The Way of the True Christian

Colossians 3:1-4

July 5, 2026

Well, please turn your Bibles to Colossians Chapter 3. Paul is turning a corner, here, and preparing us for some practical application. So we're going to get into some very practical things in the weeks to come in Colossians 3 and following. But he's turning a corner. This is a hinge point in the letter.

And in Colossians 2, the section we just finished, Paul, as you know, was confronting the false teachers that were troubling the Colossian church. Several times we have pointed out how the false teachers liked to prey upon Christians' sensitivity to sin. And especially so among new Christians, among immature Christians. I say new Christians, and I say immature Christians.

New Christians are those who are brand new to Christ and realize that after they get through the elation of the new birth and new life in Christ and forgiven sin, and after that, we may call it a honeymoon period, after that kind of passes by, then

they realize, Wait a minute, I'm in a war, and they have sins that they never knew were there, that all of a sudden they have to confess and deal with. And it's sometimes overwhelming to them. And false teachers love to prey upon people like that.

I also say immature Christians because there can be immature Christians who've been sitting in a church for a long, long time, listening to messages week after week, month after month, year after year, decade after decade, and they still have not assimilated the truth.

They still don't really look like strong, mature, steady saints, but they look like petty, bickering, bitter people who call themselves Christians. False teachers love to prey upon those types of people, too.

In either case, whether young or old, new or mature, whatever we are, we realize that sin is a problem. Sin is such a nuisance, isn't it? And I don't mean to trivialize sin by calling it merely a nuisance. It is a nuisance, but it's also a menace. Sin's a great evil. It is the greatest malady that the world has ever known. It's the, sin is the catastrophe of mankind that separated man from God and brought death into the world.

God, we know, dealt with sin once and for all in the death of Christ on the cross. He erased the guilt of our sin, canceled the certificate of debt written against us. We've seen this in the text in Colossians 2. He nailed that certificate of debt to the cross, and "there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" since penalty is removed from us, it's gone forever because Christ took the penalty on himself in his own body when he died on the cross for our sins.

And now that we have been saved by grace through faith, now that we are new creations in Christ, as I said, we awaken to a brand-new reality. We have been born again, and yet we have been born onto a battlefield.

From the moment of the new birth, we realize we awake to a fight for holiness, a fight for righteousness. We find ourselves on the pathway from infancy to maturity, and yet we're facing, even from the time as a little infant in Christ, we face conflicts and adversities and afflictions and suffering.

And even though we can find ourselves reeling, we wonder at times what hit us, we need to learn and realize nothing is actually going wrong at all. This is not only normal for the Christian; this is all happening according to a good and wise plan of God for us.

These are called trials, as we've come to learn, trials, tests, proving us, all designed by God to shape us and to strengthen us and form us and mature us in Christ.

Now, like any soldier, the less training that he has, the less actual experience he has in warfare, the fewer rounds he has exchanged on the battlefield, well, the more vulnerability he will have to making errors, the greater his potential for making costly mistakes, even deadly mistakes.

It's the same thing in the Christian life, and as I said, particularly at the outset of the Christian life, when we are the least mature, when we're new to the truth, when we're new to this thing called sanctification, that's when old sins and old habits are most vexing to us, and temptations seem unduly strong. Falling into sin seems so easy and far too frequent.

And these are the things for a younger Christian, or maybe an immature Christian, these are the things that diminish assurance. These are the things that cause doubts to rise in our hearts about our salvation.

But like all soldiers who survive their errors and outlive their mistakes and failures, like all soldiers who learn, they

learn to grow wary and watchful and wise in the fight. Same thing for young Christians, growing from immaturity to maturity.

God uses all this testing, all this trying, all the trial, all the affliction, all the suffering, even the sins that we fall into, God uses all this to give us experience, to drive us forward to increase in knowledge and understanding, to drive us forward, to learn wisdom and to develop skill in applying the truth to real life and its trials and tests and temptations.

With that said, it is in these times of testing, especially in the early years of the Christian life, it's in these times that false teachers find their easiest targets. They prey upon those who struggle with sin. They capture those who are most blind to their immaturity and their pride. And sin is the point of vulnerability that all false teachers and all bad actors exploit.

And what their point is, what their purpose is, they hope to drive a wedge between the young Christian and his Christ. They hope to cause him to doubt the path that he has embarked on, doubt the salvation that he has, to peel him away from the truth and to lead him down the primrose path: shortcuts to sanctification, intoxicating ideas, mystical experiences that

bolster the flesh in some kind of self-sufficiency and feed the pride.

Now, some of this testing exposes false converts. They may have professed Christ, but some of this testing is actually proving they're not really with Christ. They're not in Christ. And the end for a false convert is apostasy. You see him walk away, and then you know what his true colors are.

For a true Christian, though, for those who truly are saved, even though tempted, tried, sometimes failing, for a true Christian, they have to run the gauntlet of false teachers, they have to turn away from bad influences and turn to the truth continually.

