

### Colossians 3:1-4

#### “Set Your Mind on Things Above”

#### Sermon

1.

#### Introduction

1.

John Bunyan tells a story about “a man with a muck-rake” (who doesn’t seek the crown hanging above his head)

1.

The character named the Interpreter shows a woman named Christiana “a room where was a man that could look no way but downwards, with a muck-rake in his hand. There stood also one over his head with a celestial crown in his hand, and proffered to give him that crown for his muck-rake; but the man did neither look up nor regard, but raked to himself the straws, the small sticks, and the dust of the floor.”

2.

“...his Muck-rake doth shew his carnal mind. And whereas thou seest him rather give heed to rake up straws and sticks and the dust of the floor, than to what he says that calls to him from above with the Coelestial Crown in his hand, it is to shew that Heaven is but as a fable to some, and that things here are counted the only things substantial. Now whereas it was also shewed thee that the man could look no way but downwards, it is to let thee know that earthly things when they are with power upon men’s minds, quite carry their hearts away from God.”

3.

## Col. 3:1-4 - Set Your Mind on Things Above

Written by Tim Black

Tuesday, 01 May 2007 13:49 - Last Updated Tuesday, 01 May 2007 13:53

---

“Chris. Then said Christiana, O deliver me from this Muck-rake.”

4.

“Inter. That prayer, said the Interpreter, has lain by till ‘tis almost rusty. Give me not Riches, is scarcely the prayer of one of ten thousand. Straws and sticks and dust with most are the great things now looked after.”

5.

“Straws and sticks and dust with most are the great things now looked after.”  
What do you “look after” in your life? What are the “great things” in your life? In this passage Paul exhorts you to “[Set your mind on things above, not on things that are on earth.](#)”

6.

**Sermon Outline.** We will consider this exhortation under the following three headings:

1.

Seek the things that are above 1

2.

Set your mind on things above 2

3.

Because Christ is your life 3-4

## Col. 3:1-4 - Set Your Mind on Things Above

Written by Tim Black

Tuesday, 01 May 2007 13:49 - Last Updated Tuesday, 01 May 2007 13:53

---

1.

### Body

1.

### Seek the things that are above 1

1.

First Paul exhorts us in v. 1 to **seek the things that are above**.

1.

1 If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.

2.

### Ground: Union with Christ 1a

1.

Paul grounds his exhortations throughout this passage in the fact of your union with Christ.

-

“Since then you have been raised with Christ”

-

Paul is building on what he has already taught us in **2:12-13**,  
that you were

buried

with Christ in baptism, and

raised

with Him through faith. At the center of your union with Christ  
is the fact that you are united with Him in His death and  
resurrection. In

**2:20**

Paul said “

with Christ you

died

to the basic principles of the world.

” Through Christ’s death you died to the powers of this dark  
world. “

Sin shall no longer be your master.

” (

**Rom. 6:14**

) Now in

**3:1**

Paul expresses the complementary truth that with Christ not  
only have you

died

to sin, but also you have been

raised

to life with Christ. Christ is your representative who died in your place, and produced your new life in His resurrection, and it is He who is now the source of your spiritual life. When you first come to believe on Him as your Savior, He works a radical change within you—He convicts you of your sin and grants you the gift of repentance unto life so that you turn away from your sin to Him as your Savior. At your conversion the benefits of Christ's death and resurrection are applied to you, so that you died, and now you have been raised with Christ to newness of life.

-

**Exhortation: Seek the things that are above 1b**

1.

Have you been “**raised with Christ?**” Has Christ worked this radical change in you? Has He made you one who now hates your sin, and desires to live a godly life in Christ Jesus? Then why do you turn away from godliness and throw yourself again into sin? Oh, I know it catches you unaware at times, I know it's

often true it was someone else who provoked you to anger, spite, jealousy, or malice, but in the end these are empty excuses to cover over the shameful reality of your guilt. Are you one whom God has granted conviction of sin and godly repentance? Then admit your sin, and seek Christ your Savior. “

If...you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above.

”

2.

Why have you turned away from godliness and stubbornly participated in sin this past week?

