

On Heavenly Mindedness

Colossians 3:1-4

August 26, 2018

Turn in your bibles to Colossians chapter 3, Colossians 3. I'd like to take you, you to a text that's really been on my heart lately. One that I have found particularly helpful throughout my Christian life. And it's a message that I think we all need to hear this morning. It's found in Colossians 3:1-4. This is Paul's exhortation to heavenly mindedness.

Back in April, Gary Brotherton preached a message out of Colossians and went through some of the context of the letter. And so I'm going to cheat and I'm not going to cover all of the situation, background, historical context, I'll just refer you to his sermon for that content. But what I do want to say by way of introduction this morning is that many believers in the Colossian church, if you read the letter from start to finish,

it doesn't take long actually I'd recommend you do that this afternoon.

But many believers in the Colossian church were struggling in their Christian life because of a lack of heavenly mindedness. And they were succumbing to some form, and there were a number of different forms, but some form of worldly mindedness. That's one way to summarize the problems that the Colossian church was having as believers. They were being distracted from simple devotion to Christ.

They were giving in to the temptation to think like worldly people think. That's a pressure we all face, isn't it? They were entertaining worldly arguments. They were pondering worldly philosophies to see what meat they could find while they spit out the bones. They were submitting to worldly traditions. They were observing worldly pastimes.

Many of those things were happening outside the church. But they were brought inside of the church and considered as something that may be relevant and helpful to the Christian

life. It couldn't be further from the truth. Inside the church as well, there were people who seemed like the super spiritual Christians. You can find them, look in Colossians 2:18 and following. These are the people who were insisting on asceticism. If you're not familiar with that term it means, like hyper spiritual disciplined.

Trying to pressure everybody into ascetic harsh treatment of the body; strict schedules, strict disciplines, all of it commanding the conscience of believers. So they were insisting on asceticism and, also by the way the worship of angels. Going on in detail about visions they were having, puffed up without reason about their sensuous minds.

And as spiritual as these people seemed, they were not spiritual. Verse 19, they were not holding fast to the head of the church who is Jesus Christ. The Colossians, these newer believers, they were giving in, they were caving in, they were listening to every kind of teaching, considering all of it to have some form of merit. They were allowing their consciences to

be bound by that which is not biblical, that which is not truly Christian.

Though they had professed Christ, though they had walked with Christ, though they had even suffered for Christ. Slowly, and even as it were almost imperceptively, they had been disengaging from Christ, which is lethal to your spiritual vitality, joy, growth, security, confidence, fruitfulness, and on and on we could go. After all it is in Christ that "all the fullness of deity" dwells bodily, Colossians 2:9.

And Christians are filled in him alone. It is in Christ, Colossians 2:3, that "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" are found. The Colossians had to stop looking to the world for wisdom. Why? Because the world has no wisdom, nothing, nothing to offer. Christ has all, all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are found in him. So, they, they needed to be connected to Christ.

The practical effect of their worldly mindedness was to compromise the Colossian church with the fruit of worldly

mindedness, which is sin. They had been committing sin. Notice the end of the second chapter. Paul sort of summarizes the result of their thinking throughout that second chapter. Colossians 2:23 says, "These," that is all these traditions and, and things that bind your conscience, all this asceticism, all these visions, all this extra biblical teaching, "these have 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."

Then notice in Colossians 3:5, the verse right after the section we're going to cover this morning. Paul commands the Colossians to deal with their sins and to deal with their sins at the root level, "Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: Sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness which is idolatry." The sins of their hearts, which was an outgrowth of idolatry in the heart, the sins of their hearts were producing evil fruits on the outside, verse 8, "...anger, wrath, malice, slander, obscene talk" on and on it goes.

So not only was this worldly mindedness in the Colossian church of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh, worldly mindedness was fanning into a flame all of the temptations of the flesh, and many believers were being overcome. They'd been compromised by false teaching, false doctrines. They were being overcome by their sins. They were in danger of being completely neutralized as a church.

And that's why Epaphras found this to be so troublesome. He's the Colossian man who had been saved during Paul's ministry at Ephesus. Had gone back to the Lycus valley and, and evangelized the valley and he found three churches being planted there in Colossae, Hierapolis and Laodicea. He planted the Colossian church. He found it necessary to make that long journey from modern day Turkey all the way to Rome, where Paul was in prison. He needed to visit Paul. He needed to get his help in dealing with these errors because he could see they were rotting the core of the Colossian church. The life of the church was at stake and he needed the Apostle's help.

So Paul wrote this letter and at a key turning point in the letter, Colossians 3:1-4, he gives the exhortation. He gives an exhortation that is essential, it is a hinge point on sanctification. He has got to call the Colossians attention to the essence of Christian repentance. Which is, turning from a worldly mindedness to a heavenly mindedness. Which is an issue of faith. It has to do with the thought life, the affections, the will.

