

Heavenly mindedness

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- [0 : 00] You will find my text this evening in Colossians chapter 3 and at verse 2. Colossians chapter 3 verse 2.
- Set your affection on things above and not on things on the earth. One of the prime needs of the church in our day is that she rediscover this emphasis on heavenly mindedness.
- God's people ought to be a heavenly minded people. Our thoughts should be taken up more and more with the things that are above, not the things that are on the earth.
- But my text really means more than that. We are to set our affection on things above. We are to think of these things because we love them.
- Because we treasure them. Because we prize them. Because they mean so much to us. Because our hearts are set upon them. Our heart should be in heaven, not on earth.
- [1 : 19] Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. Now I want us to notice, first of all, we are not to set our affection on things on the earth.
- We are not to set our affection on things on the earth. Why not? Well, we're told here in verse 3, ye are dead.
- For ye are dead. Now what does this mean? Surely the gospel message, the message of the Lord Jesus Christ, is the message of life. Did the Lord Jesus himself not proclaim over and over again that he came to give life?
- I am come that men might have life and that they might have it more abundantly. Are preachers not forever urging people to turn to this Christ that they might have life?
- In him is life abundant, life eternal, spiritual life, satisfying life. Yes, indeed, this is gloriously true.
- [2 : 23] Only Christians possess true life. But it is an important spiritual principle that life issues out of death.
- You will recall that the Lord Jesus said, Except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone. But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.
- You are dead. What does Paul mean here? He's talking to Christian people, talking to those believers there at Colossae. And he says you are dead. What does he mean? Well, the doctrine he is preaching here is the New Testament doctrine of union with Christ.
- Believers are united to Christ. And they have been united to him in his death. They have died with him, dead with Christ. You find the doctrine there in Romans chapter 6.
- That really is the classic passage in the New Testament on this doctrine. Paul says there, As many of us as have been baptized into Christ, have been baptized into his death.
- [3 : 38] Our very baptism is symbolic of our death with Christ. We have been planted together with him, he says, in the likeness of his death.
- We have died with him. Know you not, he goes on to say there in that sixth chapter of the epistle to the Romans. Know you not that your old man is crucified with Christ.

Therefore, he says, reckon yourselves dead. Dead indeed unto sin. It is the doctrine of union with Christ.

You have it again in the epistle to the Galatians. Galatians chapter 2 and verse 20. I am crucified with Christ. I have been crucified with Christ. You have it again in the sixth chapter of the epistle to the Galatians.

Galatians chapter 6 and verse 14. God forbid that I should glory save on the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ by which the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world.

[4 : 45] I have been crucified unto the world. Believers, Christian believers have died with Christ. They've died with him to sin, to his rule, to his reign, to his sway, to his dominion.

They have died with Christ to sin as our ruling power. Now, of course, sin had nothing in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Nothing at all in him. But he took upon himself, he assumed the responsibilities of his people as sinners.

Our responsibilities as sinners. He took upon himself our sin and he paid its penalty.

He died paying the penalty of our sin. And having died and paid its penalty, he is free from all the claims that sin, our sin, which he took upon himself.

[5 : 54] All the claims that that sin had upon him. And we, we who are Christian believers, united to him, are also set free.

Paul says there in Romans chapter 6, He who has died, he who is dead, is freed from sin. Free from the claims, the rule, the reign, the dominion, the ruling power of sin.

And so Paul goes on there in Romans 6 to say, Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.

He says, Reckon yourselves dead indeed unto sin. We are dead, ye are dead, says Paul here in Colossians chapter 2.

Now we should be remembering this. Let us remember this and act accordingly. We ought to have nothing whatsoever as Christian believers to do with sin.

[7 : 03] Of course, sin remains in us, here in this world. As long as we are here in this world, there will be the presence of sin within us.

But sin is not to be obeyed. It is not the master that it once was, if we are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not the master that it once was, usurping authority and authority it ought not to possess.

Its subdominion has been broken. Sin shall not have dominion over you. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.

Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin. And he goes on to give that teaching there in Romans chapter 6.

Sin is utterly inconsistent.

[8 : 25] In the life of a Christian. If you treat sin lightly, if you are prepared to tolerate it in the life, then you had better re-examine the foundations.

When a person is born again, there is put into him a new principle. A principle of hatred of sin. Do you hate sin?

Do you owe sin? Do you abominate sin? Do you mourn over sin? Does sin distress you? Has that happened in your life which has effected a separation from sin?

