

99-01-15b Colossians

We resume now our study in Colossians chapter 3 where Paul says 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. In passing, I want to note that here in chapter 3 verse 1, as in chapter 2 verse 20, both of these begin with the idea if then or if therefore this is true, and this is, anybody that's had Greek can hardly pass up a wonderful first class condition, if, if and it's true.

And a lot of times, in fact you may see this in some English translations, this will actually be translated since then you were raised with Christ or since then you died with Christ from the basic principles because the idea is if you acknowledge that this is true, here is the conclusion or here is the result of that knowledge. And so once again, everything we're talking about tonight in verses 1 and 2 as far as setting our minds and seeking those things which are above is based on knowledge of a fact and acknowledgement of that fact. Paul has argued in chapter 2 that we, in a spiritual sense, died with Christ, were buried with Christ, were raised with Christ and now in chapter 3 verse 1 he says if then you were raised with Christ and he's talking about not only raised with Christ from the dead but raised, he's referring obliquely to the ascension as well because Christ has been raised not only from the dead but he's been raised and elevated to the position of honor at the right hand of the Father.

And Paul says since you are united with Christ in his death, burial, resurrection, ascension and what they call session, meaning his being seated at the right hand of the Father, we're united with Christ in each one of these things, recognition of the facts of the career of Jesus Christ in accomplishing our salvation in those areas forces us if we acknowledge it and if we act upon that reality, it ought to change the way we live. That's the idea. That's why Paul says, he talks about the fact that Jesus Christ has in his death separated from sin.

It is the great circumcision, the putting off not just of a tiny portion of the flesh but putting off the flesh altogether in death and then being raised incorruptible, being raised in a new life that is separate from the old flesh and the old limitations and the old elemental spirits of the world. Death is divorce, Paul says in another book. The old man is gone.

Death has dissolved that marriage to the old husband and you are raised now to a new life. But as I've referred recently, it's kind of like the Surgeon General's warning. You can know a fact and yet not act on it.

People who engage in any one of a number of bad habits that you want to name may know and believe that it's detrimental. But if that knowledge doesn't spur them to change and to abandon that bad habit or that bad activity, that knowledge does no good. There is a difference between knowledge and faith.

Faith says, I am going to act upon this knowledge and trust that God will honor my acting in this way. So even the demons know that Jesus Christ died, was buried, was raised and is seated at the right hand of the Father. That knowledge does them no good even though they know it.

They know Jesus is the Son of God. But knowing that and even acknowledging that as a fact doesn't save them, doesn't deliver them from their plight because it isn't something that they have acted on. They have not repented, if that is possible for them.

They have not returned to God and looking at the pattern elsewhere in God's dealings with his creatures. There is always grace before judgment in every visible situation in the Bible and in this invisible realm we have to figure. I assume that there was some form of grace before the judgment that was pronounced on the fallen angels and they did not avail themselves of it.

So the same thing that Paul talks about the unbelievers in Romans chapter 1 or what John says in John chapter 1, when they knew him as God, there is no doubt that he is God, they know him as God, but they do not glorify him as God and it doesn't spark thankfulness. But they become empty in their imagination and their foolish heart is darkened. The knowledge is there and that knowledge is the opportunity for faith, it's the opportunity for deliverance, it's the opportunity for salvation in all of its fullness.

But you can possess the knowledge and by failing to act on it, lose the benefit, lose the gift and the grace of God. There are believers who because they know Christ as their Savior but do not honor him as Savior are fallen from grace and are cut off from Christ. Read Galatians.

It is possible to have the knowledge and not gain the benefit and a lot of our knowledge oriented Christianity has deviated from the truth in assuming that if you have the knowledge everything will follow. It's not knowledge by which we live, it is faith. It's treating that knowledge as reality and acting accordingly.

If these things are so, how should we then live? And Paul says in verse 20 of chapter 2, therefore if you have in fact died with Christ or since because this is a first class condition, if and it's true. The particle EI plus the present active indicative, if and it's true. You died with Christ from the basic principles of the world.