Look at Colossians 3:1-4, "If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on the earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory." Don't you love the simplicity of that text? Think about your own life in the light of that text, Christian. Are you, like the Colossians, are you succumbing to temptations of the flesh? Are you compromising, slipping into a, some form of spiritual lethargy, going through the motions. Anesthetized by worldly distractions that you have allowed to become dominant in your life.

Think for a moment about your thought life. What do you spend your time thinking about? Do you think about earthly things mostly? Or are you preoccupied with heavenly things? Are you overcome with fears and anxieties? Are you often , pre, preoccupied with relational conflicts and unfulfilled ambitions, or with the cares of the world, financial or otherwise? Has your mind slipped away from the simplicity of devotion to Jesus Christ? If so, let's get back on track. You have to have noticed in that text as we read how Christ-centered that text is.

Our thoughts are to be preoccupied with Christ, verse 1. Our minds are to be thinking about where Christ is right now bodily, verse 1. We're to be focused on Christ seated at God's right hand. Our, our life is hidden with Christ, our very life. What actually makes us, us, is hidden with Christ, verse 3. One day, we need to be meditating on this, one day Christ will appear, verse 4. We too will appear when that happens with Christ, verse 4, with Christ in glory. The remedy for all false teaching, the remedy for all distraction, the remedy for a joyless, powerless, unfruitful life, is found in Christ. To walk

in Christ, to pursue Christ, devoted to him in passion, and diligence, and joy, that's the Christian life.

This text gives us the perspective we need to do all that Paul writes about starting in verse 5 of Colossians 3 and following all the way to the end of the book, all the way through that great chapter. In a word this text gives us the perspective we need to live the Christian life, very simple. Neglect this text and you will waver. You will succumb to worldly distraction, and worldly temptation, fleshly temptation. You'll find yourself, neglecting this text, you'll find yourself falling often into sin. You'll feel overwhelmed, you'll feel overcome, like you cannot get a hold on your thought life. You'll feel taken away, carried down the river as it were, of fleshly indulgence.

But, get this text down. Really get it down, put it into daily practice. You'll be thriving in the Christian life, guaranteed. You've got God's word on it. So what I want to do this morning is to give you just three simple points. You can find them there in your bulletin. Three points, there's one

condition, two obligations, and three motivations in this text, three simple points. It will give you the perspective and the motivation that you need to live a joyful and fruitful Christian life. That's what I want to see for all of you. That's what our elders pray for this church and many of you individually by name. We pray for you, that you would live a joyful, fruitful Christian life.

This is the text for it, ready? Let's begin by looking at one condition, the one condition necessary for living the Christian life. That is to say, if this condition isn't met you fail in the Christian life. If this condition's met, you will thrive and succeed. You have everything you need to live the Christian life. One condition, this is the vital prerequisite.

Look at Colossians 3:1-2, "If then you have been raised with Christ seek the things that are above where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God, set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are on the earth." That condition, that one condition, the one prerequisite, comes in the very first phrase. "If then you have been raised with

Christ.” That condition then is followed up with two commands. The first is in verse 1, “seek the things that are above.” And then the second command, verse 2, “set your mind on the things that are above.” Those are the two commands. Very simple, but listen, they are absolutely vital for living the Christian life. If you do not obey those two commands, you can forget about it.

You don’t live the Christian life without seeking things above. You don’t live the Christian life without setting your mind on things above. But even more essential and fundamental than that, you need to meet this prerequisite for seeking and thinking about things above. You need to meet the one condition, what is the one condition?

You have to be raised up with Christ. You have to be seated with Christ in the heavenly realm. You say, what does that mean? I mean I’m not raised up at all, frankly. I’m here, I get up every morning. I go to the same job. I’ve got the same life. I eat the same oatmeal. I’ve got the same old sandwich. I am not living a raised up life. It’s a daily grind here on

earth, in fact sometimes I feel like I'm being buried alive under the earth. What do you mean raised up?

You see the word, verse 1, second word, if then? If then, that's the conjunction, therefore. Therefore, which, connects, connects, this text with the previous context. So, if then, you've been raised with Christ or if, therefore, you have been raised with Christ. So let's go all the way back to chapter 2 and verse 9, verse 9 where Paul speaks about what it means to be raised with Christ.

This is the context; he speaks there in verse 9 and following about salvation in Christ. Spiritual union with Christ, which is the vital prerequisite for obeying anything that Christ commands. If you are not saved, if you are not raised up with Christ, you can't obey. Your desire to perform Christian duties, and obligations, and commands will be only so much moralism and eventual frustration.

So look at verse 9 of chapter 2, "For in him," that is in Christ, "the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily." It's the

mystery of the incarnation, right? And, verse 10, "You have been filled in him." Oh, we are filled with all that's in Christ.

