

#7 Colossians

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Verse 20: 'Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as *though* living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations—²¹ "Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,"²² which all concern things which perish with the using—according to the commandments and doctrines of men?'

Paul has been trying to remind us that we are alive in Christ, we are complete in Him, we were crucified, buried and raised with Him, signified by our baptism, and we are now alive in Him and dead to the World and its false and seductive pleasures. He's saying, since we are now dead to the World, why would we any longer seek to enter into following the World's folly?

Paul is now addressing another false teaching; these Colossians really had problems... so much false teaching from so many false teachers, each one having been brought in by Satan to try and teach them 'doctrines of demons.' So far, Paul has addressed *Gnosticism* and the *Judaizers* to which he is still referring with 'do not touch, do not taste, do not handle... having to do with requirements of the Mosaic Law, to which no Christian is bound any longer: 'whom the Son sets free is free indeed!' But now he is warning them concerning another false teaching, another doctrine of demons: *Asceticism*, which demands self denial, self abasement, doing without when God's Word specifically tells us that all things are lawful to those who are *free from the Law*: 'All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.'¹³ Foods for the stomach and the stomach for foods, but God will destroy both it and them. Now the body *is* not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.' 1Cor 6:12

No food is, any longer, 'against the Law.' But here is something that God does command us: *sexual immorality* is not 'lawful for me.' This is the main reason that the World hates the Lord Jesus Christ and His Church; they refuse to submit to Him regarding their myriad sexual appetites and enslavements. Many of them even hate what they are enslaved to and yet, they would rather go to hell than give it up.

This, *asceticism*, is the teaching that led to the 'Desert Fathers,' so called priests and prophets who went out into the desert to live as hermits, or as monks in monasteries, or women into convents. These are once again being held up as models for a better Christianity, modern monasticism. It's through the 'Desert Fathers' that Eastern mysticism crept into the Church through meditation. All that these false teachers were promoting had to do with false and manmade spirituality, the commandments and teachings of men and not having to do with God's Word, His Holy Spirit or His guidance at all. Paul is saying that these false teachings are powerless to restrain sinful desires or to lead anyone to salvation.

Verse 23: 'These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, *false* humility, and neglect of the body, *but are* of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.'

How can he say that *denial of self* has no value; isn't that what Jesus meant by 'Deny yourself?' The truth is, the real purpose behind much 'self-denial,' then, as now, is actually self promotion, to display one's deep spirituality, rather than deny the flesh, in reality, it gratifies the flesh, seeking out the admiration of others.

Chapter 3: 'If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.'

We did die with Him and we were raised with Him which was shown forth in our Baptism; our baptism did not cause it to happen but was, rather, simply a reflection of what God had already accomplished in us and for us.

What is 'above' that we should be seeking and setting our minds upon? Is it the Lord Jesus Christ or the Holy Spirit? Jesus Christ and His Holy Spirit live within us, never to leave or forsake us; He is not something which is 'above' needing to be sought, is He? Is it the Word of God? The Word of God is down here with us, in its completeness; in a book and in our hearts; It is not something which is above that must be sought... is it?

Rom 8 says, 'For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those *who live* according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.' So, if we are living according to the Spirit, we are setting our minds on the things of the Spirit. What might those things be? The 'fruit of the Spirit, what grows within and out of us as we set our minds on things above are: 'love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.' Gal 5:22 By submitting to God and His

Lordship over our lives, learning what that means, in His Word, and through many trials and tribulations, those fruits are grown in our lives: 'being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete *it* until the day of Jesus Christ; Phpp 1:6

'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.' Phpp 4:8

These are all things we think on and set our minds upon which God uses to change us in conforming us into the image and likeness of the Lord Jesus Christ but when He is telling us, specifically, to 'set our minds on things above and not on things of the Earth, 'I think He means two very special things. One is in what John and Paul call our 'blessed hope.'