Paul tells you why. It is because you did not “see k the things that are above.

”

3.

There is certainly a rebuke implicit in Paul's words here. But the greater part of Paul's point is a strong encouragement to grow as Christians. It is the encouragement Paul makes

explicit elsewhere, as he says in Romans  
2:7:

-

**Romans 2:7** to those who by patience in  
well-doing **seek** for  
glory and honor and immortality, he will give  
eternal life.

-

**Location: Heaven 1c**

1.

Paul says the things we should seek are “  
[above.](#)”

” To

what location

is he directing us? From where should we seek these things? Paul says this location is

-

“[Where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God](#)”

-

**Heaven. In Ephesians 1:20 Paul**

makes clear that this location is  
heaven

. He says the Father

-

**Ephesians 1:20** raised him from  
the dead and seated him at his  
right hand in the  
**heavenly places**

-

**Christ.** At the center of our

focus should be Christ. The things above are “ **where Christ is.** ” Our pursuit should be to gain more of the things that are found where our Savior is.

-

“Turn your eyes upon Jesus;  
Look full in His wonderful  
face.

And the things of earth  
will grow strangely dim  
In the light of His glory

and grace.”

-

**Exaltation.**

-

Paul points us not to seek Christ on the cross, or Christ risen from the grave but still on the earth. Paul points us to seek Christ in heaven, Christ

in His exaltation. Christ our Savior is now in a position of glory and honor and power. He sits at the right hand of God the Father, which means He sits in the seat of a king, as the one who rules with all the power of the almighty God. In that position He is the central object of all worship in heaven and on earth, and by His intercession He presents us in God's presence, prays for us, and makes us acceptable in God's sight. He has gone ahead of us to prepare a place for us, and

from that place even now Christ is our source of peace with God and life through His name. From there He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

-

He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, and He now holds before you the heavenly crown of life. Do you see it? Or do you only see the straws and sticks and dust of the things of this world?

-

## **Set your mind on the things above 2**

1.

If you know that your vision is  
too often set on the things of this

world, you need to “set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.

” What are those “things that are above?”

”

2.

**Distinction.** This exhortation in v. 2 to “set

your minds on

” is different from the exhortation in

**v. 1**

to “

**seek**

” the things that are above.

To set your mind on things

above i

nvolves setting your

affections, your desires, on

them. It indicates an inner

disposition, rather than a

practical pursuit. But it also

requires that you have an

intellectual knowledge of what

those things are on which you

are to set your mind. For this

reason Paul introduces a distinction to make more clear what he means. He distinguishes the “  
things above  
” from the “  
things that are on earth.  
”

1.

The things above he has already implied are things in heaven, because that is

where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.

2.

But now he distinguishes the things above from “things that are on earth.

”

3.

**Location: Heaven vs. Earth.** What differentiates these two sets of “ **things**” is their location, and their locations indicate the nature of the “ **things**” in view. The one set is in heaven, the other is on earth

▪

4.

**Christ and God.**

Certainly Paul directs us  
to set our minds on

Christ

and on

God

, both of whom are in  
heaven, according to v. 1.

5.

**Salvation blessings,  
moral purity.** But there  
are other things we should  
be concerned about as  
well, indicated by the  
difference between heaven  
and earth. Jesus  
distinguishes heaven and  
earth in this way:

-

## **Matthew 6:19-20 19**

**&quot;Do not lay up for yourselves**

**treasures on earth**

**, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves**

**break in and steal, 20**

**but lay up for yourselves**

**treasures in heaven**

**, where neither moth**

nor rust destroys and  
where thieves do not break  
in and steal.

-

The things in heaven  
decay and can be taken  
away, the things in  
heaven do not decay and  
cannot be taken away.

These treasures in  
heaven have the ring of  
the blessings of  
salvation, of eterna  
l life in all of its  
aspects

. In

## **Col. 3:5**

, Paul tells us to put to  
death the things that are  
“earthly” in us and  
specifies them as a list of

sins, and contrasts them  
in vv. 12ff with a list of  
Christian virtues

. In Romans 8:5-6

Paul uses a figure of  
speech that parallels v. 2:

-

**Romans 8:5-6** 5 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

**set their minds**

on the things of the

Spirit. 6 To

**set the mind**

on the flesh is death,

but to

**set the mind**

on the Spirit is life and  
peace.

