

IT ALL STARTS IN YOUR MIND

Colossians 3: 1-4

Turn in your Bibles, please, to Col. 3:1-4 (read). As Paul begins his letter to the Colossians, for two entire chapters he paints a marvelous canvas of the majesty of Jesus Christ and of our sufficiency in Christ. It is sweet as honey to the taste and it is strong nourishment for the soul. We are complete in Jesus! We need nothing else. And this precious truth gives the believer in Jesus Christ joy and hope and strength that is priceless in a world that sinking just as surely as the Titanic. But in chapter 3 Paul abruptly switches gears, moving from the theological to the practical. For you see, beloved, the Christian life is more than just a glory hallelujah praise fest day by day. There are battles to be fought; there are victories to be won. There is a life to be lived that brings honor to our King, Jesus Christ! And so for the last half of the book of Colossians Paul talks about that life, and today we will begin to look at it.

Three or four years ago pastor David Platt wrote a book entitled, Radical, which some of you have read. And a year or so later he followed up with Radical Together, which speaks of the mission of the church. And in both books Dr. Platt stressed the call of God upon the lives of His children to live radical Christian lives. To live lives that the world calls fanatical, but lives that God uses to advance His kingdom in mighty ways.

Now, beloved, here's where the Great Deception of the church kicks in. We all know that God gave the church the Great Commission. "Go and make disciples of all the nations", and every true believer I know gives at least mental assent that the Great Commission is given to every Christian. But the church has also been given the Great Deception, except that it didn't come from God, but from the Devil. The Great Deception has to do with

the call to live that radical lifestyle that David Platt spoke about, but not only Dr. Platt, but 2000 years before, our Lord Jesus Christ. In Luke 14:33 Jesus makes the most radical statement in the entire Bible, “So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple”. Jesus said that His followers must forsake all. But the Great Deception says, “Jesus was speaking of the Green Beret Christian here. They are the one who must forsake all to follow Him, not the foot soldiers in His army like me.”

But Jesus was not talking about the Green Berets. Listen, we're all Green Berets in the army of God, from the missionary in Botswana to the middle schooler at Sipse Valley. Paul wrote that Jesus came to deliver us out of this evil world, and he was speaking about all of us (Gal. 1:4). He says that although we still live in this world physically, we are already citizens of Heaven (Phil. 3:20), and that means anyone who is saved, and the writer of Hebrews and Peter both say that and that we are strangers and pilgrims upon the earth (Heb. 11:13; 1 Peter 2:11). We are foreigners, uncomfortable with the customs of unconverted men, and like righteous Lot, our righteous souls are tormented by their ungodly conduct day by day (2 Peter 2:8). And by the way, that's a pretty good indicator if you are a child of God or not. Are you tormented by the ungodliness that is swirling around you every day? Or are you right at home viewing it on television and the internet, listening to it on the radio and your I-pod, even participating in it by where you go and what you do?

Well, for all who are truly born again this morning, I urge you, brothers and sisters, I beg you in Jesus' name; don't fall for the Great Deception! Don't say that you are not called to forsake all to follow Jesus. Don't say that the radical Christian lifestyle is for the preacher and the deacons but not for you. But know that whether you obey or disobey, you are called to live every day as a pilgrim

in this world, a stranger, with a different lifestyle, a holy lifestyle, looking for a city whose builder and maker is God. Beloved, then and only then will you and I make a difference for Jesus Christ!

Well, if you would make that commitment to forsake all and follow Jesus, to live a life that is radically sold out to Him, then our text this morning tells you where you must begin. “If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God”. Now, we need to understand that Paul is not questioning the salvation of the Colossians here. The Greek meaning of “if” is better translated by the word “since”, as it is translated in the NIV. Paul is saying, “since you were raised with Christ – since you are Christians – then seek those things which are above. And the word “seek” means to strive after something or to aim at something. And Paul says that we are to seek the things which are above, the things which are in Heaven.

Now, beloved, that’s quite an ambition. Whatever is happening up in Heaven, that’s what we are to strive to see happening down here below. And the force of the Paul’s words are a command. Paul says, “I command you, seek the things of Heaven in your life”. But when you think about it, what Paul is commanding us to do here is merely a follow-up of what Jesus has already told us to do. For how did Jesus tell us to pray? “Our Father.....Your Kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven”. Beloved, that’s what seeking those things that are above is all about! As best as we can, praying and working for God’s rule in this world in all things.