All of this has a purpose. It is designed by God to further sanctification, to strengthen faith by testing faith, turning up the heat so that all the dross rises to the surface, and that's swept away and what's left is a pure, still gold that's tested and tested by fire; deepens resolve to auger our hearts more deeply in the truth and to seal and secure our affections for Christ. That's the point.

So Paul wants these Colossians, he wants us to have the right mindset and to prepare us for the sanctification process

that he prescribes in Colossians 3:5 and following. He wants to give us a perspective, here, that sets us on the right foundation so that we will have the proper foundation, the proper hope, the proper grounding for fighting the good fight of sanctification. For it's in holiness that we grow strong in Christ. It's in holiness that we become stable. It's in holiness

that we even strengthen our assurance, by holding fast to Christ that we see his work is finished, his ministry to us as ongoing and eventually as perfecting us in that holiness.

So what I'd like to do as we embark on to this next section is just kind of read Colossians 3:1-17, this big chunk, and just see what Paul is planning for us and why it is that we need this foundation in verses 1 to 4, which will be the the text we cover this morning. So starting in verse 1, chapter 3, we'll read through verse 17.

"Therefore, if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on the earth. For you died and your life has been hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is manifested, then you also will be manifested with him in glory.

"Therefore, consider the members of your earthly body as dead to sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which is idolatry. On account of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, and in them you also once walked when you were living in them, but now you also lay them all aside: wrath, anger, malice, slander, abusive speech from your mouth.

"Do not lie to one another since you put off the old man with its evil practices and have put on the new man, who is being renewed to a full knowledge, according to the image of the one who created him, a renewal in which there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free man. But Christ is all and in all.

"So as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience, bearing with one another and graciously forgiving each other. Whoever has a complaint against anyone, just as the Lord graciously forgave you, so also should you.

"Above all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity, and let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body, and be thankful. Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly with all wisdom,

teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with gratefulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him."

The more we press into this process of sanctification, we're not only protected and inoculated from the influence of false teachers, but holiness deepens our satisfaction in Christ. That's why I said earlier, man, sin is such a nuisance, isn't it? Yeah, it's a grave offense against God, our father, who loves us. Like, how could we sin against such a one? He's called us with a gracious calling.

We also need to see sin as the impediment that it is, an impediment to the good life that he saved us to live, an impediment to the love that he's chosen for us to enjoy, an obstacle to the rest that he's provided for us and his son.

And that's why we need to see in today's text, Colossians 3:1-4, I'll give you two points, here, we need to live by an entirely new mentality, verses 1 and 2, and that's because of an entirely new reality in verses 3 and 4. So new mentality, new reality. That's how the passage is divided up. We're going to organize our outline that way. The mentality in verses 1 and 2, and then the underlying, undergirding reality in verses 3 and 4.

So here's the first one if you want to write this down: the true Christian mentality, number one, the true Christian mentality. "Therefore, if you've been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on the earth."

So now that you're raised up with Christ, he says, the true Christian mentality is known in what you seek after and what you think about. Now that you've been raised up with Christ, the true Christian mentality, a true Christian is known by what he seeks after and what he thinks about.

There are two verbs here, both in the imperative, two verbs, *zeteo* in verse one, which is to seek after, to search, to pursue. It implies a, a diligence, a push. It implies getting up and getting after it. *Zeteo*, it's aggressive, it takes initiative, it's active, it's not passive. It doesn't just sit and let it come to you. No, you go after it and go get it. That's the *zeteo* idea.

Phroneo in verse 2, the word for mind, *phren,* the verb is built from that. But *phroneo,* mind, it means to, to ponder, to constantly fix the thought upon, to keep thinking about, reflect

on, let it saturate your mind. It's kind of like the Psalm 1 meditating-on-the-Word-of-God-day-and-night idea.

These two verbs, here, refer to the inner life of the Christian, refer to the thought life, and then that thinking that drives all desire and ambition and then action. So it's the internal life of the individual. You know what you're seeking after because it's what occupies your time, your energy, your money, your resources. It's what you spend on, what you sacrifice for. It's what you give up to get.

So think about it. What is your hierarchy of priorities? And when priorities are in tension with one another, which one gives way to the other? Which one emerges as the sacrosanct, sacred cow that will never be set apart for another? Because whatever you will not say, no, to, what gets the priority of your time and attention, that's what you seek after. That's what you pursue.

And unsurprisingly, what you seek after is directly related to what you think about, what occupies your thought life, what you meditate on, what you bring in, what you reflect on, what you, even, shows up in your dreams, what you dream about.

The mentality of the true Christian is one that is constantly, habitually, continually seeking after the things above and constantly, habitually thinking about the things that are above.

Now, perfectly? No. Flawlessly, without any deviation from the pattern? Well, no, obviously not. That's why Paul has put these two verbs in the imperative form. He's got to command this church to do that. We need the command. We need the reminder.

That's why we come here every single Sunday, to have somebody standing up here and barking orders at you from the word of God. We need to be pushed and moved, and that's totally understandable. Paul has to command because these Colossians are tempted to seek earthly things and to ponder earthly things. If they're like that, it's not a very far step to realize we're like that, too. We realize that.