"Filled in him who is the head of all rule and authority."

So if we keep close to Christ, we don't have to worry about any other rule or authority other than Christ and everything Christ commands. If you fear one person in your life, you'll fear no one else. If you don't fear him, I guarantee you'll fear everybody else. "In him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily. You have been filled in him who is the head of all rule and authority. In him also you were circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of flesh by the circumcision of Christ, having been buried with in him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith and the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. You who were once dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him. Having forgiven us all our trespasses, by cancelling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross." Amen Christian?

There's a series of metaphors there that Paul uses. In that series of metaphors Paul unpacks what he means in verse 10 that "you have been filled in him." This is what's true for every Christian. First he says there in verse 11, "We are circumcised in him." That means our old self, the fleshly unregenerate self, that is dead in trespasses and sins; that old self, to be circumcised is to have that old self cut off cut away and cast away. The verb is *peritemno*, in the Greek, and it means to cut around, literally to cut around, to cut away, to cut off, it is the term for circumcise.

And those who have been filled in Christ are those who have had that unregenerate, unbelieving, dead in sins self, cut off and thrown away. Second, in verse 12, those who have been filled in Christ are those who have been baptized in Christ. The word is, there is *baptizma*, from the verb *baptizo*, that is to be submerged in water. That is a beautiful picture, it's a picture of union with Christ, it is a picture of emersion, and submersion, complete surrounding and covering, to be, sum, subsumed in Jesus Christ.

The metaphor here is speaking of our full spiritual union. When God united us to Christ. A union that covers us completely in Christ. So in other words, God has counted us, he has reckoned us, as having died spiritually when Christ died physically. We're transported back to the cross. And when God nailed his son to the cross because of the sins that we committed, it's as if we died with him. Burying that punishment, burying that wrath. God then reckons us as having been buried with Christ spiritually when he was buried physically. And then God reckons us as having been raised up with Christ spiritually when he was raised physically, bodily, literally being resurrected from the dead. That is the power that is our salvation.

And Paul makes these metaphors unmistakably clear in verse 13 when he tells the Colossian believers, "You who were dead in your trespasses and sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh," he, "made alive." Two more metaphors there. Dead in trespasses, what does that mean? It means not alive to the Law of God? Dead in trespasses means, living in constant and repeated violation of God's law. Dead in trespasses means guilty under divine condemnation, facing eternal death when God righteously

sentences us for our repeated violations of his holy Law. That's what it means to be dead in trespasses.

We're also, according to verse 13, dead in the "uncircumcision of our flesh." Which means we had been bound to, basically, a dead and rotting corpse. Tied to a corpse. Dead in the uncircumcision of the flesh means experiencing the corruption, the defilement, the rottenness of the carnal life. Dead in the uncircumcision of the flesh means putrefaction, being overcome with the poisonous decaying of that dead and rotting condition.

But God here, in his amazing grace, he stepped in to our deadness, and trespasses, and uncircumcision, and he intervened by raising us to new life. That's verse 14, God made us alive together with him, having forgiven us, sent away all our trespasses. "Cancelling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands." Think about that. Think about all the sins you have committed against a holy God. Think about all the sins of mind that you've committed against a holy God. If God were to flash your thinking up on the screen, what would we see?

All the sins of thought, word, and deed. The things that we've said to other people. They're absolutely scandalously, slanderous, and accusing, and ugly. All of our words, all of our unkind words, all of our wrong, critical-spirited judgments.

All of our deeds. Things that he commanded us to do and we didn't. Like love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and love your neighbor as yourself. Things that he commanded us not to do and we pursue it whole heartedly. Think about all the sins that God has forgiven. He has wiped away that he has cancelled. This record of debt that he himself in his holy omniscience has kept writing down everything. He took that, and he nailed it to the cross.

Is that good news? Apart from God's grace we were dying, we were, it's ugly but it's, we were decomposing. We were becoming increasingly foul. Apart from God's grace, apart from Christ we kept on trespassing, we kept on violating his holy Law. We could do nothing but earn our death sentence of eternity in hell. But God put an end to that. Forgiving us all of our trespasses, not, not just some, not a majority, majority won't

do us any good. When one sin can condemn us to an eternal hell, he took away all of them and forgave them. He took those written violations, the legal demands, he set them aside; not by forgetting all of them; not by suppressing them; not by refusing to look at them and deal with them, no; he dealt with them fully and finally when he magnified them and then nailed them to the cross. Killing his own son. Jesus, freely, willingly died the death that we should have died that we might live the eternal life that God has given us in him.

