

Living a God Focused Life

Spilman Memorial Baptist Church, Kinston NC

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June 16, 2024

Text: Colossians 3:1-11

Purpose: Paul is calling the people of Colossi to shift their focus in life from the things of this earth to a heavenly focus. We are to put off our former lusts – fornication, anger, bitterness, unforgiveness – and put on Christ – forgiving, gentleness, patience, forbearance. The way of a follower of Christ is to walk in the way of Christ. Not returning to the way of the world, but becoming Christlike in every way.

Just before the outbreak of the First World War, a small ship named the *Endurance* set sail from Britain with a crew intent on being the first to cross the South Pole. The ship reached Antarctica, but became ice bound in the Weddell Sea. Soon they had to abandon their ship and the 28-man crew took to their lifeboats. They were trapped on the ice for over a year. A desperate decision was made to take four men in a 20-foot lifeboat across the roughest sea in the world to a whaling station on South Georgia Island some 800 miles away.



At the helm was a man named Worsley. All he had to guide them that 800 miles to South Georgia Island was a map, a watch, a sexton, and a compass, but it was all he

needed if he used them well. A mistake as minor as being off by only one degree would have proved disastrous. The four men in that boat endured seas that raged higher than a ten-story building. They were constantly cold and wet from the waves that constantly drenched the boat. They had only the most meager of rations. The journey did not take days, but two weeks. But Worsley, whose most sophisticated tool was a compass, managed to get that lifeboat the 800 miles to South Georgia Island and eventually the entire crew of the *Endurance* was saved.

As a result, Worsley was a hero. The whaling captains who sailed those waters considered him one of the wisest navigators in the world. Worsley was brilliant, but all of his brilliance would have been worthless if he not used the compass. Worsley was wise because he used the compass to guide him. The ancients believed that there are two types of people in the world: people who are fools and people who are wise. Being wise is a matter of using the compass you've been given to get where you need to go. Fools choose not to use the compass. ¹



Let me repeat that last part: **Being wise is a matter of using the compass you have been given to get where you need to go. Fools choose not to use the compass.**

As I look at the news each night, I am amazed at how foolish some people are. You hear story after story of someone robbing another person, someone shooting someone over something stupid, or someone getting caught

cheating another person or business. I am sure they didn't wake up that morning and decide to do something wrong, it simply happened. They were on the wrong path, with the wrong people; they were following their wants, their needs, their desires, instead of following God's plan for life. Most people are simply going through life doing the very best they can but as it turns out, they are not following any particular plan. They have no compass in life and end up doing what feels right when in fact it is actually detrimental to them.

As a Christian, I believe we have been given a great gift from God. We are the beneficiaries of God's written word. God did not leave us here without an instruction manual. He didn't simply place us here without a compass. God's word can be our guide – our compass if you will – if we use it and apply its principles to our life.



Living the life of a Christian and not reading and studying your Bible is like a boat captain heading out to sea and not using their compass and sexton. You will end up somewhere, but it most likely will be in a place you never intended.

As a follower of Jesus Christ, you are to seek the things of God. You are to have a God-focused life. You are to study and know God's word, and apply those principles to your life.

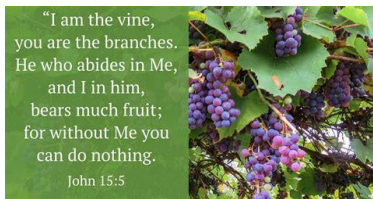
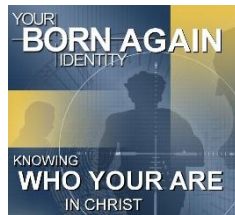
Paul wrote the people of Colossi to address some of the problems



that were present there. Churches have always had problems, from the days of Paul all the way up to today. It is because it is made up of people with problems and issues. Some churches are made up of people that want to control the show, make all the decisions, and bully those that don't agree, and introduce unbiblical teaching into the membership.

Paul was dealing with those issues in Colossi. In chapter two he warned the church of people that bring persuasive, enticing words into the fellowship (2:4), be on the lookout for teachers of unbiblical philosophy (2:8), don't get entangled with a focus on excessive legalism (2:16), watch out for those practicing mysticism (2:18), and they should even be careful not to get caught up in excessive piety and asceticism (2:20). Paul is saying there needs to be balance in our daily walk with the Lord. The Bible should be our guide. A Christ-like spirit should direct our speech and a Christ-focused walk should guide our steps.