So Paul says if you've been raised up with Christ, seek and think differently than you have been seeking and thinking. He's gently, once again, gently calling for the Colossians' self-examination, here.

And especially among those who were listening to the false teaching, especially for those who were kind of drifting away

from the simplicity of faith in Christ and submitting to this externalism and ritual rule-keeping. Those people in particular really need to check themselves.

I mean, if they really have been buried with Christ and are raised up with Christ, as Colossians 2:12 says, the clear evidence is that they will be seeking the things above. They'll be setting their mind on the things above.

And why is that? Because *above*, that's where Christ is. And Christ is he who won our salvation. Christ is he in whom we hope, he's our very life, he's our deepest longing, the one whom we all seek, who we think about, who we long for.

And so Paul knows this is what really is going to mark the dividing line between the false professor, the pretender of the faith, and the true Christian, in what he seeks after. And what he seeks after is driven by what he is thinking about.

We like to think about how Christ-focused our lives ought to be, how Christ-saturated our minds ought to be. If we notice, here, Paul does not say, keep seeking Christ or keep thinking about Christ. Though that's implied and though that's true, Paul's command, even though Christ is most precious to us, Christ is most precious to Paul, notice that Paul did not say,

If you've been raised up with Christ, keep seeking Christ, keep setting your mind on Christ.

It's inferred, it's implied, but he says, instead, "Keep seeking the things above." He says, "Set your mind on the things above." Paul is widening the scope of our seeking. He's, he wants to broaden our thinking.

He's not underplaying our ambition to seek Christ, to love Christ, to worship him, to be Christ-like. He's not minimizing our fixation on him at all, in the slightest. But he is, in putting it this way, he is expanding the scope because he wants us not only to see Christ, but to see the significance of Christ, the fullness of Christ, all that explains Christ, all that Christ did, what he earned, what he bought, what he paid for, what he has saved us to. He wants us to see it all.

So this expression, "the things above," is as broad as it can be, to include all things in the *above category*. But that said, Paul has used, by calling it, the things above, he's using an expression that we have to admit is rather general and abstract.

So it may help us to discern a bit from the context what does Paul mean by the things above? What does he mean more

specifically, more concretely? After all, if we're going to seek after it, if we're going to set our minds on it, specific and concrete is what we need. That'd be helpful.

So I'm going to give you three things I'm seeing, here, from the context that helps give us specificity and concreteness to the things above. First, write down the word, heavenly, the word, heavenly. The things above, refers to the realm of all that is heavenly. We see this in the contrast in verse 2. Paul contrasts, the things above with the things that are on earth.

And he's not speaking, there, about the rocks, the trees, the animals on the earth. And it's not a matter simply of the spiritual world as things above versus, the physical world, the things on the earth. That's not the issue either.

The things that are on earth, translates a Greek phrase *ta epi tes ges*. *Ta* is a definite article, *epi* is a preposition, and *tes ges,* that's the earth. That expression shows up again in the exact same form, words in the exact same order in verse 5 to describe the members of your earthly body. The members of the things on earth, *ta epi tes ges*. And notice the members that he speaks about are not physical things like hands and feet, eyes, nose, mouth. Following the expression, the members of your earthly body, it's a list of sins, isn't it?

So the realm of the heavenly, in contrast to the earthly, is a place absent of any and all sin. In verse 5, it's the place where there is no sexual immorality, no impurity, no evil desire, no greed, no idolatry. Can you imagine such a place? I think it's hard for us to do because we live in the day-to-day, in that world that he commands against in verse 5. This place absent of any and all sin in verse 8 is the place where there is no wrath, no anger, no malice, no slander, no abusive speech.

By contrast, the heavenly is where, verse 12, there's compassion all the time, kindness, humility, where humility dwells there with gentleness and grace and love, verse 14, which is the perfect bond of unity, pure love, so pure unity, never to be fractured and broken apart. It's the place, verse 15, where Christ rules and the peace of Christ rules. It's the place, verse 16, where the Word of Christ dwells richly.

You take all those concepts, kind of put them together in one pot, this has got to be the most delightful, emotionally moving, soul-stirring place. And there is music that resounds in this place of psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, excellency of human speech set to the beauty of angelic music. This is what he wants us to be thinking about.

So by the things above, Paul does not point to the things spatially above us, as in up, as in the sky, beyond our own atmosphere, or where the planets of our solar system are orbiting, or where the stars are or other galaxies are hurtling through the universe.

It's not what he's talking about. Paul wants to seek after and to think about the spiritual realm, the heavenly world where Christ is right now, where he is. It's the realm of God. It's the place of the thoughts of the mind of God. It's the service of the holy angels who dart about like flames of fire, immediately doing his will. It's a place where no sin is, in which there is nothing contrary to his will at all. It's a place where righteousness reigns, where blessing flows.

