

Colossians 2:20-3:5

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[0 : 00] Good morning. If you can take your copy of God's Word and turn to Colossians 3 for me. If you will pray with me before we begin this time in the Word.

Father God, we thank you that you have set your love upon us and sent your Son to die for us. And we thank you that we have life in Christ.

Lord, during this time, as your Word is opened, we ask that we be convicted in truth. That your Spirit would work and move in us to love and rejoice in your Word. Help us have minds set towards you and the world to come. In Jesus' name, amen.

In the late 1600s, there was a famous allegory, which we love here at Christ's Family, called Pilgrim's Progress by John Bunyan. In this allegory that John Bunyan produced, he is picturing the Christian's life pre-Christ, during his life, and his journey to heaven.

So he gets his place in the city of destruction, the cross where he was saved, and his journey until he gets to the celestial gate. As he comes to the cross, and as he receives salvation, he feels the weight of his sin leave him, and he is put into glorious robes.

[1 : 23] And he has a mark on his face that is extinguished from the world, and he has a scroll to give him assurance. And as he continues his journey, he comes to this beautiful palace. It is glorious.

And he looks, and he calls it the house beautiful. And through watchfulness and verification, he gets into the house. This house is the church.

And he spends many days there, enjoying the rest and the fellowship of the people there. And this time, they have meals together. They have lively conversations. That he reads good books.

He reads scripture. And he feels full. And as his time was coming to an end, and how it's beautiful, they took him to the top of the palace. And they pointed and looked and said, over there is the delectable mountains.

With the intention of showing them to encourage them of where they were going. And it says, when Christians saw the delectable mountains, that they were the most pleasant and mountainous country.

[2 : 26] Beautiful with woods, vineyards, fruits of all sorts, flowers, springs, and fountains. Very delectable to behold.

And when he asked the name of this country, he was told that it was Emmanuel's land. And like this hill, this church, this palace they're at, it is for the pilgrims.

And when you go there, you will see the celestial gate. So my intention in our time together today is, as we are in our house beautiful, that you'll be encouraged and comforted.

And as we're in Colossians 3, 1 through 2, that you'll be captivated with the most beautiful mountains. And ultimately, your heart will be inspired for a deep love in King Emmanuel and the kingdom to come.

So I intend to show you this through one point and three charges. Prior to these three points, let's look, let's read Colossians 3 and look at the immediate context. We're going to start in 2.20 and go to 3.5.

[3 : 27] If with Christ you have died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations?

Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch. Referring to things that all perish as they are used, according to human precepts and teachings. These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body.

But they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh. If then you've been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.

Set your minds on the things that are above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ and God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you will also appear with him in glory.

Put to death, therefore, what is earthly in you. In this text, in the immediate context, you see two important words that provide transition. You see two therefore's.

[4 : 34] It's translated in ESV, if then, or if with. But in verse 220, you see, therefore, since you have died with Christ. And in Colossians 3.1, you see, therefore, since you have been raised with Christ.

The therefore's are a word used to transition. They're saying, in light of what was just said, therefore, this. Typically, when you see therefore's, they're going from doctrine to duty. From theology to doxology. It's going from, in light of this beautiful truth I've just told you, do this. So in Romans, the book of Romans, we see chapters 1 through 11 with rich content of the gospel. When we get to Romans 12, it says, therefore. And then you see a beautiful call for us to live as living sacrifices. So in our text here today, we have therefore's. And the urge is for us to go from doctrine to duty, belief, practice, and that our knowledge of God will lead to praise of him. So the therefore, the first one says, therefore, since you have died with Christ.

[5 : 42] This is communicating that you are no longer living in this world or for this world. When Christ died, your life died with him. All the things of the old man, all the sinful patterns in which you were born and lived for in your life have died.

They are no longer. So he's urging them in this text not to be focused on worldly things. As if you were still alive to this world. He's saying you're no longer alive to this world.

You have died. The importance is that we've been delivered from our sin and are now alive to Christ. Which leads us to the second, therefore. Therefore, since you have been raised.

So we have died to our sin and now we are raised to resurrection life. This transition is communicating security and resurrection power in life. We are born into this world as a baby. But we all need a second birth to go to the next world. We all need a new birth to be born again. We all need the spirit to resurrect our hearts. And just as Jesus Christ died and was resurrected, in him when we die and are resurrected, we receive justification.