The central theme of Colossians is based upon the idea that those that have received Jesus Christ as their Savior, are to be fully and completely identified with Jesus Christ. As a believer in Jesus Christ our position is described as *"being in Christ."*



Jesus expanded upon this idea in John 15:5 when he said: *"I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me*

you can do nothing." It is the connectedness of a believer to Jesus Christ that produces that positive fruit in our life.

If we are not connected, Jesus describes our ability to produce anything worthwhile as impossible. Our righteousness – our salvation – our life – is fully bound up in Jesus Christ. Separated from Jesus – it is nothing.

We need to let that idea sink in. Without Christ, our goodness is nothing. Our life in Christ is everything. If you don't grasp that concept, then the rest of Colossians will not make any sense.

When we turned from our sinful life and embraced the forgiveness offered to us through Jesus Christ, we are now standing on the only ground that will not sink. The old hymn reminds us,



My hope is built on nothing less,
than Jesus' blood and righteousness;
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
but wholly lean on Jesus' name

On Christ the Solid Rock I stand,
all other ground is sinking sand.
All other ground is sinking sand,
all other ground is sinking sand.

We need to turn loose of all the other false ways in which we think we are justified with God. There is only one Savior, only one way, only one Lord – that is Jesus Christ.



Jesus said to His disciples in John 14:6, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."*

When we keep our life focused on Jesus Christ and try to live out what He teaches – we are walking in the **way** of Jesus Christ. When we keep our eyes and minds focused on the **truth** revealed in the Bible, and meditate upon it and apply its truths to our life, we are walking in the truth of Jesus Christ. When we yield our lives to the full control of Jesus Christ, our **life** then becomes hidden in Jesus Christ.



When a believer first comes to the Lord, they identify themselves with Jesus through baptism. It is an outward symbol of an inward change. It represents a death to the old way of

life – the way of following after the flesh and the lusts therein – and burying it there – just as Jesus was buried in the grave. When we come out of the water, it is symbolic of our identification with Jesus’ resurrection.

One day, if the Lord tarries, our bodies will be laid in the grave. But Jesus has promised us resurrection. Our coming up out of the water is an identification with the future resurrection that Jesus will bring about when He returns.

Without identification with Jesus Christ – our sins will not be forgiven and we will die and be judged for our sins. Without identification with Jesus Christ – our bodies will be raised to face Jesus at the Great White Throne judgment where those that have rejected Jesus will be judged.

Paul starts out in Colossians using the language of resurrection and the language of being identified with Jesus Christ.

If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. (3:1)



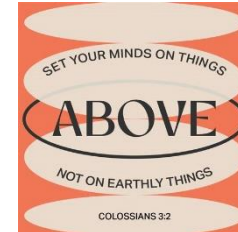
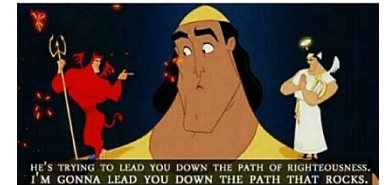
Paul begins his instructions with the “If ... then” statement. If you are identified with Jesus Christ If you were raised with Christ (i.e. baptism) Then you are to keep your life’s focus on the things above – on the things of God.

How hard is that first sentence to understand? Not too hard. Because we are in Jesus Christ – we are to seek the things of God.

How hard is it to apply that first precept to our lives consistently? Very hard!

The tension between the spiritual life and the physical life will always be present in every believer until the day the Lord

calls us home. Many have described it like an angel sitting on one shoulder telling us the good things we are supposed to do and at the same time there is a little devil sitting on the other shoulder telling us to stop being so nice and start looking out for “number one.” Often we pass off the guilt for our actions by saying, “The Devil made me do it!”