Then on the contrary, Paul says do not seek or think about the things that promote sin, or that feed temptation, or that distract us from the things above, or that entice us into sinning on account of those things. Colossians 3:6 says, "On account of those things, the wrath of God comes upon the earthbound and the sons of disobedience." This wrath comes when Christ returns to execute God's judgment and wrath.

And that leads to a second specific and concrete meaning of the things above. Second, you can write down the word,

sovereignty. So first, what's the things above? Heavenly. Second, what's the things above? Write down the word sovereignty. The things above refer to the place of Christ's sovereignty.

Paul refers to his sovereignty by identifying the exact place where Christ is, that is, at the right hand of God. This is yet another reference to the commonly quoted verse in the New Testament, the most commonly quoted verse in the New Testament from the Old Testament, Psalm 110, verse 1, one of many in the New Testament.

Psalm 110 verse 1, "Yahweh says to my Adonai," that is "Yahweh," the divine name, "says to my Lord, my Adonai." David is speaking. He says, "Yahweh says to my Adonai, 'Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies as a footstool for your feet.'"

Now besides the picture, there, of total and complete domination of all hostile forces, besides the putting down of the rebellion and executing all the rebels, Psalm 110, verse 1 is describing a co-regency between God the father with his son the Christ.

In ancient monarchies, the son of a reigning king could reign alongside of his father and do so for many years, and he reigned there as an apprentice to the throne that he would one day inherit. In Psalm 110, verse 1, David is calling this son who is a son of David, future son of David, he's calling this son, my Lord. He's acknowledging him as my Lord. He's bowing to him as my Lord, as Yahweh is the one who awards him the kingdom, who acknowledges his right to reign. Yahweh bids him to wait until the time when all his enemies are bowing, prostrate, turned into his footrest.

Paul writes the same thing to the Corinthians, expanding the thought just a little bit, 1 Corinthians 15:24-26. He says, there, that Christ "will abolish all rule and all authority and all power, for he must reign until he's put all his enemies under his feet." Same concept, same idea. He says, there, that "the last enemy to be abolished is death itself."

So again, by all, by the things above, Paul would have us seek after the things of Christ's sovereignty, to think about the reality of his authority and his power, his absolute domination over kings and Lords and sin and destruction and demons and every vile thing, every hurtful thing.

We're not to seek after lower power and authority, think about, worry about, be anxious over lesser powers, lesser authorities. Let your mind dwell on the omnipotent sovereignty of God and the omni-benevolent character of his rule. Omni-benevolent, just meaning all good character of his rule, which we are going to enjoy literally for an entire millennium, 1,000 years of Christ reigning from David's throne in Jerusalem.

His righteous governance, according to Isaiah 9:6, it's going to cause the land to blossom and to bloom and to thrive and to prosper. Put no hope in human princes. Do not worry about elections and results and polls. Don't worry about the data. Put no hope in human princes. Put all your hope in the King of kings and the Lord of lords, because he is sovereign, and he has conquered, and he has won.

Whatever troubles you're going through in life, so brief, even if you live another hundred years. I could almost guarantee none of you will. Another hundred years on this earth, it's a drop in a drop of the ocean of time that Christ reigns.

So by the things above, Paul means seek after the heavenly, seek after Christ's sovereignty. Think about the heavenly. Think about his sovereignty. Let it fill your heart with satisfaction and peace and joy.

And then to be specific and concrete, to know exactly what to think about, third, write down the word ministry, heavenly sovereignty, and then the word ministry, as in the things above refers to the place of Christ's ongoing ministry to his people.

It's noteworthy, here, that Paul is taking a moment, here, to set some perspective, fixing his readers' attention on Christ, who's seated at the right hand of God, and he does so right in the middle of a context about the desire to be sanctified from sins.

Sins, as I said, trouble us. They are a nuisance. They keep us from what we really long for. They weaken us. They distract us. And the false teachers, while they said their teaching was valuable to mitigate against fleshly indulgence, Colossians 2:23, Paul said, no, they're worthless, futile. Don't listen to bad doctrine. It's not going to help you get any way forward at all. It's actually going to take you in reverse.

Then after the perspective that Paul sets, here, in Colossians 3:1-4, Paul wants them to start right away to kill sinfulness, verse 5, to put off actual sins, verses 8 and 9. He says, Get after it! You've got the power, you've got the ability, you've got a Christ who saved you, who won your salvation. He's given you of his Holy Spirit. You've got a new

nature, you've got the powerful Word of God. Get after it! There's no sin that can stand against God and his power. Get after it!

This picture of Christ seated at the right hand of God, it's not only about Christ's sovereign power to subdue all his enemies. It's also about Christ's high-priestly ministry to care for and show mercy for his own people, who are tempted and tried and sometimes failing.

The author of Hebrews uses the same language of Christ seated at the right hand of God in Hebrews 1:3, and he draws this connection to Christ's ongoing ministry, a high-priestly ministry of propitiation and then prayer; major proof of the superiority of Christ over the old covenant system. It says in Hebrews 1:3, "Having accomplished cleansing for sins." That's everything. Propitiation, satisfying the wrath of an angry deity; expiation, removing our sins as far as the east is from the west.

