's what Paul does here; he refocuses our thoughts on the fact that we have a new life and a new identity Christ. Before coming to Christ, we looked at everything from an earthly perspective. We looked at our jobs as just a paycheck, or even just a way to find satisfaction in life. We looked at our day as something to just get through, and hopefully we'll experience peace and maybe a little bit of enjoyment. But that viewpoint isn't high enough; it's too low and it's concerned with just the here and now. So Paul encourages the Christian to get an elevated viewpoint. Rather than attempting to start from an earthly perspective and then moving heavenward; we start from the opposite direction.

I want you to take notice of something here as Paul gives the command, *seek the things that are above.* (And we call that the imperative). Paul works hard to ground

that imperative with the indicative of the gospel, *if then you have been raised with Christ*.

What is commanded of us is to “seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.” The NIV translates this verse, set your hearts on things above. This verb, seek, or set your hearts, it indicates a continuous action of the Christian. We are to be captivated by the eternal realities that are already ours in Christ.

Jesus put it this way,

“Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.” –Matthew 6:33

Paul and Jesus are not recommending that you walk around with your heads in the clouds all day, but that our preoccupation with heaven would direct our earthly responses. John MacArthur says,

“To be preoccupied with heaven is to be preoccupied with the One who reigns there along with His purposes, plans, provisions and power.¹

You look at life through a completely different set of lenses and you start to view the things, people, and events of this world through the eyes of Jesus and with an eternal perspective in mind. You have been raised with Christ and have had your eyes opened to a completely new reality. Through our new identity in Christ, through our new life in Christ the existence of the eternal life with Christ has been revealed, and we need to live accordingly.

And we’ll focus on that a little more as we look at verse 2.

But before we do that I want to be clear something. If you sit here this morning unsure of whether or not you have this new life, if you sit here and don’t have confidence that you’re saved, you’re uncertain of whether or not you’ve placed your faith in Christ and will spend eternity with Him, would you please not leave today until you’ve had an opportunity to talk with someone about what this new life is all about? We’d love to sit down with you personally and explain in detail what sin is all about, what Jesus has done to pay the penalty for sin, and how through faith in Jesus Christ you can be confident of your salvation. We love you and we would be so excited to answer the questions you may have, as we desire to see people follow Jesus.

Well, let’s turn our attention back to Colossians as we need to keep moving. The second result of your new identity in Christ is found in verse 2, and this builds off from the first result that I already mentioned.

¹ John MacArthur. Colossians & Philemon commentary pg. 128

READ COLOSSIANS 3:2

Second Result, Your New Identity in Christ Demands a New Focus.

Now I could have easily put *this* portion of the message up into that first point and just meshed them together. But I didn't because Paul emphasizes in this verse setting your mind on things above while at the same time turning away from the things of the earth.

This verb that starts off the sentence, "*set*," (Set your mind on things above) is a present tense verb. Which means that it's expressing an action that is continuous. It keeps going on and on and on. This is a *command* that is given to the Christian that you are to be constantly setting your mind on things above and turning away from a continual focus on earthly things. You are to have this inner mindset that looks towards the eternal.

Now, we all know what a compass is. I'm sure that you all know that the needle on a compass always points north. I was talking with Laura this past week and I told her that I am positive that there are people that if I asked them on the spot which way north is they could answer without hesitation, because their mind (like a compass) is always oriented toward the north. "Lynne, which way is north?"

Now in big picture of life, knowing what way is north is not important. It can be super-helpful but it's not essential. But, in the same way that a compass points north, the Christian orients himself/herself towards Christ. We are to constantly/daily bring our minds to think on the eternal. And I do believe that the Holy Spirit is at work within the believer bringing about new desires (and I never want to discount that), but there also needs to be an intentional choice and commitment that we make as an individual, that the day we have today, that the life God has given us, is not just going to live for the here and now.