But the truth is we are yielded to the will of the flesh instead of keeping our eyes fixed and focused upon the things of God. That is why Paul said in verse two... *Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.* (3:2)

Set your mind – fix your mind – bolt down your mind – on the things above. When something is “set” it is firm and unshakable. Our minds are constantly focused on the things of earth – our grass needs cutting, our house needs cleaning, our work is demanding more and more, our bills need to be

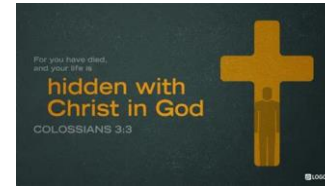
paid, our stomachs need to be taken care of several times a day, our other physical needs demand our attention, our stock portfolio must be monitored, our land needs to be tended too, our animals need to be fed, our children must be watched constantly, our wives / husbands need our attention, our extended family needs us at times, the doctors' appointments continue to come, along with the dentist, eye doctor, and ear doctor. The things of earth SCREAM for our attention.

Jesus is saying we need to keep our mind on things above and not on the things of this earth – how is that possible with so much calling us to give focused attention?

I don't know about you, but I am not very good at multitasking. When I am focused on something, I usually don't hear what others are saying. When I am reading an article on my phone, I don't hear someone in my family asking or telling me to do something. For me to really listen, I have to pause the television, turn my phone face down, and then look the person in the eye.

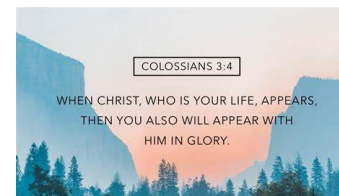


I believe Paul is asking us to multitask. While you go ... doing all the ordinary things of life... keep on the forefront of your mind, the things of God. While you are cutting grass, think on God. While washing dishes, hum that song we sang Sunday. While at work, do everything as unto the Lord. Do not get entangled in the lusts of the flesh – deny them. Focus on things above.



Our life in Christ is not to be compartmentalized. We don't need to think of God only on Sunday morning for one hour. We need to think on the things of God all throughout the day and throughout the week. Why? Paul says: *For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. (3:3)*

We need to recognize that our former – self-centered – me focused – life is dead. We are only alive now because our life is hidden in Jesus Christ. The life we now live should be lived as unto the Lord. Aubrey Jones, the former Pastor at FBC Kinston has said a thousand times – **“We are dead men on furlough.”** I think I understand that more now. The only life we have worth living now is the one that is hidden in Jesus Christ. Any other life we try to live apart from Christ is a dead life. Our hope is in Jesus Christ – a hope for now AND a hope for eternity.



Paul reminds them.... *When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. (3:4)*

We don't have a “hope so” faith; we have a “know so” faith. Our knowledge of our eternal security is not based upon our righteousness; it is based upon the righteousness of Jesus Christ. When He appears, we too will appear. We are a part of the great crowd of witnesses, dressed in white, appearing with our Lord when He returns.

I heard that promise given to many families at the graveside of their loved one. Today they are present with the Lord. One day, at the trumpet sound of the Lord, their body will be resurrected. Those of you that are here that are “in Christ” have that same promise.

We need to hear that time and time again. Heaven should be our life’s focus. Not the things of this world. Not the treasures and trinkets of earth – not the pleasures and temptations that are passing, but a life focused on the glory of God as revealed through Jesus Christ.



Therefore



You may be sitting here thinking this is impossible. No one can fully do that in the world in which we live today. It is a difficult decision to stay with consistently, day in and day out. But it is a decision none the less.

Are you going to live an earth focused life? With all the temporary, fleeting rewards it has to offer? Or are you going to live a God-focused life? With all the permanent, and eternal rewards it has to offer?

It is an invitation. It is your freewill. It is up to you to believe. It is up to you to accept. God is a gentlemen and He does not force anyone – or override the ability to choose between good and evil. God has risked greatly in allowing His creation the freedom to reject or embrace the forgiveness offered through Jesus Christ.



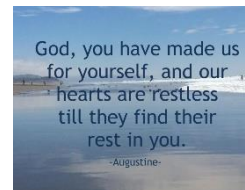
Which way will you live your life? Are you going to use the compass you have been given or are you going to listen to the little devil seated on your shoulder whispering to you to reject God’s plan for life – God’s plan of wisdom? And exchange it for Satan’s lie. I once heard someone say: *Satan always pays off in counterfeit currency.*

If you have decided to live a God-focused life this is the prescription offered to us by Paul.