Do you live accordingly? Are you living accordingly now? You are dead, says Paul here. Verse 3.

For ye are dead. Now of course Paul is not teaching here that we are to be inactive, that we are to be passive, but there is no reaction in us to sin.

[9 : 25] That is not the teaching at all. Indeed, there in verse 5 he says, He says, He says, He says, He's not giving there an exhaustive list of sins.

It's a representative list. What he is saying is, Mortify these sins and all other sins as well. And this term, Mortify, is a most active term.

It means put to death, slay, kill off, murder, ruthlessly repudiate, mercilessly reject, have nothing to do with these things, deal them death, blowes in you.

That is the reaction that there ought to be in us to sin. We are dead to sin, to its rule and to its reign, if we're Christian believers.

There is a more powerful force now, active within us. It is the grace, grace, the grace of God.

[10 : 37] There in Romans chapter 6, Paul says, Ye are not under law, but under grace. Exercise, therefore, this grace.

Exercise grace in mortifying, in slaying every expression of sin within you. Do not set your affection, then, on things on the earth.

You're dead. Dead with Christ. You've died with Christ. Your life is hid with Christ in God. You've died with him to the rule and to the reign of sin.

And this, of course, also involves separation from the world. This world is anti-Christ. This world is anti-God. It is dominated by evil and by sin.

This world will do everything in its power to lure you away, Christian believer, from God and from holiness. Friendship with the world is enmity with God.

[11 : 41] God forbid that I should glory, save in the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.

Christian people and the Christian church need to hear again in our day a clarion call to separation from this world, from its ways, from its standards, from its attitudes, from its values, from its pleasures, from its empty attractions.

Separation from the world. Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

This surely is one of the great needs of our day and generation, that Christian people learn again the vital importance of separation from the world.

Set not your affections on things on the earth. We are not to set our affections on things on the earth. And secondly, notice this, we are to set our affections on things above.

[12 : 52] Verse 2, Set your affections on things above. We are to set our affections on heavenly things. It is in heaven that our affections ought to be.

Set your affections on things above. And why is this? Well, in a sense, in a real sense, in a spiritual sense, if we're believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, we are there already.

Paul says there in the third verse, your life is hid with Christ in God. And where is Christ? He is in heaven. Set your affections.

If you be risen with Christ, verse 1 says, seek those things which are of God where Christ sit us at the right hand of God. Paul teaches the same truth in the epistle to the Ephesians in the second chapter.

He says there, God has raised us up together with him, together with Christ, and he has made us sit together in the heavenly places. We're sitting there in the heavenlies.

[14 : 03] We've risen with Christ, as verse 1 says, and sitting with him there in the heavenly places. Again, what Paul is teaching here is this New Testament doctrine of union with Christ.

We have been united to him in his death, as I've been emphasizing, and as we've been united to him in his death, so we are united with him in his resurrection also. There in Romans chapter 6, you have it all.

We have been baptized into the Lord. Those of us who have been baptized into the Lord Jesus Christ have been baptized into his death and into his resurrection.

As we are planted with him in his death, so have we been planted together with him in his resurrection. If we have died with him, we believe also that we shall live with him.

And so Paul goes on there in that sixth chapter to teach that we are to reckon ourselves dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

[15 : 07] He says, Let not sin reign in your mortal bodies that you should obey it in the lusts thereof, but yield not to your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, but yield yourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead.

There it is, alive from the dead, risen with Christ. And he says earlier in that chapter that as those who are risen with him, we are to walk in newness of life.

We are united with Christ, united with him in his resurrection. We've risen with him. Our life is hid with Christ in God.

We've risen with him and therefore must seek those things which are above where Christ sit us on the right hand of God. What effect then should this have upon us, upon our whole way of life?

What's the practical application of this to ourselves? What difference should this make to our way of living? I want to make six points. First of all this, we must remember that our citizenship is in heaven.

[16 : 18] Our citizenship is in heaven. Our life is hid with Christ in God, says Paul here. We're seated with him in the heavenly places.

We've risen with him. Your conversation is in heaven, Paul says to the Philippians, Philippians 3 and 20.

Your conversation or your citizenship is in heaven. This is not our home if we're Christian believers. This world is not our home.

Heaven is the homeland. We're just passing through. We're pilgrims. We're travelers on the way home. This is not our homeland. I love those words of the poet James Montgomery.