-

By tying these threads together we can see that the things associated with God in heaven are morally pure

,

and the things associated with earth are morally evil

. In Romans 8 Paul  
says the  
flesh

brings weakness,  
hostility, sin, fear,  
slavery, condemnation,  
death, and decay,  
and the  
Spirit

brings life,  
righteousness, adoption,

freedom, peace,  
submission, and  
glorification.

-

**Summary.** We can summarize that the things on which we

should set our minds  
are God, e  
ternal life

,  
salvation blessings

,  
Christian virtues

, and anything that is  
morally pure

. Paul exhorts you to  
focus on these things, as  
he also says in

# Philippians

# 4:8

,

-

**Philippians 4:8** Finally, brothers, whatever is **tr**

**ue**

, 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

▪

-

# **Interrelation.**

**1.**

Now does this mean that we should despise all earthly things?

Matthew Henry says it does. Commentators

John Eadie and

Alexander Maclaren

say we should not

despise earthly things,

but should consider

them means to God's

ends, and so of  
subordinate  
importance. Eadie  
says,

-

“The pilgrim is not to  
despise the comforts he  
may meet with by the

way, but he is not to  
tarry among them, or  
leave them with  
regret.” [1](#)

-

I want to agree with

Eadie's view, but what view does scripture require us to take?

-

The deciding principle is this: we must be thankful for God's good creation, and despise its sinful perversion. And certainly God's creation can be used in the service of

pursuing the things  
above. “For  
everything created  
by God is good, and  
nothing is to be  
rejected if it is received  
with thanksgiving.

” (

**1 Timothy 4:4**

)

But a key perversion

you should flee with all  
your might is the  
desire to gain an  
earthly

blessing when God  
offers a  
heavenly

blessing that is far  
better. This is the true  
devotion that God

## Col. 3:1-4 - Set Your Mind on Things Above

Written by Tim Black

Tuesday, 01 May 2007 13:49 - Last Updated Tuesday, 01 May 2007 13:53

---

# desires.

-

# Hebrews

**11:15-16** 15 If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 But as it

is, they desire  
**a better country**  
, that is,  
**a heavenly one**  
. Therefore God is  
not ashamed to be  
called their God, for  
he has prepared for  
them  
**a city**

■

-

Do not be like  
Esau, who traded his  
heavenly birthright  
for a bowl of  
earthly pottage. Do

not be like the  
wedding guests  
whose response  
was “I cannot come  
to the banquet; don’t  
trouble me now.  
I have married a  
wife, I have bought  
me a cow. I have  
fields and

commitments that  
cost a pretty sum.  
Pray hold me  
excused, I cannot  
come!” Do you want  
to come to the  
wedding feast of  
the Lamb? If you do,  
I have good news for  
you—not only

will you be a guest,  
but you will be the  
Bride! What  
amazing blessings  
await you if only you  
have eyes to see,  
and ears to hear,  
of the good news of  
salvation in Christ.  
Desire the

blessings of  
salvation, and set  
your mind on the  
things that are  
above. It is worth it  
beyond your wildest  
imagination.  
Paul says,

-

# Philippians

**3:8-11** 8 Indeed, I  
count everything  
as loss because of  
the **surpassin**  
**g** **wor**  
**th**  
of knowing Christ

Jesus my Lord. For  
his sake I have  
suffered the  
**loss**

of all things and  
count them as  
**rubbish**

, in order that I  
may  
**gain Christ**

9 and be found in  
him, not having a  
**righteousness**  
of my own that  
comes from the law,  
but that which comes  
through  
**faith**  
in Christ, the  
righteousness

from God that  
depends on faith- 10  
that I may know him  
and the  
**power**  
of his  
**resurrection**  
, and may share  
his  
**sufferings**

, becoming like  
him in his death, 11  
that by any means  
possible I may  
attain the  
resurrection from the  
dead.