Now, go back to Colossians 3:1 and import all of that from chapter 2 into that opening phrase "If then you have been raised with Christ." If you're here today and you are in Christ, okay maybe you don't feel any different physically. You got the same old job, you've got the same situation, you've got the same ailing body which is hurting you and getting worse as age takes its different forms, right? But if you are united to Christ you can attest to the fact that there was a point in your life when you started thinking differently. Something changed, you know that you have different desires, different ambition; you are not the same as you've always been.

Different things matter to you. An entirely new life animates you, excites you, gives you joy, happiness. You find the sinful pastimes of the world around you to be repugnant. And you can see and smell the death in it. You're ashamed of the time you spent sinning, offending a holy God. And you're ashamed whenever you find yourself now stumbling into the same old sins. Giving in to old habits, and you wonder what is happening, why am I doing that?

You no longer care about hiding your sins from God and from others. You don't care about controlling people's perceptions of you. You don't care about controlling people's opinions, getting respect, getting ahead, making a lot of money, or whatever it is. What you do care about is what God thinks. What you do care about is what mature Christian people around you think. Because you want them to help you live the Christian life. You want them to help you to pass on their wisdom and maturity to you, that you might please God in all of his glory, for all of his grace. So you want to be a part of mature Christian conversation. You want to join in with the same godly mature Christian pursuits. You want to make plans for holiness in your life.

You're so overcome with joy that the living God has taken kind notice of you, to forgive you, that you feel you need to tell everyone around you about him. You want to tell everybody how to know him, how to come to Christ through repentance and faith. In fact you don't understand why anybody can talk about anything else.

That folks is the common experience of every true born-again Christian. Do we all live that as faithfully, as consistently, as we should? No we don't. That's why we come here every single Sunday to be reminded, over and over again. But this is what we all share in common right? Those of us who are in Christ, those of us who as it says here have been raised with Christ, this is the evidence that the life of God is flowing in and through us. Giving us the will and the power to obey everything Christ has commanded.

This is what makes that opening line the one condition necessary for obeying those two commands that follow it, because the unregenerate cannot obey God. They are utterly unwilling,

and completely unable to do his will. So, therefore, if you have been, not been raised with Christ that's where you need to start. You need to start with that one condition. You need to deal with that issue. Otherwise trying to do what the rest of the sermon talks about is only going to lead to further and further frustration and failure, and anger, and difficulty.

Trying to live the Christian life without Christ is nothing more than empty and fruitless moralism. And that is the saddest of all conditions, so close yet so far away. Covered with religion when you've got a tomb inside of you. But, if you have been raised with Christ, then by God's grace you've fulfilled the one condition necessary for gaining the necessary perspective. Obeying the blessed commands that Paul gives here.

Look at those two commands, second point in your outline, two obligations. Two commands, two obligations. Now that we've talked about the one condition, let's finish the, if-then statement, this conditional statement. If then you have been raised with Christ, then, here is the, con, here's the fulfillment of it, seek the things that are above where Christ

is seated at the right hand of God. And then number two, set your mind on things that are above, not on things that are on the earth.

If you've met that one condition, that single simple nonnegotiable prerequisite then you have what it takes to proceed to step two. The two obligations, first seek the things that are above. And then second, set your mind on the things that are above. We'll take those as two sub-points.

Sub-point A, you could call it, has to do, seek the things that are above, that has to do with your pursuits. That has to do with your ambitions, that has to do with your will, and what is your will driven by but your affections and your desires. That's what this is about. Seek the things that are above. Zeteou, seek them, pursue them, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Now I know this doesn't make sense for unbelievers, those who are still dead in sins, not raised with Christ. But for those of us who are in Christ, for those who are raised up with him, having died to our own old selves, having been buried with Christ in baptism, having been raised to new

life in Christ. Is it not true that our eyes are always drawn upward?

Why is that? Because he is there. Because he's there. Paul tells us, Christ is seated there at the right hand of God. That is a reference first of all, seated at the right hand of God, it's a reference to the salvation that he has won for us. Because Hebrews 1:3 says, after making purification for sins. He did what no high priest has ever done, he sat down at the holy of holies. He sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high. What was necessary to make purification for our sins once for all, he has accomplished. Nothing else needs to be done, no adding to that work.

So when Christ commands, "Seek the things that are above where Christ is seated at the right hand of God," we're here to obey that command, absolutely, because that's where your savior is. We love him, we want him to be close to him, to be close to where he is, that person is the one who won our full salvation. And he has preceded us to that place. We want to be where he is.

So our eyes are drawn ever upward, looking to our savior and the reward of our full salvation.

Second reason, we're compelled to seek the things above, because Christ is seated there. He is seated there at the right hand of God. Do you ever struggle in gift giving, especially to people who've lived a long time and have received many gifts over their life? You're like what do I give to the person who's got everything? Right? What do you give to the Person, capital P, the one Person who has everything? Well in the infinite mind of the eternal God, here's the greatest reward that he could give his Son, his obedient Son who obeyed him fully in everything. You know what he gave him? The presence of God.