[6 : 50] So this leads us to our first point. Point number one is entrance into the beloved kingdom. Entrance into the beloved kingdom. This point we will survey a little bit of Colossians 1-3.

Specifically looking at the passage to describe our salvation. The hope in this time is that we'll answer the question of how do we get into the kingdom of God?

How do we become Christians? How do we experience this dying and this resurrection? And I believe through Colossians 1-2 that access into the beloved kingdom comes through the king in his life, death, and resurrection.

And this is portrayed through his redemption, his reconciliation, and his resurrection. So we're going to spend time looking at his redemption, his reconciliation, and his resurrection. So read Colossians 1-14 with me.

He has delivered us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

[7 : 56] In this passage, we see lots of kingdom language. We see a dominion and we see a kingdom. There are two kingdoms here. And these kingdoms are not based on geography, on circumstance.

It's not that there is a kingdom in this world that we are a part of that we're entering into. These are spiritual kingdoms. These are kingdoms that are in the minds and the hearts of men.

These kingdoms are in the thoughts and the affections. And this is the kingdoms that Augustine picks up on in his two cities. He says, Two cities have been formed by two loves.

The earthly by the love of self and the heavenly by the love of God. Sadly, we are all born into the kingdom of darkness. We are all born as citizens in the kingdom of darkness with desires for this kingdom.

Naturally, we are hostile to God and we do not follow his will. Naturally, we delight in our autonomy and our rebellion. We love our evil deeds and we do not see our need to be rescued in our flesh, in our natural disposition.

[9 : 00] But we do. We need to be rescued from the deceptical, tyrannical rule of Satan. Satan is the god of this world. He is the ruler of the kingdom of darkness.

But verse 3 communicates this. It demonstrates how we are rescued. We see prior to knowing Jesus, we were citizens of this earthly kingdom. Citizens of the kingdom of darkness. And that we were sons of the devil. In this kingdom, we were enslaved to our sin. We listened to sergeant sin in our lives. And from an outside perspective, we thought we were in charge. We did what we want. We did as we pleased. And that was satisfying to us. But we did not see. We were blinded that we had two masters. That our first master was sin and our second was Satan. We did not know of the danger we were in. We did not know that we were following our sinful ways. And that we, like Christians, were in the city of destruction. But by God's grace, he worked in our lives.

[10 : 02] By God's grace, he rescued us from the kingdom of darkness. The text says that he has delivered us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved son.

This word delivered is like the word rescued. It's a salvific term. So we, in this kingdom, were set up for our own ruin. We could not do anything to save ourselves.

If we stayed here, we would all be destroyed. But Christ has come and he's rescued us. And he did this by laying down his life for us. He did this by taking on the weight of sin for us.

In Colossians 2, it talks about how our sin was canceled and our record debt is no more. And how our sins were nailed to Jesus. So Christ came and he rescued us from our state in the kingdom of darkness.

And he has placed us in the kingdom of the beloved son. We now have security. We are now placed in this new kingdom. And we are no longer under Satan's rule.

[11 : 04] We are no longer enslaved to our sin. We are a new man in a new kingdom with new allegiances. And we are citizens there. As we think about this kingdom, this reminds us of the theology of kingdom.

The theology of the two kingdoms. So when I talked about it in the beginning, I said that the kingdom of darkness and the kingdom of the beloved son are kingdoms that are in the minds and the heart of man. And they are in our thoughts and our affections.

When Christ takes us and places us in his kingdom, he gives us a new spirit. We are part of a new kingdom. And now Christ reigns in our heart. This is what we call the already of the kingdom of God.

The already of the kingdom of Christ. So currently now, Christ is ruling in our hearts. Currently now, Christ is reigning over our hearts and our minds. But we talk about the not yet of the kingdom.

The already not yet. The not yet of the kingdom of the kingdom to come. While Christ is currently reigning now in our hearts, there is a kingdom to come when Jesus Christ will come back and he will receive us. And we will be brought to heaven.

[12 : 09] That we will receive the glory that awaits us in this new kingdom. In the kingdom of God that is to come. So that is our redemption that we have through Christ.

Our reconciliation is in Colossians 1, 20-22. It says, And through him to reconcile to himself all things whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of the cross.

And you who were once alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in the body of his flesh by his death. In order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach. So our natural condition, we were in the kingdom of darkness. Now, in this picture, in our natural condition, we are enemies of God. We did not like God's reign.