## Col. 3:1-4 - Set Your Mind on Things Above

Written by Tim Black

Tuesday, 01 May 2007 13:49 - Last Updated Tuesday, 01 May 2007 13:53

---

-

# Application.

1.

Now do you set your mind on things above? Take stock of your thought life. On what objects do you allow your thoughts to

dwelling? What station do you tune your radio to? What songs fill your head? What are you watching on the TV, reading in the paper, talking about when you sit

down and when you  
rise up? On  
weekdays does  
your Bible, do the  
very words of God,  
sit unread and  
unheard amidst a  
clamor of worldly  
information in your

life? What thoughts fill your mind when you become angry at someone in your household? I tell you, what goes into your mind today will come out of your

heart tomorrow.

Are they the things  
of God? Or the  
things of this world?

Take Paul's  
warning to heart  
when he tells  
you,

-

# 1 Timothy

6:10-11 10 ...the

love of money is a  
root of all kinds of  
evils. It is

through this craving  
that some have

wandered away  
from the faith  
and pierced  
themselves with  
many pangs. 11  
But as for you, O  
man of God, flee  
these things.  
**Pursue**

righteousness,  
godliness, faith,  
love, steadfastness,  
gentleness.

—

Christian, there is a more pure love than the love of this world. You have a higher calling, a calling from God above. Cry out to God with a pure devotion to Him.

-

# Psalm 73:25-26

25 Whom have I  
in heaven but you?  
And there is  
nothing on earth

that I desire  
besides you. 26  
My flesh and my  
heart may fail,  
but God is the  
strength of my  
heart and my  
portion forever.

## Col. 3:1-4 - Set Your Mind on Things Above

Written by Tim Black

Tuesday, 01 May 2007 13:49 - Last Updated Tuesday, 01 May 2007 13:53

---

■

# Because Christ is your life 3-4

1.

Now why should  
you set your  
mind on things

above, and not on  
earthly things?

What is the  
reason

for doing this? In

v. 1 Paul has

already given

you the ground for

his exhortation--“

you have been  
raised with Christ.

” But now he  
drives you to the  
vital core of why  
you must set your  
mind on things  
above. The  
reason is that

Christ is your life.  
He says,

1.

3 For you have  
died, and your life  
is hidden with

# Christ in God. 4

When Christ who  
is your life  
appears, then you  
also will appear  
with him in glory.

**2.**

**The fact.**

**1.**

**I want to be**

frank with you. I don't think many of you fully believe what this passage says. It says that "Christ... is your life."  
" It does not say

Christ is the  
source

of your life,  
though He  
certainly is that.  
But it says Christ  
IS  
your life. It

does not say

Christ is the

Guarantor

of your life. It

says Christ

IS

your life. Do you

believe that?

2.

If you don't  
believe that, then  
you lack the vital  
reason to set  
your mind on

things above. If  
you do believe  
that, then you do  
not need any  
other reason to  
set your mind on  
things above.  
Christ is your life.

3.

Paul cannot be denying the biblical distinction between the Creator and

the creature.

Scripture is  
absolutely clear  
that there is an  
absolute  
distinction  
between the  
being of God and

the being of  
man. God is not  
human. Man is  
not divine. Not in  
any way.

4.

Yet for those  
who are saved,  
Christ is your life.  
His life is your  
life. He is the  
core of your  
eternal life.

-

**1 John 1:2**      **2**  
the life was made  
manifest, and we  
have seen it, and  
testify      to it and

proclaim to you  
the eternal life,  
which was with  
the Father and  
was made  
manifest to us.

-

If you did not  
have Christ, you  
would not have  
this life.

-

**1 John**

**5:11-12 11 And**

**this is the**

**testimony, that**

**God gave us**

eternal life, and  
this life is in  
his Son. 12  
Whoever has the  
Son has life;  
whoever does  
not have the  
Son of God does

not have life.

-

But if you are

a Christian,  
Christ's life is  
manifest in you.

-

2

# Corinthians

4:10-11 10

always

carrying in the

body the death

of Jesus, so that

the life of

Jesus may also

be manifested in  
our bodies.

—

His life is  
what animates  
you. It is what  
makes you a  
new creature.  
It is because  
He lives in you

that you have  
eternal life.