"Having accomplished cleansing for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high." Completed work, new phase of ministry. He's done away with the old, and now he's into the new and it's mercy, compassion, prayer, strength, grace for all of our times of need.

The high-priestly ministry of Jesus Christ, it's superiority over the entire Mosaic priestly system, indeed what the entire Mosaic system pointed to. That's the chief theme and burden of the pastoral exhortation in Hebrews. It's what all Christians need every single moment, every single day. This is so deeply encouraging, that he's seated at the right hand of God.

So does that help us to get maybe a little bit better specificity, greater clarity, concreteness? What Paul means by the things above, taking these cues from the context, is the heavenly realm where God dwells, 1 Timothy 6:16, "where he dwells in unapproachable light."

So the absence of sin, the home of holiness and purity, the realm of righteousness, joy, love, peace, perfection: Christ is there. He's there right now. He's there in resurrection glory. He ascended to the right hand of the father to rule and reign in sovereignty and to minister to us in his mercy, in the mercy of God.

And by the way, Christ is there right now ministering to us currently, and he's doing so in a human body, perfect, not being perfected, but perfect, glorified. He is there in a state of power and honor and glory. His body is no longer in a state of

weakness and humiliation. His body is there in resurrection glory, power, new body.

He's there with God the father, and he's dwelling with the father in unapproachable light, a light that no man has seen or can see. And yet Jesus Christ, the God-man, he is there and he's seeing what no man has ever seen or ever could see. He sees the father's glory, and he intends to share it with us.

We're going to have more to say about that in just a few minutes, but first, stop and think about this section and think about what it is you most often seek after. What do you live for? What do you spend your time and energy on?

If the mentality of a true Christian is marked by what he seeks after and what he thinks about, ask yourself, is it the things above, or is it the things below? What's on your mind? What do you live for? How are you spending your time?

Is Bible reading and prayer something you check off your list of tasks, or is it more like the best part of your day? Is it that which you cannot wait to get to and to get back to when you leave it? Is it what you wish you had even more time for, more hours in the day for? Is it the first thing you do? Is it the last thing you do?

Let's acknowledge it, admit it. The things on earth, the sports and entertainment, news and politics, text messages that interrupt us all the time, intrude into our lives, take our attention, things that flow constantly to us, kind of like IV fluid going through the veins of our minds; all this information, expectations, pressures that come from others who tried to set the agenda for us, who tell us what to seek after, what's important, what to think about.

Man, our thoughts are so quickly turned from heavenly things back down to earth, as if we're bound by these invisible chains anchored into the mundane and the banal and the trivial. We ache sometimes, don't we, at how inconsistent we can be. No wonder we find ourselves so susceptible to sin, especially when trials come. We can be so easily anxious and fearful and worried, perplexed, troubled.

Jesus said in Matthew 6:25, "'Do not be worried about your life as to what you will eat or what you will drink, nor for your body as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?'" Yeah, I like to think so. Verse 27, "'Which of you by worrying can add a single cubit to his lifespan?'"

If we'd only spend more time thinking about how our God feeds the birds of the air in all their beauty and variety, so many birds. If you walk through natural spaces here in Colorado, you can't count the number of varieties of birds that there are out there. And he clothes them and feeds them.

He clothes the lilies of the field. How many grasses that we pass over and run over and stomp on? If we get down on our hands and knees and look at them, we realize, wow, even Solomon and all his glory with all his wealth, he didn't eat like the birds do, and he didn't dress like the flowers do.

If we'd only spend more time thinking about these things, how our faith would wax strong. We would realize "'your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. Therefore seek first his kingdom and his righteousness,'" Matthew 6:33, "'and all these things be added to you as well.'" Don't sweat it.

Paul's making really the same point here in Colossians 3:1-2. He's calling us Christians to be Christians, indeed, not to just give lip service to it, but to give ourselves to learning and studying and deepening in the truth.

He's calling us Christians to be so shaped by divine truth that truth sets the agenda for us, not the pretty lies, not the

alluring distractions, not the temporal pressures of the world, not the pleasure of the company of people, but truth, true truth, sanctifying truth, saving truth.

Even the deepest anxieties of the soul, fears about forces beyond our control, whether those forces are natural or spiritual, anxieties over spiritual things, perplexities over troubling sins, over giving into temptations, caving into falling into sins, these, too, all answered by what Paul is commanding us to do here. "If you've been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above where Christ is seated at the right hand of God."

His mission success benefits you. His faithfulness won the field, secured your full salvation. His victory is your victory. And by his accomplishment, you rest assured. You're strong. And if you doubt that at all, God is telling you, right there, that your savior is right now seated at God's right hand. And from that place he subdues all his enemies; and from there he keeps serving as your great and merciful high priest. As J. B. Lightfoot says, "You must not only seek heaven, you must also think heaven."