So if we are to be seeking those things that are above, have you ever thought about that, about what’s going on up in Heaven right now? Every now and then I’ll hear some guy who likes to fish say tongue-in-cheek, “Well, I don’t know everything that’s gonna be happening in Heaven, but I guarantee you there’s going to be

some good fishing there. 'Cause if there weren't it wouldn't be Heaven. What about it? Will there be fishing in Heaven? And if so, then there would have to be shopping for the all the shopping sisters in God's family. And perhaps a little tailgating this time of the year? And maybe for you teenagers, unlimited texting, 24/7?

Well, without being dogmatic I can just about guarantee you that none of these things will be going on in Heaven. Sorry, fishermen, but you won't need your bass boat in Heaven, because Rev. 21:1 says in Heaven there will be no more sea. Sorry, shoppers, but there'll be no more midnight madness sales, no more triple off coupon sales, because in Heaven everything's free. Don't weep, tailgaters, but there'll be no more grilling out at the stadium in Heaven, because there won't be any football as we know it, because in Heaven there are no more injuries, pain, and death. And teenagers, don't freak out, but texting is toast in Heaven, because in Heaven you can travel at the speed of thought to be with your friends.

Well, I trust that some of you will not fall into a state of depression by what I've just shared, but if that's a possibility let give you the upside of all this. Just being in the presence of Jesus in Heaven will be so much greater than any of these things, you'll never ever think about them again. But let me quickly tell you the four things that Bible says are happening in Heaven, right now. Four things that we are to be seeking in our lives. I hope that you'll write them down in your Bible or in your minds.

1. **Praise** is going right now in Heaven. Rev. 4:7-11 says that the four living creatures and the 24 elders worship God night and day, never resting.

2. **Prayer** is going on in Heaven. Heb. 7:25 says that at this moment Jesus is making intercession for the saints.

3. **Holy living** is going on in Heaven. Rev. 21:27 says that in Heaven there is nothing that defiles.

4. **Service** is going on in Heaven. Rev. 22:3 says that the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in Heaven, and His servants shall serve Him.

And if you would strive after what's happening in Heaven, then you will be striving to praise God continually, you will strive to be a person of prayer and godliness, and you will be actively serving God day by day. But here's what you cannot miss. **The beginning of this quest is all in your mind.** It's all in what you think about. Paul says in v. 2, "Set your mind on things above, and not on things on the earth". He says the same thing just a little differently in Philippians 4:8: "Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things *are* noble, whatever things *are* just, whatever things *are* pure, whatever things *are* lovely, whatever things *are* of good report, if *there is* any virtue and if *there is* anything praiseworthy—**meditate** on these things." He says it this way in Rom. 12:2, "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed **by the renewing of your minds**". And David wrote that the man God blesses meditates on the law of the Lord day and night (Ps. 1:3). His mind is on heavenly things.

I want to ask you, child of God, in the time that is your own, when you are not occupied with thinking about your job or about some other necessary task, when your time is your own to think about what you want to think about, is your mind mostly on heavenly things? Is your mind occupied with praising Jesus for all of His blessings in your life? Is your mind in the spirit of prayer, considering Paul's charge to pray without ceasing (1 Thess. 5:17)? Is your mind occupied with the Word of God, which leads to holy living? Is it occupied with serving God by serving men? Or is it on the matters of this world? Listen, beloved, the mind is the wellspring of all of our actions. And that is the reason that it is so critical that we think on the right things. Listen to what Jesus said in Mark 7:20-23:

“What comes out of a man, that defiles a man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man.”

Every sinful act you ever commit starts when you think about it. Every sexual sin, every murder, every theft, every lie. And people who commit those sins ought to know better than to feed their minds with the filth that causes such things, right? Right! But wait. Look what else defiles a man. Evil thoughts, covetousness, which is greed, pride, foolishness. All of these sins are never fleshed out, they are all contained to our minds, but they defile us just the same. And that last one, foolishness, is an interesting word. It is the noun form of the adjective used to describe the rich fool in Luke 12. He was the one who tore down his barns to build bigger barns to store all of his goods, and God called him a fool. And he was a fool because he spent all of his time immersed in the things of this world, things that pass away, things that have no eternal value.

What a picture of so many Christians today! They are not unsaved like the rich fool, but act just like him nonetheless. Day by day their minds are entrenched in the pursuits and cares of this world. Things that are not sinful in themselves, but things that are weights in their lives as the writer of Hebrews says, things that siphon the spiritual desire right out them, things that steal away their focus on what really matters in life, which is the eternal souls of men. And beloved, I'm talking about an epidemic in the body of Christ. And some are church-going Christians. But Monday through Saturday Satan has turned their minds to the things on the earth, and they are fiddling while Rome burns.