We were hostile to God. And we wanted to live our own self-governing lifestyles for our own glory. We were filled with self-love and self-interest.

[13 : 11] And in this natural state, God's wrathful gaze is upon us. We were in his crosshairs. Because the Bible says that the wages of sin is death. We will die for a sin without someone taking our sin for us.

But Romans 5, 8 says, But God demonstrated his love for us in that while we were sinners, Christ died for us. It goes on in that passage to talk about how we have peace through this death.

So through Christ, our sin was propitiated. Through Christ, our sin was taken. And the wrathful gaze of God left us and was aimed at Christ.

And he received the weight of the wrath for our sin. And because of that, by his blood, we now have peace. We are no longer enemies, but we are friends.

We are no longer against God, but with him. And at peace with him. Number three, resurrection. Colossians 2, 11 through 13 says, In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him, through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised us from the dead.

[14 : 30] And you, who were dead in your trespasses and uncircumcision of the flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven all of our trespasses. The third aspect of this work of God in our lives is that we had dead hearts.

In the natural man, without Christ, our hearts were dead and did not respond to God. They could not respond to God. In our natural state, in our natural hearts, we were inclined to self-love and self-ture.

We were inclined to live for ourselves. And we could not see Christ's glory. We could not experience the sweetness of his word. We could not see the wonders of his work. But the text tells us that God has made us alive.

By the power that raised Jesus from the dead, he has raised us from the dead. God spoke new creation into our hearts. Our dead hearts received the wind of the Spirit and were made alive. They were dead and now they're living. They were hard and now they're soft. They were stone and now they're flesh. This is the wonderful doctrine of regeneration, that we have received a spiritual resurrection.

[15 : 38] And we have been born again a second time. So entrance into the kingdom is through God's redemption. It is through God's reconciliation and it is through God's resurrection.

These are one work accomplished through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. And because of this work that he's done in our lives, and because we have new hearts and we're a new creation, a new person in a new kingdom, we now have new allegiances.

We have new responsibilities. We are now citizens of a different kingdom. And these new allegiances is we no longer love to live for ourselves. We want to live for God.

We delight in living for God and for his glory. We have new responsibilities. Now that we have been received resurrection life, now that we've been changed, we're called to a new way of living.

We have new responsibilities to be a new citizen, a new kingdom. Three of these responsibilities we will see in the text today. Number one, the first charge, the first command, responsibility we see, is that we should seek King Jesus.

[16 : 44] We see this in Colossians 3.1. It says, If then you've been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.

The word here, seek, is an imperative, meaning it is a command. It is a charge from our King that we should aim or pursue something. That we should have serious devotion to a goal, to an aim. This devotion, this seeking, this looking for, this desiring, is an ongoing action. It is a keep on always seeking, is what Paul is saying here.

He's saying, be always preoccupied with. This is not bound by circumstance. This is a every moment of every day. So the charge here is that every moment of every day, we need to seek King Jesus.

We need to seek Christ and the kingdom to come. Our desire should be for the world to come, not for this world. And this is hard. I think about my day. Sometimes I'm so busy that I have goals to accomplish.

[17 : 45] I don't want to stop and think and meditate on scripture. Because I'm going. I'm being productive. Sometimes we have hard days with kids. That we feel as if we're disciplining all day long.

And we feel like we're beating our head against the wall. And in those moments, this command is still active. In those moments, we shouldn't, we're not bound by that circumstance. In those busy days, we're not bound by our busyness.

The seeking is all the time. So even in the hardest days of discipline, even in the days where our soul is down, even in our most productive and busy days, we have a priority.

A charge to seek Jesus. An example, I was thinking of ways to describe this seeking. It made me think of when I courted Cheyenne. When I decided to pursue her.

I saw her as a beautiful and godly woman. I wanted to set my time to pursue her. And as I got to know her, I realized how much more beautiful she was than I thought. I saw her godliness and her

character.

[18 : 46] And it just drew my heart to her. So then, things changed. I now had a new goal. A new reality. I wanted to marry Cheyenne. So what did this lead me to do? It lead me to act differently.

Before, I was eating salmon. I was enjoying the best coffee that I loved. I was living in such a way that I got what I wanted. I spent my money how I wanted. And in some ways, it was not healthy. But when I knew I was going to have a wife and a daughter. And I was pursuing to marry them. I now live differently. I counted every single dollar. I bought tilapia.