Listen, what makes heaven, heaven is that God is there. That's why we want to go there, for no other reason. We don't want to go to heaven to escape our troubles. We don't want to go to heaven to escape this life. We don't want to go to heaven to escape our creditors. We don't want to go to heaven to escape relational conflict. We don't want to go to heaven because it's

got pearly gates, and streets of gold, and flying angels, and we get wings too, and all that. We don't care about any of all that stuff, you know why we want to go there? God is there. That's why Christ wanted to be there.

After Christ obeyed the Father perfectly and completely, accomplishing all the father's will, his reward is to be seated at the father's right hand. And then to continue doing the father's will, at the father's side. Is there any greater joy for a son than to be near his father? A little kid with his pudgy little hands holding his little plastic hammer, banging while his father is doing real work over here. His son is over here dropping things, and falling all over the place, but loves being by his father's side. That's the reward Christ looked to. Prior to enduring the cross, Hebrews 12:2 says Jesus endured the cross, despising the shame, why? "For the joy that was set before him."

He's come in to that joy of obedience to the father's will. Receiving the full reward, being seated at the right hand of the throne of God. And that is where he, currie, carries out his

current ministry to the church, directing the church from that throne. Interceding for the saints and working out all things after the counsel of God's will. The greatest pleasure for Christ, the greatest joy for him, the gift that God gave to the one who already possesses all things by virtue of his divine nature, is to be bodily in the presence of God. Christ is right now bodily, physically, in his true humanity, Christ is experiencing that fullness of joy.

So the reward Christ enjoys right now, what does that reward have to do with us? That's where this gets so good. Listen, not only do we keep , leek, looking upward. Not only do we keep seeking the things above because Christ is there, but also because we get to share in his eternal reward. He won it by his merit, by his obedience, and united to him, raised with him, we share in that reward. Christ, our head, he knows the fullness of divine joy now. And he intends to bring us into it.

"Behold I go to prepare a place for you," where I go, "that where I go you may be also." Right? He's going to bring us into that fullness of joy to participate, it, in it with him.

That's what Jesus prayed for all of us, that we would partake of that full reward. John 17:24, he prayed "Father, I desire that they all, whom you have given me," so all the elect, all of God's people, from, from start to finish, "all that you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me from before the foundation of the world."

Is it any wonder why Paul commands us "Seek the things that are above." What else would you seek? Where Christ is seated at the right hand of God and, actually, that's a present tense, imperative, which means a continuous aspect. A habitual pattern of life. Keep on seeking the things above. Look, why does he need to command us to keep seeking?

Because in our current condition we're so, aren't we, dull of heart? We're so dull of mind. We're so prone to forget and slip back into old habits of thinking. So we need to revisit this command over and over, that we might keep on seeking the things above until the day comes when we are transported into glory, into his presence; our minds are, preoccupied, to be

preoccupied with being there, with being with him, a prelude to enjoying our full reward. And that's why Christ rejoiced to command us in the same way in Matthew 6:33. Don't preoccupy your mind with anything else, but keep "Seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." Right? So, sub-point A, has everything to do with our desires. It has to do with our affections, what do we, what do we want?

Because we keep seeking and we keep pursuing the things that we really want, don't we? Look at the things in your life that you keep seeking and keep pursuing, and ask yourself a question. Is that what I really want? I mean deep down inside, these things I keep doing, these habits, is that what I really want? Because if it is, and you could say, "Yeah that's what I really want," and it's a worldly thing? You need to check and see if the first condition in your life is met.

We go after the things that we want. We pursue the things we love. We make time for the things that we want and desire. Yeah, but we often find our hearts dull, our thinking muddled, our love growing cold. So that tension, right? We've got to keep

on going, we've got to keep on pursuing the obedience to this command because we're prone to be dull, we're prone to be weak. We need to keep coming back.

So how do we keep seeking, how do we keep striving to obtain? How do we change our desires, and fan those desires into a flame? How do we keep pursuing the things of Christ when we wake up every morning with our heads and hearts so dull? How can we be that heavenly minded when we're daily encumbered by weakness and frailty, when we're ensnared by distractions and tripping over temptations? Well, Paul is immanently practical as always. Notice in Colossians 3:2, he tells us exactly how to do that. It's not a mystery, it's very simple. We've got to fight and win a battle in the mind. "Set your minds," as he said in verse 2, "set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on the earth."

Sub-point B, that has to do with the way you maintain your desire for Christ. The way you fan into flame the affections that you have for Christ. How you keep seeking the things above? Want to know the secret to seeking the things above? Grow your

affections for Christ. Grow in your devotion to Christ. And how do you strengthen your affections for Christ? Simple, think about him and think about him a lot, and keep on thinking about him. The verb is *phroneo* in the Greek from the Greek word for mind, it has, has to do with pondering. It means, to think intently about, and keep thinking about. Again it's the present tense. So, think continually about the things above.