Now, I want us to see just why God says that setting our minds upon things above is the only thing that makes any sense at all. First of all because of our **position with Christ**. Look at v. 3 again. “For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God”. Did you know that you are dead and buried? You may think that you are alive, but you really are not. Now, since you are sitting up, heart beating, and hopefully hearing this message, how can this be? Because, beloved, when Jesus died, you died. Paul said, “I am crucified with Christ” (Gal. 2:20). He also said, “Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him...” (Rom. 6:6). The moment that you received Jesus as your Savior and Lord, that moment your old, sinful nature was nailed to the cross of Christ, and it died there with Him, and every sin was washed away by His precious blood. And after you died with Christ your were buried with Him and then you were raised up with Him (2:12).

But here’s the point. Your old nature, the nature that birthed your every thought and action your entire life before you were saved, your old nature is not a part of you anymore. You have a new nature, a new life. 2 Cor. 5:17: “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation...” And that new life is now the seat of your existence. It is what drives your thoughts and actions. And look where that life resides (vs. 3b). Paul says that it is hidden with Christ in God. And beloved, that’s talking about Heaven. Spiritually speaking, at this moment we are seated with Christ in the heavenly places, Eph. 2:6. Don’t ask me to explain that; it is not fathomable to the human mind. But as a child of God your body is here but your life, the real, eternal you, is hidden with Christ in God, in Heaven. And there are at least two ideas behind the word “hidden” that are so precious. One is secrecy. We have a life with Christ that the world just doesn’t understand, but it is real to us and it is priceless. But not only is it a life of secrecy, it is

a life of safety. We are with Christ, in God. And the verb tense of “hidden” indicates continuing, abiding, permanent results. We are with Christ in God, and we will always be with Christ in God. For what devil on earth or in hell can ever storm Heaven and snatch us away from such power and such love?

But there’s another reason that setting our minds on things above is the only reasonable thing to do. Not only because of our **position** with Christ, but also because of our **presentation** with Christ. Look at v. 4 (read). One day when Jesus returns in all of His millennial glory you are going to return with Him. John writes in Revelation 19 that we will return with Him as part of His conquering army. We will have the privilege of helping to crush Antichrist and his forces (Ps. 149:6-9). And David writes in Ps. 149 that it is an honor.

Oh, but we will not only return with Jesus as His heavenly army, but we will return with Him as His bride! Without spot and without blemish. And oh, how Jesus is so proud of His bride! How Jesus honors His bride and exalts His bride. Both John and Paul write that He has given to His saints His own glory (Jn. 17:22; 2 Thess. 2:14). And so because of our **position** with Christ and our **presentation** with Christ, I ask you, what pleasures of this world could ever deserve more thought and more allegiance than such a Savior?

Do you see how foolish it is for you or me to be caught up with the things that once were a part of our past but now are dead, buried, and gone forever? The passions and sinful desires that we lived for before we were saved? The meaningless, worthless things? Peter calls it our aimless conduct (1 Peter 1:18), and it dominated our lives. And when we revert back to thinking about our old, sinful life, we are caught in the middle of two worlds, being pulled in both directions. Our new nature is pulling us upward to the peace

and joy and purpose that brings glory to God. And Satan is trying to pull us downward to living as we once lived, in sin and darkness, that brings dishonor to the One Who died to set us free. And living in this no man's land is a terrible place to be. We are lukewarm, and you know what Jesus said about being lukewarm. He said, "I will spew you out of my mouth".

Imagine this situation. A woman much too young marries a man much too wicked. He abuses her in every way. But like many women with low self esteem and a masochistic perversion, she stays with him for years until he dies, leaving her battered and broken, physically and emotionally. But by the grace of God a nobleman meets her, sees beauty behind her brokenness, falls in love with her and marries her. She has never had life so good. He treats her like a queen. For the first time in her life she feels true love. But it's like she is Cinderella, waiting for the clock to strike 12. She can't believe it's true. But it is true.

But one month into her marriage the strangest thing happens. She starts having flashbacks of her old life, her old life of pain and heartache. But not only that, she begins to have those masochistic feelings again, and begins to long once more for the perverted feelings of pleasure she used to get from the beatings and the scorn. And so one day she makes her way to the cemetery where her first husband is buried, and she sits there by his grave and weeps and weeps and exclaims, "Oh, how I miss my life with my husband. How I wish he were alive again!" And the nobleman hears about what his precious wife is doing, and his heart is crushed.

What a sad story if it were true. But beloved it is true. It is true in every believer's heart who sets his mind on the things of this world, whose first love is for those things that matter nothing

in eternity, but occupy far more of his thoughts, time and energy than Jesus Christ and the things of Heaven.

Beloved, living the abundant, Christ-honoring life all starts in your mind. Where is your mind today?