I've quoted them to you on a number of occasions. Here in this body pent, absent from him I roam, yet nightly pitch my moving tent, a day's march nearer home.

[17 : 23] Oh, since this is so, then surely as Christian believers, surely we should sit lightly by the things of this world. They ought not to mean so very much to us.

It is surely dishonoring to our Lord when anything of this world becomes an obsession with us. Of course, there are those things that in the world that must concern us as long as we are here in this world.

There are our families, there are our homes, clothing, food, our work, and so on. These are legitimate concerns, but none of them ought to be an obsession with us.

All these things are transitory, they're ephemeral, they're passing, they're temporary. We have to leave them all behind us. And it should be not with those things, but with the things of the other world, with the things of heaven, that we should be supremely concerned.

Of course, there are those things in this world, too, in which we ought not to participate, with which we should have nothing whatsoever to do. The media is constantly today bombarding us with immorality and with filth and with impurity.

[18 : 44] We need to be tremendously vigilant if we are to keep ourselves unspotted from the world. We are to live in this world as those who belong to another world.

We ought not to feel at home here in this world. If you and I feel at home, Christians, here in this world, then there is surely something far wrong.

Far wrong if we are at home with this world and with its ways. That's the first point I want to make. We must remember that our citizenship is in heaven.

The second point is this. We are to be holy people. We are to be meditating upon them. We will see to it that we draw apart day by day to the place of private prayer.

And in all those devotional exercises, we will not be content until we have the felt sense of the presence of Christ himself, of the Lord, of our beloved.

[19 : 50] until we have this sense of communion with him. We should be designing our heavenly frame of mind and spirit.

And when that is given to us, then we will be carrying around with us amongst our fellows something of the fragrance of heaven itself.

They will take note. Our fellows will take note. They'll take note that we have been with Jesus and our influence for God will be all the greater.

Awake, O north wind, and come thou south. Blow upon my garden that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden and eat his pleasant fruits.

Communion with God. And then firstly, I draw this lesson. There's this point of application. Our thoughts should be taken up with heaven.

[21 : 00] Our thoughts should be taken up with heaven itself. We, who are Christian believers, think far too seldom, far too little of heaven itself.

We're going to spend eternity there. Ought our thoughts now not often to be there? God in his great love has prepared for his people a heaven of bliss and of glory.

Ought we not then to be thinking of that place, wondering what it is like, trying to discover anything that he has made known about it, that he has revealed about it?

Christ our beloved, he has gone to prepare a place for us. Ought we not therefore to be thinking of that place, what is that place like, should we not often be thinking about it, should it not frequently be that our thoughts are there, not on earth, not in this world, in heaven itself.

God has been pleased to reveal a certain amount concerning heaven and what it is like. He has revealed a certain amount there in the scriptures.

[22 : 17] Ought we not then to be studying those scriptures, finding out just what it is that God has revealed. There's much that has not been revealed, we know that, we're not to speculate about that, but there's much that he has revealed, and that should occupy our thoughts and our attention.

Some people say, do they not, concerning a heavenly minded person, he's so heavenly minded he's no earthly use. But that is not so, that is most emphatically not so.

It is a person who is most heavenly minded, who does most good for the kingdom of God here in this world, and who does most good for his fellows, here on earth.

Think then of heaven. Think a great deal about heaven. Think of heaven's bliss, of heaven's beauty, of heaven's purity, of heaven's glory, of heaven's inhabitants.

Study with the book of the Revelation as to say about that place, and what's said about it in other parts of Scripture. nature. Set your affection on things above.

[23 : 40] Our thoughts should be taken up with heaven. Then fifthly this, contemplate Christ. Contemplate Christ.

Verse 1 says, if ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth, on the right hand of God.

This is what makes heaven so desirable, desirable above all else, for the people of God. Christ is there, their beloved himself, the redeemer, the savior.

He is there, he is in heaven. Heaven itself would really have little attraction for them, were it not that their beloved is there.

The lamb is all the glory of Emmanuel's lamb. He has been gloriously exalted. It is as the, the, the, he has been gloriously exalted.

[24 : 48] God has exalted him, exalted him in his human nature. It's the God-man that sits there tonight at the right hand of the majesty and high.

This is the way in which the father has rewarded him for his work in the covenant of redemption. He has given to him the name that is above every name.

He's king of kings, he's lord of lords, sitting there in a place of authority and of power, there at God's right hand. All power is given unto him in heaven and on earth.