Notice, at the same time we're to purpose to not think about the things that are upon the earth. Because the world has nothing for us. Paul says, Romans 12:2, "Don't be conformed to this world, be transformed by the renewal of your mind. That by testing you may discern what is the perfect will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." So keep setting your minds, keep thinking about the things that are above, not about the things that are on the earth. How do you do that? How do you renew the mind?

How do you stop thinking about earthly things, and fill your mind with heavenly things? Devour scripture. Devour it. Eat it. Read it. Meditate on the words that have come from the mind

of God. Those are the things above, right? They don't come from earth. They don't come from the heart or mind of man. They have come down to us from heaven. They are literally heavenly things revealed from God.

This is Philippians 4:8, right? Same concept there.

"Finally brothers," get this list, "whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things."

Let me suggest something. Take all of your current distractions, take all your entertainment, all your extra-curricular activities and past times, take all the things that you do with your so-called free time and run them through that Philippians 4:8 grid. And as you run them through that grid and you test against whatever is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable, excellent, and worthy of praise, as you run them through that grid, jettison anything that doesn't meet that standard.

Once you do that, you're going to find your schedule free up. You're going, you're going to see a whole lot of time available for more bible reading, and prayerful meditation, which results in spiritual power in your life, and wisdom for living and an abundance of unmitigated joy. And don't just think about the, the free time and the past times, think about what you busy yourself with. Think about what you say, yes, to because you don't have the courage to say, no, to the things you should say, no to. Think about what you obligate yourself to and how you give yourself to this and that and things that do not matter.

Let's bump that up a bit. Think about the many things that seem to matter that you give yourself to over and over again but you crowd out all the time for this. Look Christian, you've got to get your mind into the word of God. And you've got to get the word of God into your mind. That's what this is about.

As Paul says a few verses later, Colossians 3:16, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you," what, "richly"... richly, "teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom." Why are we teaching

and admonishing, that is to correct and reprove, why don't we do that with each other, with the word of God. So that we can get the word of God into our minds. So we can be thinking God's thoughts after him.

We need his thoughts in our heads, that is the input. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly. And don't just depend on yourself, it's to be a corporate thing. We're to teach one another, we're to admonish one another. That's how this works. That's the input and then, the output is going to be Colossians 3:16, "Singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." Thankfulness in your hearts to God. Joy is the output.

Excellence of speech. You don't find anything more excellent than hymns and psalms and spiritual songs. Thankfulness, gratitude come pouring out of your heart, that's the output. You become like the man of Psalm 1 whose delight is in the law of the Lord; on his law he meditates day and night. You're going to be like a tree planted by streams of water, that yields its fruit in its season. And even the weakest parts of it, the leaves, they don't wither. That's because the vitality

of God's eternal life flows in and through you, goes through all you do, and you will surely prosper.

Those are the two obligations. Let's turn to the three motivations. If you've been raised with Christ, then you have met that necessary prerequisite to obey the two obligations. You will keep seeking the things above, and you will do that if you keep thinking about things above. And you'll do that if you're continually filling yourself with God's word, every single day.

Now, three motivations. In verses 3-4 we find three reasons to obey those commands, and they become really motivations for us. "For you've died," it says there, "and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory." Three motivations, so you've got three sub-points here.

Powerful perspective, when we consider our past, our present, and our future because that's what you find there in those two verses, past, present and future. Sub-point A has to do with your past. Keep seeking the things above. Keep thinking

about the things above because your past life is over. It's over.

Who you once were is dead and gone. So it makes no sense to keep visiting the grave. You've died. That corpse is buried, don't keep going back. The way Paul wrote that indicates the finality of it, it's in the aorist tense. It's a completed action in past time. Done, dead. What you once were has been put to death, that old self is dead and gone. Its fleshly ambitions and dreams and hopes and aspirations. Everything that it used to occupy... dead and gone. All the priorities, the pursuits, the pleasures, dead and gone. So again, quit visiting the grave of your old dead self.

Quit rehearsing those thoughts and memories. Quit feeding those old desires. Quit giving in to those old temptations. Keep seeking the things above, keep thinking about the things above, because what you once were has been put to death. So no more grave digging Christian. No more grave digging. No more séances with the corrupt mind of the old man. That's called necromancy, we're not to be guilty of it, right?

Sub-point B has to do with your present. Paul says in verse 3, you've died and, present tense, your life is currently present tense hidden with Christ in God. Therefore, let the reality of your present condition motivate you to keep on seeking the things above and keep on thinking about the things above. Your present life, that is who you really are. Who you are right now, your life is first of all as it says here, first of all it's glorious and second of all it's unseen. There's a glory there and there's an unseen, there's an invisibleness to it.