I drank Folgers. And all this for the aim that I can marry Cheyenne and be a good husband and a good father. Take on these new responsibilities.

And that example to help us think that with Christ, we have responsibility. It's not a work. It's through grace. But it's a call. A command for us to seek our King.

[19 : 41] To enjoy Him. To enjoy what He has given us. This should remind us. Make us thankful for the three R's of redemption. Reconciliation. Resurrection.

It should cause us to rejoice in our salvation. That we are now part of His kingdom. We are now His child. And this seeking is motivated by these new desires we have through His Spirit.

And these new commitments we have as His citizen. Christ shapes our whole lives. And it changes it. And it's by His grace and for His glory. Samuel Rutherford has this quote.

I'm going to repeat it twice. And I found it really helpful. Desires or more grace and groaning, which cannot be uttered, are growing pains. And we should wish to feel them more and more.

Desires or more grace and groanings, which cannot be uttered, are growing pains. And we should wish to feel them more and more. We should long to desire. We should long to desire our King.

[20 : 43] And long to desire His promises. And it should cause emotion and affection in us. Christ loved us. Therefore, we should love Him. The fruits of the Spirit are joy, peace, patience. We're commanded to have joy.

Because of Christ's life, death, and resurrection, it should cause us to rejoice and desire Him more and more. Our life should be for Christ.

And when we receive Him, it should be gain. So, set your desires on Jesus. Your longings on the things above. Have ambition to know the things of God more deeply, and the heavenly realities even greater.

Ask God for the grace and spiritual inclination for Him and His purposes. So, we see in the text, the command is for us to seek. What is the object of that seeking?

We see it's the things above, but then it has some things after that. It says, seek the things above where Christ is, seated at the right hand. So, while the things above encompass heaven, the things of heaven to come, the promises we have for heaven, the promises we have in salvation, the object is the King of heaven.

[21 : 54] The object is King Jesus. We should seek Him in all of His benefits. Let's look at how it's pictured Him in the text now. It says, seek the things above where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.

Christ is seated at God's right hand. This is the highest place of honor. Does it harken your mind back to think of Matthew, where the disciples are like, can I sit at your right hand?

What about me? And they're all getting mad at each other. Christ is at the right hand, and God's going to determine who sits next to them. But this place is a place of honor. Those disciples wanted the highest honor.

They were thinking about themselves. But here, Christ is at that highest place of honor. There's nothing higher, there's nothing greater than our King. As we think of His majesty, let's think of some texts that happened after He resurrected and went to heaven.

It says that He has given all power and authority in Matthew 28. In Philippians 2, it says that God has exalted Him and bestowed upon Him the name that is above every name.

[22 : 53] In Ephesians 1.21, it says that far above all rule and authority and power and dominion and above every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the age to come.

We see that Jesus Christ has the highest rule and authority. He has the greatest power, and He has the most worthy name to be named, in which every knee will bow.

So today, we should bow our hearts to our King and seek Him and love Him and treasure Him and rejoice in Him. So we see that the command is to seek.

The object of the command is Christ. The end of the command is that we would enjoy Him. And we see this in Philippians 3. But when we think of Bunyan's, his allegory, when we think of that story, they're called to look over at Emmanuel's land, the most delectable mountains.

But what makes them delectable? What makes them beautiful? What is the vineyard picturing there? It's picturing that it is Emmanuel's land. That is the land of the King. And we should long to be with Him.

[24 : 01] Long to see Him face to face as a man sees his bride. Because what we get in weddings, when we see our bride, it is such sweet joy. But when we see Christ, that joy will be so much more abundant and so much more greater.

What a beautiful thing that our picture of the sweetnesses of this earth point to a much greater picture to come. So in Philippians 3, Paul says that whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ.

Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For His sake, I've suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish in order that I may gain Christ.

So in this, we see that our life is for Christ. To die is gain. And even now, as we seek Him, He is of surpassing worth. He is our treasure and our joy.

In this passage, the word here for rubbish is dung. It's trash. The idea isn't that our earthly things, these other things aren't good. It's that in light of Christ, they're nothing.

[25 : 05] In light of Christ, they are not worthy of our attention and time. So all of the gifts of God that we have on this earth are but a taste of the joy we will have in Christ when we get to heaven.

That means all our possessions and pleasures our marriage and our families, our friends and our hobbies, our taste of the everlasting joy that is before us.