And that can be hard. This past week I walked around the Mall up in Mentor with my family and my mind constantly drifted towards earthly things as I walked the electronic aisles, or as I went up and down every lane in the sporting good store. I wasn't buying anything, but I was daydreaming of how fun it would be to buy all sorts of stuff. I even found myself in the back of Sears admiring all of the tools, and I'm not even handy. I could fill my garage with tools and have no idea what to do with them. It wasn't until we walked into a kids store and saw a t-shirt that said, "Just Follow Your Heart" that snapped out of it. Follow my heart?! That's the last thing I need to do. My heart has a natural inclination towards the things of this earth... not on things above!! I should not follow my heart, I need to lead my heart, I need to lead my mind towards what truly matters.

Do not let your ambitions and your goals be exclusively tied up with the things of this earth. Those things are temporary. Just practically, I'd encourage you to sit

down by yourself, or if you're married, sit down with your spouse and talk this through. Ask yourself some questions:

- What am I doing that will matter for eternity? And what am I doing that won't carry any value a week from now, let alone a 1,000 years from now. (Now, I'm not saying that every activity is going to must have some enormous significance. But there's probably activities/routines that we need to pick and there are certainly activities we need to put down).
- Look at your finances: What does the way that you spend your money say about what you value? Would it testify that you value the eternal or the temporary?
- Do you long for the eternal? Is the cry of your heart, "Come, Lord Jesus!"? We earnestly pray for the return of Christ. It is so easy to get caught up in things of the world. But to see our Lord and Savior ought to be the greatest longing of our hearts. The new heaven and new earth is our ultimate home, it's our ultimate destination and what a joy it will be when we arrive there.

So our new identity in Christ takes the focus *off from* right here and right now; off from the things of this earth and demands that we focus our attention toward eternity. And that leads us into the last couple of verses.

READ COLOSSIANS 3:3-4

Third result, of **Your New Identity in Christ** is that it **Will Display a New Life**.

Paul begins by reminding the Christian that they have "died." But in what sense has the believer died? Well in the sense that the penalty for sin has been paid. Romans 6:23 tells us that the wages of sin is death, so we must die. We are sinners by nature and by choice, and our sin has earned us death. But through faith in Jesus Christ, we are united with Him, and we die the required death in Him when He was nailed to the cross, therefore the penalty is paid and sin can never claim us again. We have consequently died to sin in the sense of paying its penalty. Its presence and power still affect us –but it cannot condemn us.

We have died and our new life is hidden with Christ. And when it talks about being hidden with Christ this speaks and this speaks to a few different things. *First*, it speaks to our union with Christ and God the Father. But then *second* it speaks to the reality that the world around us is not going to fully grasp the significance of the believer's new life. Many things relating to God and His purposes are in the present (right here and right now), but because they are in heaven, they are hidden from human sight. And to a degree it is even hidden from your sight.

The Christian is already a citizen of heaven, and is already experiencing the benefit of being a child of the King of kings. But we live in this period of "the already" and "the not yet." The new age has begun and the Christian already belongs to it. But the old age, however, has not yet concluded, so until the Christian dies (or until the Lord

returns) our new life will be hidden truth. This is a truth that it would be helpful to remind ourselves of repeatedly. Remind yourself of who you are in Christ. Remind yourself that you have died with Christ. Remind yourself that you are no longer living for yourself, you live for Jesus Christ. It is your aim to please Him. It may be helpful to memorize Galatians 2:20 which says,

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. –Galatians 2:20

You have a new identity in Christ, and there's coming a day when the Lord will return and what's hidden will be unveiled. The Lord will appear one day and for those who have placed their faith in Jesus Christ as their Savior, we will appear with Him in glory. And the new identity that we have in Christ will be on display for all to see.

That New Identity, that new life that we have in Christ was made possible for us due to the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. We need to set our sights on things above on where Christ is at, but let us never forget to look back at the cross. At Cornerstone Bible Church we always take the first Sunday of the month to celebrate the Lord's Supper together. (*Ask the elders to come*). It's a time of remembrance, it's a time of rejoicing, it's a time to celebrate what Christ accomplished by leaving the throne of heaven to accomplish the will of His Father by taking on Himself the penalty of sin, dying a horrific death, then rising from the grave to return to sit down at the right hand of God.

And I'm going to turn things over to Tim Wilmot, one of our elders, and he is going to lead us into our time of communion.