Verse 3 demands really the exercise of faith, right? Because contrary to what our senses tell us, we're actually dead, our old self is dead even though it feels very much alive, right? Contrary to what our eyes tell us, our true life is not here. But it's there. It's up there. Where it's hidden with Christ in God. We've got to live by faith and not by sight. That's what motivates us to keep on seeking the things above, to keep on thinking about the things above. Because we have to keep on feeding our faith with this truth.

We have to always look beyond our physical senses. And feed our minds instead with spiritual realities. That even though we feel locked down here on this earth the truth of it is that we are very much alive with Christ in God. And in fact, the life of God in Christ is the very source of all our vitality. The more we find our present identity in Christ, not on the things of our dead past, not in the things of our past culture, our old traditions, our family identity, our jobs, our bloodlines, and all the rest.

The more we find our present identity in Christ the more we're motivated to keep seeking the things above and keep thinking about the things above. The present reality is our true identity in Jesus Christ and he is the source and he is the final goal of all of our life. In other words, he is the author and finisher of our faith. So there are past motivations, present motivations, you've died, let's keep the coffin lid closed. Your life is hidden with Christ in God. So you need to feed the by faith thinking and not the by sight thinking.

Sub-point C, finally, has to do with your future as a Christian. Your future. You need to keep seeking the things above. You need to keep thinking about the things above because your future life is glorious and that glory cannot remain hidden, that's verse 4, "When Christ who is your life appears then you also will appear with him in glory." What's that referring to? When's that going to happen? That's a reference to the second coming of Christ, isn't it? When every eye shall see him.

Not just our eyes, every eye. Again for those who are not Christians this can come across as pie in the sky and the sweet by and by kind of talk, right? It comes across as encouraging us to be so heavenly minded that we're of no earthly good. That's not God's view of it. God's, God's view is that you need to be so heavenly minded that you'll become of some earthly good.

We need to be heavenly minded more and more and more, and not less and less. We don't expect non-Christians, whether they're raised in the church or, or not, we don't, find, we don't expect non-Christians to find any motivation in the second

coming. In fact, they despise it, scorn it, spurn it, they ignore it, they're indifferent to it. Many even professing Christians, many professing evangelicals, live as if the second coming and as if the future realities are not really that important to them at all.

They're pretty content here, with their iphones. They've got an app for that, any time you're bored just swipe right, right? Their hearts are dead to the hope of all the saints, which is a future hope. We find no fulfillment, no joy, in the things on this earth. It doesn't matter how glitzy, and bingy, and flashy, and colorful, they are right?

For those of us who were raised with Christ, born again, spiritually alive, it's this promise of fulfilled hope that is perhaps our strongest motivation to keep seeking and keep thinking about the things above. We absolutely love the thought of being with him. We love the thought of being there forever. We need to remind ourselves, as the Apostle Peter said, that "God has according to his great mercy, he has caused us to be

born again." Spiritually regenerated to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

What do we look forward to? An inheritance that is imperishable, and undefiled and unfading. Kept in heaven for you. Who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. That time, that future hope, that unveiling, that's when our faith becomes sight.

That's when Christ returns. 2 Thessalonians 1:10, "When he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints and to be, I love this, marveled at among all who have believed." When he returns I just want to marvel. It's exactly what I want to do. I just want to, I just want to shut up and marvel.

On that day we're going to enter the fullness of joy forever. Joining Christ in the presence of God. Notice the contrasting statements in verses 3, in verse 3 and verse 4. Paul says in verse 3 your life is now hidden with Christ. And then verse 4 that Christ who is your life, that's when your hidden

life will become visible. So what is hidden will become visible.
What is not seen is going to become seen.

It's the verb *phaneroo* to be made manifest, to be revealed, to be made visible, put on display. It's what the Apostle John also taught in 1 John 3:2. That when he, "When Christ appears we shall be like him because we shall see him as he is." Perfect vision on that day means immediate conformity. We're going to grow up into full grown maturity in an instant. Into the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, when he comes we will experience immediate conformity to the image of Christ. No more waiting.

Whenever I think about the strength of spiritual vision over physical vision, the power of living by faith and not by sight, I'm often drawn in my mind to the great hymn writer Fanny Crosby. Many of you know that she was blinded as an infant, lived in that condition of blindness for ninety-four years until her death in 1915. I can't remember where I found this but one source, recounted this, when Fanny was six-week-old she caught a slight cold in her eyes.

The family physician was away and another country doctor was called in to treat her. Again, he's, this is an infant, he prescribed hot mustard poultices to be applied to her eyes, which destroyed her sight completely. It was later learned that the man was not qualified to practice medicine. But it was too late to prosecute him, he had left town and was never heard from again.