He rules the universe. God has given him to be head over all things to the church. He rules the universe in the interests of his church.

And he has gone there. He has entered there as the forerunner, as the pioneer of his people. We who are his shall be glorified with him.

[25 : 57] And there in heaven eternally we shall sing his praise. Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne and unto the lamb.

We shall cast all our crowns before him. Oh, contemplate, contemplate the exalted Lord Jesus Christ.

He's there in heaven now. Whom have I in the heavens high but thee O Lord alone and in the earth whom I desire besides thee there is none.

He is the eternal Son of God. All divine glory is his. It is as the mediator, as the God-man that God has exalted him to his own right hand.

It's the God-man who sits there at the right hand of the majesty on high. But you know as you contemplate this exalted Redeemer, you cannot divorce his exaltation and his humiliation.

[27 : 09] The one is the outcome, the inevitable consequence, the reward of the other. They're inextricably linked. as you contemplate, as you think of him, the exalted Redeemer, think too of his humiliation, the humiliation that led to the exaltation.

There is that one who thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but he made himself of no reputation. He took upon him the form of a servant.

He was found in the likeness of man. Oh, let your mind dwell upon his incarnation. It's breathtaking. It's the wonder of all wonders.

He humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, the accursed death. He bore the anasema, the very curse of God upon the sin of his people.

He bore the wrath of God due to the sin of his people. He bore there, his people's hell. And he was buried.

[28 : 20] Think of it. The one who is the prince of life, the author of life, the giver of life, the source of life. He lies there in a tomb. His humiliation, and he endured it all, Christian believer.

He endured it all for you. But God raised him. he raised him from the dead, and he has exalted him to his own right hand.

There he sits now, if ye then be risen with Christ. Seek those things which are above, where Christ sits, at the right hand of God.

Contemplate Christ. Remember this then, your citizenship is in heaven. We are called upon to be holy people.

If we're setting our affection on things above, we will be holy people. We are to seek communion with heaven. Our thoughts to be taken up with heaven.

[29 : 26] Contemplate Christ. And then lastly, sixthly this, contemplate the coming glory. Contemplate the coming glory.

I've been talking of Christ's exaltation. But the exaltation of the Lord Jesus Christ is not yet complete. Does that surprise you?

One day, the heavens will burst asunder, and in kingly, majestic, divine glory, accompanied by his retinue of the holy angels, the Lord Jesus Christ himself shall appear.

The Lord himself shall descend from heaven. There is to be a glorious second advent. And when he appears, we who are his shall appear with him in glory.

Verse 4, when Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. God's people shall rise from their graves.

[30 : 45] There shall be a glorious resurrection, and together with all living believers, they shall be caught up, we shall be caught up together, to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

We shall be in heaven. The mortal shall have put on immortality, the corruptible shall have put on incorruption, death shall have been swallowed up in victory.

You shall be in heaven, there bodily, redeemed completely, body and soul. They are enjoying the glories of heaven forevermore.

Contemplate those things, and as you do so, as you do so, your longing will be intensified, and such contemplation will prove to be a powerful incentive to holy living.

That, then, Christian believer, is your destiny. Oh, you're not going to be, are you, like that man with a muckrake, raking up the twigs and the dust and all the muck there on the ground, when a celestial crown awaits you.

[32 : 23] Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. But is that your destiny?

If you cannot cherish in your heart, if you do not have ground for cherishing in your heart the hope of such a destiny, then I pity you. oh, my friend, my saviour, my saviour again invites you tonight to come to himself.

Come to him. Do not delay. Do not linger. Do not wait longer. Come to him. And you will be an heir of God, a joint heir with Christ.

Let us pray. O Lord, our gracious God, we thank thee for the heaven that is prepared for thy people, that glorious inheritance laid up in heaven for thy people, kept by the power of God, those who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed at the last time.

God, grant that our thoughts will be there, that we will set our affection not on things on the earth, but on things above, that as those who have risen with Christ, we will set our affections on things above, where Christ sits at thy right hand.

[34 : 06] May make us, we pray, a truly heavenly minded people. May we hate sin with a greater hatred. may we have such a love of that place of perfect holiness, of heaven itself, that we will more and more shun everything that is evil, and separate from this vain, godless world, and let our thoughts dwell in heaven.

And, O Lord, if any of us still are without Christ, and so without hope, bring us, we pray, to repentance and to faith in him, to rejoice in his great salvation.

Bless to us thy word, we pray, for Jesus sake. Amen.