-

**Galatians**

**2:20** 20 I have

**been crucified  
with Christ.  
It is no longer I  
who live,  
but Christ who  
lives in me  
.**

-

This is what  
Christ told you

when He was  
still with you.

-

**John**

**14:19-20** 19

Yet a little while  
and the  
world will see  
me no more,  
but you will see  
me.

**Because I  
live, you also  
will live  
. 20 In that  
day you will  
know that I am  
in my Father,**

and

you in me

, and

I in you

.

-

# Illustrations

1.

The fact that  
Christ is your  
life is like a  
nation ruled

exclusively  
by a king that  
can truthfully  
say the king is  
the nation. If  
we lose the  
king, we lose

the nation. Its  
distinctive life  
is gone.

2.

It is like a  
wife who  
knows “If my  
husband dies, I  
lose my  
marriage.”

3.

It is like a  
boxing  
manager who  
says “If I lose

my prize  
fighter, my  
business is  
dead.”

4.

It is like a  
blood donor  
who warns the  
nurse, “If you  
take two  
thirds of my  
blood, you will

take my life.”

5.

It is like a  
patient on a

heart-lung  
machine who  
says “Where  
this machine  
goes, I go,  
because this  
machine is my

life.”

6.

# Application

1.

If Christ is  
your life, you

must pay  
attention to  
where He is.

You must  
pay attention to  
the things He  
is doing for

you. You must  
set your  
mind to follow  
His priorities,  
His plans, the  
course of  
His life. And

where He goes  
your heart, and  
mind, and life  
must follow.

-

# Philippians

**1:21 For to  
me to live is  
Christ ,  
and to die is  
gain.**

-

He has now  
gone on into

heaven, into  
glory, where  
you do not yet  
see Him.

And so Paul  
says that our  
life is “hid” with

Christ in  
God. It is  
hidden for  
now, and so  
you must  
believe by faith  
in the as yet

unseen glory  
of the  
inheritance  
kept for you,  
ready to be  
revealed at the  
last time. And

as 1 John  
3:2-3 says,  
we must  
purify  
ourselves in  
the hope of the  
day when His

full glory will  
finally be  
revealed.

-

# 1 John

3:2-3 2

Beloved, we  
are God's  
children now,  
and what we  
will be has not

yet appeared;  
but we  
know that  
when he  
appears we  
shall be like  
him, because

we shall  
see him as he  
is. 3 And  
everyone who  
thus hopes in  
him purifies  
himself as he

## Col. 3:1-4 - Set Your Mind on Things Above

Written by Tim Black

Tuesday, 01 May 2007 13:49 - Last Updated Tuesday, 01 May 2007 13:53

---

# is pure.

—

If you know  
that Christ is  
your life, then  
be one of  
those of whom  
**1 Peter**  
**1:8-9** speaks:

-

**1 Peter**

**1:8-9 8**

**Though you  
have not**

seen him, you  
love him.

Though you  
do not now  
see him, you  
believe in  
him and

rejoice with  
joy that is  
inexpressible  
and filled  
with glory, 9  
obtaining the  
outcome of

**your faith, the  
salvation of  
your souls.**

—

And know  
this for  
certain, that  
when He

appears in all  
of the glory  
of His  
resurrection  
life, you too  
will appear

with Him in  
glory. For

-

**Philippians**

**3:20-21 20**

**our**

**citizenship is**

**in heaven**

**, and from**

**it we await a**

Savior, the  
Lord Jesus  
Christ, 21  
who will  
transform our  
lowly body to

be like his  
glorious body,  
by the  
power that  
enables him  
even to

subject all  
things to  
himself.

## Col. 3:1-4 - Set Your Mind on Things Above

Written by Tim Black

Tuesday, 01 May 2007 13:49 - Last Updated Tuesday, 01 May 2007 13:53

---

# 1 John Eadie, Commentary, 215.

## Col. 3:1-4 - Set Your Mind on Things Above

Written by Tim Black

Tuesday, 01 May 2007 13:49 - Last Updated Tuesday, 01 May 2007 13:53

---