Tragic, isn't it? It's a medical malpractice lawsuit certainly. And it would bring Fanny millions of dollars, but not a dime. But Fanny never felt any resentment against that doctor. She believed it was permitted by the Lord to fulfill his perfect plan for her life.

The Lord had taken away her physical vision at such an early age. But he replaced her physical vision with the gift of spiritual vision. And again, and a very early age. The evidence of that comes at a remarkably early age, the age of nine years old when she wrote these lines of poetry about her condition. "Oh what a happy soul I am. Although I cannot see. I am resolved

that in this world contented I will be. How many blessings I enjoy that other people don't. To weep and sigh because I'm blind? I cannot, and I won't."

I contrast that with the way many of our young people are raised. To rehearse and magnify all their hurts and pains and difficulties. To elevate all their frustrations. To talk about all their abuse and all their hurt and pain and certainly there's a lot of that going around, aren't, isn't there? The issue is one of perspective though isn't it.

Is it a believing perspective that transcends that? Or is it an unbelieving perspective that always rehearses it, always runs it over, and over, and over. She said, "To weep and sigh because I'm blind I can't and so I won't." She didn't either. She directed her energies to using that gift of nine years old writing those verses. She directed her energies to writing hymns, many of which we still sing. I love "To God be the Glory," that's one she wrote.

Mrs. Crosby later reflected on her blindness in a very humble, and meek and strong faith way she said, "It seemed intended by the blessed providence of God that I should be blind all my life, and I thank him for the dispensation. If perfect, perfect earthly sight were offered to me tomorrow I would not accept it. I might not have sung hymns to the praise of God if I had been distracted by the beautiful and interesting things about me."

Listen beloved, we need to stop being distracted by the beautiful and interesting things that surround us and perhaps that's why Jesus said, "If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it from you. It's better for you to enter into eternal life maimed than to have everything intact and suffer in hell."

Fanny Crosby, she didn't contemplate having physical vision and suffering in Hell. She thought about having physical sight and not being able to sing all the hymns she sung to her God. We need to be so focused, even though we're hampered in our believing by the curse of physical sight you might say, we can

do that only if we'll follow these two commands that Paul gave us. The joyful obligations he places on our lives.

That we keep seeking the things above, we keep on thinking about things above. That means we're going to be much about the word of God and much about prayer. Can I recommend something that'll help you increase your diet of God's word. Increase your frequency in prayer, your faithfulness in both those disciplines. Do an inventory of your week. Just take your week, and write down how you spend your time. And resolve as you set about to journal your week to do what you always do. That is to say, don't become all of a sudden more spiritual and disciplined just because you're writing it down. Record how you actually spend your time as a routine habit, hour by hour, typical week. And then do a biblical assessment. Perhaps use this text or use passages like Philippians 4:8 and think about how God, prayerfully think about how God would have you make adjustments in the use of the time he's given you as a stewardship.

Because time, like all the resources God distributes to us, how we use time is something for which we'll also give an

account. And keep in mind, time is that one resource that once you spend it you can't get it back. If we use time well, turning from worldly minded distractions to that which will promote heavenly mindedness we're going to find ourselves at the end of our lives spiritually fruitful, useful in the Lord's work, very productive in the gifts that he has given to us.

That's how Fanny Crosby lived. By the end of her life she had written somewhere between fifty five hundred and nine thousand hymns. Disabled? No. She saw more clearly than most. Didn't she? And she was, in seeing clearly, she was motivated by a heavenly mindedness that caused her to exult in one thing. She said this quote, "When I get to heaven the first face that shall ever gladden my sight will be that of my Savior."

Oh Christian, is that your attitude? Or has the physical earthly sight that you possess blinded you to the splendor and majesty of our glorious lord and savior Jesus Christ? Spend your days feeding your faith by which you see with spiritual eyes. As Peter says, "Though you have not seen him you love him, and though you do not see him now you believe in him and rejoice

with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory. Obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls." Let's pray.

Our Father we're grateful for this text, a very essential vital text at the hinge point of Paul's letter to the Colossians. As he turns them from what did not sanctify but actually polluted and harmed them as he turned them over to rooting out all evidence of idolatry in the heart. All sexual immorality, and sensuality, and covetousness, and greed which is idolatry. He commanded them to put those things to death because they are the root causes of so many sins that show up on the surface: Anger, wrath, malice, slander, abusive speech.

Heavenly Father that's, that's what we need is to set our mind on Christ. We pray that our vision would be filled with him. That you'd cause our hearts to rejoice in it. Help us to be diligent and consistent. Let us pay attention every Sunday and all through the week. Since you have given us the gift of the word of God in English. Let us take advantage of one of those many bibles that we own, and read it daily. Meditate on it often



and prayerfully. Help us to do what you've commanded us to do
for your glory in Christ's name, amen.