I read this quote of the Lord's Supper. I'm going to read it again because it pictures this so well. Jonathan Edwards said of our enjoyment of God that God is the highest good of the reasonable creature.

The enjoyment of Him is the only happiness with which our souls can be satisfied. Does that make you think of the living water incident? That if you come to this well and drink from this water, you will be satisfied and need to drink no more.

He continues, to go to heaven fully to enjoy God is infinitely better than the most pleasant accommodations here. Fathers and mothers, husbands, wives, children, or company of friends are but shadows, but the enjoyment of God is the substance.

[26 : 13] These are but scattered beams, but God is the sun. These are but streams, but God is the fountain. These are but drops, but God is the ocean.

So brothers and sisters, let us enjoy these rays and these streams and these drops now. And let us praise God who's given them until we enjoy the ocean and the fountain and the sun in the kingdom to come.

Charge number two, set your minds on the things above. That we should saturate our heart in the heavenly realities to come is our second charge. This command is also a command that is ongoing, that is active, that we should always be doing.

This idea of setting is a heart set. It is not just we put it before us, but it is that our thoughts are consumed with it. We set our mind upon Jesus, his promises, and his will.

Our lives should be forward-looking, present living. We should be looking for what's to come, living for what's to come, but living in the present, in this world, because we are pilgrims going to our heavenly home.

[27 : 20] We should meditate and contemplate Christ and his promises. And as we do, our lives will reflect them. Stephen Lawson said, what we set our minds on, therein flows the entirety of our lives.

So as we consume our hearts with Christ, and as we consume our affections and our thoughts with Jesus and his promises to us, our actions will reflect it. In our discipline, it will reflect it.

In our job, it will reflect it in our marriage. If we have the mind of Christ, we don't consider our own interests but the interests of others and lay down our lives. It will reflect it.

So let us set our minds upon Christ and his promises. During my time at Redeemer, there was this sweet old lady. Her name was Louise. And I grew to love her.

She comes from Presbyterian background, loves Jay Adams. And when I was talking with her one time, she coined this term the uplook. And this term, the uplook, became a term that was used often.

[28 : 17] And her thought behind it is that in this present life, in these temporary shacks, we should have an uplook in everything all the time. She indicated that in this present life that our thoughts, our motives, our commitments should be invested upward, not downward.

Heavenly, not earthly. So brothers and sisters, my question just to challenge you today would be, where are your concerns at? How often do you think upon this world?

Obviously we need you, but how often? What would you consider yourself, would you consider yourself to be heavenly minded? Is the use of your time, energy, and money pointing towards a permanent earthly lifestyle or a permanent heavenly home?

The final charge in the last few minutes for our time today would be, put to death what is earthly in you. Read Colossians 3, 5 with me, the beginning of it.

Put to death, therefore, what is earthly in you. So as we set our minds upon the things above, and as we set our minds upon heaven and living for our king, the earthly things in us, the things that reflect our old man, the sinful things, need to be put to death.

[29 : 28] These things have died when we died to the world. When we lived to this world, we lived for sinful thought and action. We lived for sexual morality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness.

We lived for idolatry. We lived for anger, wrath, malice, slander, obscene talk. We lied to one another. But what is the command here is that the old man needs to be put off, that these things need to die.

We should be people who are often killing sin, often reflecting on our hearts to put sin to death because we delight in Jesus. We don't just put our sin out there.

We don't just act like it's not there. We don't pretend it's there. We don't vent. Putting sin to death is we put it to death and we put on Christlikeness. We get rid of our sin.

We don't think that way when I have a thought about my wife that is not good or about my daughter that is not right. I need to reflect on my heart. I need to write it down. I need to talk to my wife about it.

[30 : 28] And I need to remember truth. And I need to fill my mind with the things of God that my mind and heart are set upon him and his word. So as we close today, let us be those who shine the light of Christ and do not let sin dwell in us.

We do not let it have a living place in our hearts, but it is killed. Let us kill our sin and all its faults and deceptive pleasures. We have a new master and this new master is King Jesus.

Let us seek him and enjoy him forevermore. In him is the fullness of joy and at his right hand are pleasures forevermore. Therefore, let your hearts be set on the King and the heavenly realities that come.

And one day when Jesus does come and our hope is fulfilled, our faith is realized and our joy is inexpressible, we will enjoy the ocean and the sun. Let's pray. Amen.