Therefore, put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. (3:5)



What Paul is suggesting to us is to count our lusts, needs, wants and passions as dead. Do not yield to the demands of the flesh. Do not yield to the temptation of sexual sin. Do not allow your passions to be inflamed. Do not seek evil for others. Do not covet the things of others. At the heart of a restless heart is covetousness.



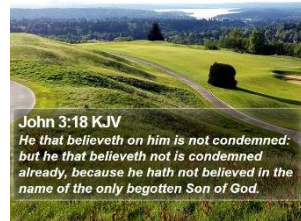
Augustine once said, “God, You have made us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in You.”

We can only find our rest, when we find our rest in God.

At the heart of all the other sins listed in the Ten Commandments is covetousness. We are jealous of others and we murder, steal, commit adultery, bear false witness,

and do not honor our mother or father. We make ourselves the idol of our mind and fulfill the desires of our selfish selves. The mind that has taken its eyes off the Lord is capable of doing most any evil.

God will not be mocked. Sin will be judged. Some people think God winks at our sin. I am so glad I will not have to face the wrath of God for my sin. It was atoned for at Calvary. Jesus paid the price for those that have received God's son. But as John 3:18 says, *"He who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."*



Paul tells us in verses six and seven that sin will be punished. *"Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them. (3:6-7)"*

It is at this point; Paul begins to list the kind of sins he is talking about. I have preached a sermon on this passage of scripture before called, *The Christian's Wardrobe* using the verses from 8-17. It includes some things Christians are to put off, put on, let in, and let out.

To summarize that sermon, Paul says if we are to put away that old man that once walked in the flesh, we are to

PUT OFF anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. (3:8)



STOP

Lying to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds (3:9)

If we are to put on the New Man, we are to now add these to our wardrobe.

PUT ON

A renewed knowledge of God who created us.

This truth applies to every one of every age.

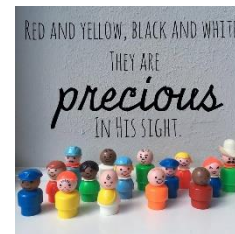
To the ... differences

Jew/Greek – cultural differences

Circumcised or uncircumcised – religious

Barbarian / Scythian – national differences

Slave or Free – economic differences



We need to see the Body of Christ as larger than our community. Every Christian of every age needs to realize that Christ can be all and in all of these various groups. We do not need to see God as only loving one particular group and rejecting another simply on the basis of the things that divide people.

We are very good at seeing God as the God of our people, but not that other group. We may judge others as unworthy because of a different culture, different religious traditions, national differences, or economic differences. We may feel as if God favors one over the other. God judges everyone on the basis of how they have responded to the invitation to receive Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Colossians 3 goes on to say that since we have been redeemed, we are to



PUT ON Tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering, Bearing with one another, forgiving one another just as God has forgiven you. (3:12-13)

As I Corinthians 13 reiterates how important love is, Colossians 3:14 reiterates that same theme: *“Above all, put on love, which is the bond of perfection.”*

LET IN Peace of God to rule your Heart The Word of Christ (the Bible) dwell in you richly – using it to gain wisdom, and helping and encouraging one another through songs, hymns, and spiritual songs.



LET OUT As you do all of these things, let out the other activities in your life, let it be done in the name of the Lord, all the while, giving thanks unto God.

To summarize, Paul has declared we are raised with Christ. Our life is hidden in Christ. When Christ appears – we will appear as well. Paul acknowledged we once walked in the flesh – seeking to fulfill those lusts – now we are to no longer walk in them.

Why? **Because We Are a Child of the King**, we are to ... *“Set our mind on the things of God – not earth.”* This earth is not my home ... I’m just passing through.



This means we are to put to death – things involving fulfilling the lusts of the flesh. Put to death means we are to give up fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desires, and covetousness.

Just as we get dressed in the mornings, we are to put on Christ before we leave, leaving our former way of focusing on the things of earth.



God has left us a compass. (Hold up the Bible).

A guide for life.

Let us use it wisely to guide us safely home.

LET US PRAY

Notes:

¹ Illustration from Sermon Central by Dr. Bruce Emmert, Accessed Aug. 2, 2013