So when accusations come, whether they come from others, scorning human beings, false teachers, people with bad intent,

or the accusations could come from your own conscience, confess your sin if you need to, and then set your mind on things above. Reflect on what God has accomplished for you in Christ. Rejoice in gratitude, because this is your reality.

Reality is the subject of our second point, number two, the true Christian reality. Number two, the true Christian reality. The mentality of the true Christian is grounded in a reality about the true Christian, something God has done for the Christian and something he will yet do for the Christian. That's the reality: what God has done for the Christian, what he yet will do for the Christian.

And we see those in the passive-voice verbs of verses 3 to 4, "For you died and your life has been hidden," notice the passive voice, "has been hidden with Christ in God. And then when Christ who is our life is manifested, then you also will be manifested," passive voice again, "you will be manifested with him in glory."

Now in verse 3, Paul is again, here, he's bolstering the Colossians. He wants to help them stand against the charges of the false teachers. They're saying things like this: You Christians, it's a quaint, you know, set of doctrines you have about the, you know, the dying Messiah in Jerusalem. That's

great. Rose, risen from the dead. We get the rumors and stuff like, it's awesome. You guys have that. It's good for you.

But look at you, really. You're nothing special. I mean, you look like I do. You walk like everybody else does. You live mundane lives. In fact, your own Apostle commands you to live quiet lives and do hard work, work with your hands, share with other people.

That's not really impressive. We have our trade guilds that, man, we feed the hungry. We've got homeless rehabilitation programs. We have programs that take care of the city. Look at these building projects. We funded that. The great goddess Diana funded that project. You're unremarkable, really. Your religion's pretty, let's admit it, unimpressive. You've got no great rituals. You've got no great things.

We've heard those kind of refrains, haven't we? Always pressing us into some other mold of social justice, or action, or trying to build big, huge buildings by taking the money of the people and turning it into Saint Paul's Basilica or Saint Peter's Basilica or something like that.

In contrast, false teachers, false religionists, pretenders, they try to parade before you a much more remarkable

religion. They try to brag about their deeds. They try to flaunt that they are on an inside track to true spirituality and they, Paul says, Colossians 2:18, really what they're doing is puffing themselves up, "delighting in self-abasement, the worship of angels."

They go on in detail about visions they've seen, or projects they've contributed to, or things they've funded, or all that they've done, or the number of people who pay attention to them, or are fans or followers on social media or money that they have.

It all seems so impressive, doesn't it? But since they have no new life abiding in them, there's no true spirituality. There's no spiritual circumcision, Colossians 2:11. There's no new birth. There's no regeneration, there's no Holy Spirit to remove the old nature, that created a new heart and gave them a new spirit and granted them a new nature to dwell within them.

So these false pretenders have nothing but what they can manufacture in the flesh, nothing but what they can parade before you that's visible, that's countable, nothing but the data that they can show. So in order to draw attention to themselves and to make bad doctrine look good, these pretenders puff themselves up and they flaunt a false spirituality like

peacocks. They scorn true Christians for being unremarkable and unimproved and unimpressive.

And Paul says in verse 3, "Pay them no mind." Just turn it off. Turn off those voices. Since you've died, you're dead to them, too. Your ears don't work anymore for that stuff. So don't pretend that they do. Don't listen to it. You are now as Christ is and as he is hidden from natural sight, so are you.

Those who judge with natural perception only, those who scrutinize and then criticize with fleshly hearts and by worldly standards, they will do nothing but come to wrong judgments. As the world has done and continues to do with Christ, so it will do with you.

Remember, after Christ walked out of the tomb, he didn't march back into the temple complex to prove himself to everybody. He didn't barge into the Sanhedrin meeting and flaunt his resurrection. Could have, but as John 2:24 says, "Jesus on his part was not entrusting himself to men, for he knew all men." He didn't need the witness of men, natural men. He appeared to whom? To his own, and to them alone, only.

Why is that? Because as 1 Corinthians 2:14 says, "A natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God for they are

foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them." He has not the ability because spiritual things are only examined and appraised and judged rightly spiritually, by those who have the Spirit.

So God kept his resurrected, glorified Christ hidden from the natural eyes of natural men, who do not have the Spirit of God, who can do nothing but make natural judgments because they reason from unbelief. The current hiddenness of Christ from the world, it's a judgment on the world. It's a judgment against unbelief.

The resurrected glorified Christ, listen, beloved, it should make you feel so privileged, special, loved. The resurrected, glorified Christ, he is the exclusive gift of God to you, not to the world, not to kings and those who are in authority, but to you, his redeemed people.

And this Christ is the most precious treasure of the redeemed in this life and in the next. The redeemed have the exclusive privilege not only to be like him now, hidden as he is, but soon to become like him.

Since Christ our forerunner has died, this is what Paul teaches us in chapter 2, we've also died in him. And since his

resurrection life is hidden from the world, so also is ours. But Christ will return one day, and when he does, his resurrection glory will be manifest to all. And when that happens, we will share in his glory, a glory that will be seen by all, that will amaze all, that will cause "every knee to bow and every tongue to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of the Father."