'...looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,' Titus 2:13

'Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. ³And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.' 1 John 3:3

They are both referring to the soon coming Rapture when the Lord Jesus Christ will come down into the clouds, not all the way down to Earth yet, and He will call us up to Himself while we are instantaneously changed; our physical, Earthly bodies will be transformed into glorious eternal bodies like His own.

It's our constant, ever vigilant watching and waiting for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, bodily, from where He is seated at the right hand of the Father, down into the clouds to remove us in the Rapture which will happen at any moment. It says that those who hold this in their hearts as their constant, 'blessed hope,' are purifying themselves in that as they remember that they may stand before the Lord Jesus Christ at any moment, they are far more apt to 'walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which we've been called.' Eph 4:1

So, the soon coming Rapture of the true Church, at any moment, is one thing we set our minds upon and seek. Another is what Paul says:

'Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him. But He has revealed them to us by His Spirit.' 1 Cor 2:9

'And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold *water* in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward.'" Matt 10:42

The first thing to establish... where we are that we could, in fact, seek the things above.

'But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶ and raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus, ⁷ that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in *His* kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.' Eph 2

Jesus Christ is sitting at the right hand of the Father; we are sitting at His right hand, right there with Him.

Since then we were raised with Christ, let us seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.

We are in Jesus Christ, clothed in His absolute righteousness, sitting just one throne away from God the Father with Whom we are able to speak, directly, anytime at all. When we pray, when we praise, when we offer thanksgiving... we don't have to cry out or weep or wail or beg; He is right there next to us; we need only to speak in our normal conversational voice. Anything else is, at best, a wasted effort and at worst, meant only to be a public showing for those around us.

We've all heard someone pray in great lofty, swelling tones, using an abundance of thee's and thou's. Not only is God not impressed by that, He is actually saddened, I think, that one of His children would speak to Him with such formality and ritual. That is, in no way, the picture of a trusting child with his loving father.

What are we to be setting our minds upon? Three main things: that the Lord Jesus Christ will return for us at any moment, so we are wise to always be living our lives accordingly, knowing that we might be

instantaneously transported, physically, into His presence, the fact that everything we do... everything will redound to our earned or lost eternal rewards and every reward from Him is far beyond even our wildest imaginings and finally, that we are, even now, in His presence.

The other point is that, as we set and keep our hearts and minds stayed on Him and on the things above, we will not be setting our minds on the things of the Earth, on the things of this World system which remains completely within the kingdom of darkness.

Verse 3: 'For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.'

Our lives are now, eternally joined with the Life of God. We are in complete union with God; we are one together with Him. The shared oneness of life between a married couple is an earthly picture of the Heavenly reality of our oneness with God through His Son.

Paul has really sought to explain that we have died, have been crucified with Jesus Christ and raised up with Him and are now seated with Him in Heavenly places.

'How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? ³ Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? ⁴ Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.' Rom 6:2

Here's something interesting to think about: if we were crucified with Him and the Bible refers to Him as 'the Lamb of God, slain from the foundation of the World,' and if it also says that we were 'chosen from the foundation of the World'... were we somehow, in the mind of God, slain with Him back then, or even in AD 33, or was our spirit somehow transported back then? Remember, God is Eternal. With Him, the past, present and future are all one big 'now.' Did He always know and love us, knowing that He had elected us for His own and that He had determined to reveal Himself and draw us to Himself, at His exact chosen moment?

I am not trying to suggest anything that is contrary to Scripture but there are many clues in Scripture, some of which we have simply chosen to ignore.

Set your minds on the things above; your life is hidden, in Christ, with God. We are seated with Him, now; ask Him questions about difficult things; He will reveal hidden things to us.