So who we are now, what we are, our likeness to Christ, the Lord Jesus Christ, who we love and worship, who we seek and we serve, listen, it's all going to be manifested in due time.

We read earlier in the service in Philippians 3:20, that as citizens of a heavenly kingdom, we seek and we think about, it says there, "for our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of his glory."

Human body in weakness and frailty, a humble state, transformed and conformed into the body, the human body of his current glory, "by his working through which he's able even to subject all things to himself."

"So as we died with Christ," Colossians 2:12, "we're also raised up with Christ." It shows us that we're united to him spiritually, united to him actually, really. Our life is united to his life. We're in the union with him by the Spirit, and so our life is hidden with his life. If his life is hidden, so is ours. We're tucked away with him who's also hidden, who is seated at the right hand of the father. That's where we are in reality, in spiritual, spiritual reality.

So it's when he returns, bodily, it's when his blinding glory is manifested, he will come to astound the entire world. 2 Thessalonians 2:10 says, "He comes to be glorified in his saints on that day," that's us, "and to be marveled at among all who have believed." It's while we are marveling at him that we're to be glorified. It's while we're marveling at him, that we are transformed from our humble state into the state of his glory, so that as he is now, we are to become.

As his resurrected, glorified body is right now, so our body is to become no longer hidden but manifested, revealed no longer in weakness and humiliation, but in power and strength and glory. The Apostle John, you can turn over to 1 John, follow me there if you'd like to, the Apostle John makes kind of the same point in his own way that Paul is making, here. And he,

too, John, is also dealing with characteristics of false teachers.

He's kind of dealing in his area with these churches in Ephesus, again, a hundred miles to the east of where Paul is writing this letter to, of Colossae in the Lycus Valley. A hundred miles to the west is Ephesus.

And John, decades later, he's dealing with the same kind of troubling doctrines of these same kinds of false teachers. They're troubling the Ephesian church decades later. And he says in 1 John, chapter 2, end of the chapter, verse 28, "Now little children, abide in him so that when he's manifested, we may have confidence and not shrink away from him in shame at his coming. If you know that he is righteous, you know that everyone also who does righteousness has been born of him."

It's kind of his way to say, Keep seeking the things above, keep thinking about the things above, keep practicing righteousness, keep pursuing him. So "keep practicing righteousness," verse 29, is "keep seeking the things above" of Colossians 3:1. "Abide in him," 1 John 2:28, is "set your mind on things above," Colossians 3:2.

And then John says this, look at chapter 3, verse 1, "See, see how great a love the Father has given to us that we would be called children of God, and," it's not only what we're called, it's not just a nominal thing, "and so we are. And for this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know him."

Again, if Christ is hidden, we're also hidden. If they can't see him clearly, they can't see us clearly. "We are truly children of God, and the world did not know us, just as the world did not know him." Why? "Because our life has been hidden with Christ in God."

And yet, verse 2, chapter 3, "Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not yet been manifested as yet what we will be. We know that when He is manifested, we will be like Him because we will see Him just as He is." It's what Jesus said in the beatitudes, "Blessed are the pure in heart," Matthew 5:8, "for they shall see God."

And John, he then explains how this comes to be. The physical sight of Christ in his glory will give us spiritual sight of God. John Owen says, "Then Christ in all his glory shall be continually before us. The eyes of our understanding shall be so gloriously illuminated, we shall be able steadily to behold and comprehend that glory."

Can you imagine it, beloved? For one, I can't. All I've known is this sinful world. I see little glimpses of good things. I'm just going to take those glimpses and take these things I know from Scripture and magnify them and know it's eternally greater.

We'll see Jesus Christ, then, and we'll see him through physical eyes, the physical eyes that have been glorified, that are set in resurrected sockets, on resurrected heads, in resurrected bodies. And it's then we shall behold in his face and perceive with spiritual sight the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, 2 Corinthians 4:6. What a day! And you know what? It's not just a day. Day, there, is a *metonymy* for eternity. It never changes, only deepens, broadens, widens.

We mentioned earlier that Jesus Christ, in the presence of God the father at his right hand, a divine nature joined to a human nature, Jesus is able to see God even though God dwells in unapproachable light. The two natures of Christ, being distinct and unmixed, those two natures are able to communicate freely, the divine with the human and the human with the divine, so that what his divine nature sees and knows, that is, the invisible God, is freely and perfectly conveyed to his human nature.

And you know what? Because we share humanity with him and he shares humanity with us, what his human nature sees and knows is conveyed to us. As our perfect mediator, he brings us into that heavenly, beatific vision.

Wilhelmus à Brakel puts it this way, "God cannot be seen with physical eyes, for he is the invisible one," 1 Timothy 6:16, Hebrews 11:27. "The Lord Jesus, according to the body, will be seen with our physical eyes with overwhelming joy and love by all the citizens of heaven. Believers will see Jesus in his glory, and they will speak with him, and he will speak with them face to face, and God will be seen with the enlightened eyes of the understanding."

It's exactly what Jesus prayed for in his high-priestly prayer in John 17. It's what he sought from the father, and he sought it for us all along. This is what he says, "'Father,'" John 17:24, "'Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory, which You've given to Me. For You loved Me from before the foundation of the world.'"

"I want for them, and I've done all that I've done for them, for your will, according to your plan and your decree. I've pursued it. I've accomplished it, and I long for it. I want

it and I'm praying for it. And I, by your strength and your will, Father, and by the power of the Spirit, I will make it happen."

You need to see this as an accomplished thing. To see Christ in his glory is to see God. Philip said, "'Show us the Father and that's enough for us.'" "'Oh, Philip,'" pats him on the head, "'if you've seen me, you've seen the Father.'" To see Christ and his glory is to see God, to behold God's love for Christ and his love for us. To see God is to love God, and that's to share in the divine nature.

Francis Turriten says, "Vision begets love." I love this line. God cannot be seen without being loved. Isn't that true? He goes on to say, "Love draws joy after it because God cannot be possessed without filling us with joy." You see the connection between sight and love and joy? It's what he's secured for us. It's a done deal. Now, it's just the waiting.

This is reality for every true Christian, and it's foundational for all that truly is, what God decreed, all that he accomplished in Christ Jesus. And so Paul's bottom line message for the Colossians and for us: This is real reality. So set your mentality accordingly, and then go out and live it. "Keep seeking the things above where Christ is seated at the

right hand of God, and set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on the earth." There is nothing for you on earth, so leave it behind as you contemplate all that lies ahead, because that's reality.

Again, à Brakel, Wilhelmus à Brakel says, and he's encouraging this kind of heavenly mindedness, he suggests that you "call to mind all that you have ever beheld of God. Call that to mind. Call to mind all the joy and the peace you've ever tasted, all the union and communion with God that you've ever enjoyed, all the being lifted heavenward that you've ever experienced.

"And then add all the enrapturing sermons you've ever heard and all that others have ever shared with you of their experiences, and all the love you've ever perceived in the gathering of saints. And consider all of this collectively, and then compare these minute rays of light to the joy and bliss we'll enjoy in the state of perfection."

Beloved Christian, since this is reality, let these truths go deep into your heart. Let them saturate your thinking. Let them dominate your mind. Let truth ground your reasoning and seal your assurance and fill you with joy and gratitude. And

then, beloved Christian, go live differently. Go live differently and follow the way of the true Christian.

Remember what Paul says in verses 3 to 4. He's giving, there, an explanation, he's providing a reason, a foundation for what he has said and commanded in verses 1 and 2. So when I say go live differently, I mean rather than rooting through the rubble of a fallen, destroyed world to find pretty trinkets, as if you're playing in a nuclear wasteland, what à Brakel refers to as "these minute rays of light" that you receive in the fellowship of the saints, that you hear in preaching, that you have in your union and communion with God in Bible study, and the rich times of fellowship you have in prayer, and the the love that you give and receive with other saints, "these minute rays of light," follow those rays upward to their source, and do it continually.

Live that way. Set down the shiny, glowing stuff of the world. Realize that glow comes from decay. You're playing with nuclear waste, and it's decaying and so it's glowing. That's what gives off that shiny allurement. Put it down. It's toxic to you.

Learn to prize and esteem and value what Christ has purchased for you with his own blood. Set your heart's

affections and aim the ambitions of your life and your will upward at the things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. "Since Christ is your life," Paul says, "seek those things." Set your mind on those things.

Or in the language of John, the Apostle of love, 1 John 3:2-3, "Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not been manifested as yet what we will be. We know that when he's manifested, we will be like him because we will see him just as he is, and everyone who has this hope fixed on him purifies himself, just as he is pure."

When we return next week, we're going to take this foundation and we're going to move from it. We're going to build off of it. We're going to learn how the mentality of the true Christian drives us to mortify actual sins so that we learn to work out this reality in a very practical way. For now, let's pray.

Oh, Father, what great things you have done for us. And even what we have talked about today and discovered today and learned and rejoiced in today is just but a brief glimpse, just a, a minute ray of this glorious future that's ours in Christ.

But we do have Bibles, and you have given us eyes to see and ears to hear and hearts to understand and believe. You've given us the Spirit as our indwelling truth teacher to illuminate the truth to us and to motivate us and drive us forward and reveal where we need to confess and forsake sin and sinful thinking and sinful priorities and ways of living, where we need to tune out the world and to tune in to what you teach in your Word. We pray that you would help us to do that, to live for you, to live differently and enjoy the salvation that you have purchased for us in Christ.

Father, thank you for your kindness to us. Thank you for showing us mercy, because that's all we can cry out for is mercy. We have no just reward in us. There's no reason why you should be favorable to us. It's just because you are compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness. Thank you for loving us in Christ. Thank you for giving us such a wonderful Savior. And thank you for uniting us to you by the Spirit in him, for uniting us to you so that we can call you Father and Lord and King and Savior. In Jesus' name, amen.