"The secret *things belong* to the LORD our God, but those *things which are* revealed *belong* to us and to our children forever, Deut 29:29

"Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, for wisdom and might are His. And He changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and raises up kings; He gives wisdom to the wise And knowledge to those who have understanding. ²² He reveals deep and secret things; He knows what *is* in the darkness, and light dwells with Him." Dan 2:22

'Call to Me and I will answer you, and I will tell you great and mighty things, which you do not know.' Jer 33:3

'It is the glory of God to conceal a matter, but the glory of kings is to search out a matter.' Prov 25:2

'Surely the Lord God does nothing unless He reveals His secret counsel to His servants the prophets.' Amos 3:7

'No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you.' John 15:15

'That is, the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations, but has now been manifested to His saints,' Col 1:26

God's plan is to reveal to us, to each of us, as much as we are willing to want to know, as much as we have the courage to ask, as much as we have faith in Him to believe of Him and as much truth as we are willing to accept. This does not mean that whatever we can imagine is true but, rather, nothing we could imagine is ever beyond the ability of God to do.

Verse 4: 'When Christ *who is* our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.'

Here, Paul is not referring to the Rapture but, rather, to Christ's second coming when He comes down to Earth, on the Mount of Olives at the Battle of Armageddon. Then, when He is seen by the entire World, riding

a great white stallion in all His Glory, as the King of kings and Lord of lords, we will appear with Him, also on white horses, in our glorious eternal bodies. We will then appear with Him in glory.

We are not to be thinking of ourselves in any high and exalted way but just imagine: imagine the Lord Jesus Christ, riding on a great, white, flying stallion; He is actually glowing in His glorious form with all the World seeing Him at once and with Him, are His companions who are also riding on great, white, flying horses and their bodies radiate with glory, they are even more magnificent than any imagined great warrior angel.

That is who we will be, at that time, and those who are left alive on the Earth, after the battle of Armageddon, mortals who enter the Millennial Kingdom, they will respond to us as we would, if there appeared before us great, powerful angels today.

That is not an attempt to magnify or glorify ourselves; that is just the way it is and the sooner we come to grips with that fact, the sooner we will be able to come into the relationships we will have with our King, with our Bridegroom, with the God of the Universe, for all Eternity.

Verse 5: 'Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.'

He is saying: 'Remember who you are.' It's as if a young prince is out riding with His father, the king. The king is showing the prince the kingdom and introducing him to the different dukes, earls, barons and viscounts; he is teaching his son what he'll need to know when he someday becomes king over all the kingdom. Suddenly the prince jumps off his horse, into the mud, ready to run into a bar or a casino or a whorehouse or a pornography store. The king forcefully, in his voice of command and authority says, 'Remember who you are! You are not like the people in those places; you were born to rule over them in righteousness, justice and wisdom... remember who you are, you are the prince! You are a son of the king!'

That is what Paul is saying here. Right now we live within dying, earthly bodies but that is not who you are. We are children of the King. Live like it now and it won't be such a drastic transition when we are allowed to enter into our eternal, glorified bodies.

The ones who are most pleasing to God, who are most glorifying of God now are those who live in such a way that the transition, at the Rapture, will almost seem like no transition at all.

Verse 6: 'Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience,⁷ in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them.'

The wrath of God is coming, just like it was on its way in Noah's time and on its way in Lot's time and place; it will begin at any moment with the Rapture but we, the children of God, have not been appointed to wrath, but to salvation. 'But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation.⁹ For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,¹⁰ who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.' 1 Thes 5:8

Verse 8: 'But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth.'

Probably most of us have battled against these at one time or another or constantly... if fact, these are all closely related and even part of one another. But it is not something we are forced to do; remember: 'knowing this, that our old man was crucified with *Him*, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.⁷ For he who has died has been freed from sin... likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.' Rom 6

There is no sin to which we are a slave. We can reckon ourselves dead to sin and alive to God forevermore. We can... but we don't always, do we?

The more we keep all these things in the fronts of our minds... the more and more successful we will grow to be. He who began a good work in us is faithful and He will continue completing His work right up until the moment of the Rapture.