Why as you are living in the world do you subject yourself to regulations? Why do you have your eyes on the world? Why do you react on the basis of what the world is going to think? Somebody in the world puts a standard on you, subjects you to a regulation, judges you and you react to that. Why are you making your reality and your standard, your motivation something in the earthly realm? You have died to all of that with Christ. If you have died with Christ, you ought to live differently.

If that fact that you have acknowledged is real to you, then it ought to make a difference. The knowledge that we have ought to make a difference. You can have knowledge galore and all it's

going to do is huff up.

If it doesn't get breathed out, if it doesn't get implemented, if it doesn't get put to use in some way, just soaking up knowledge, there are people who are wonderful scholars. I have actually seen this firsthand. I've seen people who have ended up being seminary professors who are a master of their particular area of theology or their particular discipline in the study of the Word of God.

They can answer any question. They can quote any source. They can give you chapter and verse on any area of this particular concentration in theology and yet their personal life is a mess.

When they walk out of the classroom, it hasn't made a difference. It's tragic. It's sad.

It misses the whole point of our faith. Anybody can get a body of knowledge. I was digging through the things that have come down to me from our family.

I have little cardboard boxes of personal possessions of my ancestors, my grandfather and my great-grandfather and even my great-great-grandfather. I have little articles that people saved when they died, little journals that they carried or the things that were in their wallet, books. I have a hymnal or two from my great-great-grandfather.

And these things have survived down and I possess them and yet, I forgot what my point was now. I can't even remember why I brought it up. I guess my point was talking about the fact that possessing knowledge and not acting on it is a waste of time.

I know what it was now. Forgive me for my mind slipping a stitch there. One of the things that is in those possessions, some of my ancestors were in these societies that have the Order of the Eastern Star and the Masons.

In these little boxes, I'm so glad I remembered what I was talking about. In these little boxes, among other things, are these little booklets. When you open up the book, this was a secret society.

They didn't want you to know what they do when they have their little meetings. In case the booklet there should fall into enemy hands, they don't want you to know what they were saying in the ceremony. It's in little cryptic abbreviations that you can only know if you've been there and you've been initiated.

This is sort of a memory aid. I assume it's something like the first letter of each word in this little ceremonial saying that they have when they get together. They've got the Grand Poobah up here in the front and they've got the Assistant Grand Poobah.

Each one of them has a little different thing to say. You walk in a circle and you do this and the other. They've got this little set of rituals.

It's knowledge. It's insider knowledge. You have to join the group.

You have to be initiated. You learn the mysteries of whatever this is, the Masons or whatever. Some people in my family background have been up here, 32nd degree Mason and this kind of thing.

You find these little booklets with this cryptic information. They had all of this knowledge that other people didn't have. I think as a part of this you kind of look around and say, I'm a 32nd degree Poobah here and I've got the little book and I'm the only one that can read it.

I can go in there and recite the stuff. Well, where is the eternal fruit? This is kind of a radical case. We're talking about how do you discern truth from error.

That's what Paul is talking about. How do you discern, Janelle brought up during the break, how they train treasury agents and others to spot counterfeit money. They don't show them a whole bunch of counterfeit money.

They train them to recognize a genuine dollar bill or a genuine 20 or a genuine 100. Of course, they've got these new funny looking ones with the overgrown portrait and the foil stripped through the middle and all of these new watermarks and sophisticated ways of keeping them from being counterfeited. But the way to spot counterfeit money is to study the real thing.

Well, knowledge alone is not the real thing. You can be a theologian and yet still be carried away in error if all it is is knowledge. Because it's knowledge of the Father.

It's not knowledge of theology. It's not knowledge of the Bible. You can memorize huge sections of scripture and still be carried away in error.

Look at the pharisees. Memorize the law of Moses. Could quote you chapter and verse, rattle off the Ten Commandments and the regulations for a priest and the proper way to do a sacrifice and make a nitpick about whether or not you ought to do this or that with the skin and this or that with the knife and this or that with the entrails and how much of it ought to go here and there and argue and haggle over fine points of the law and yet be carried away in error.

It's not just knowledge. It's not just how many verses can you quote or have you been through the Bible program and can you tell what each book is about and so forth. You may not be considered by yourself or anyone else to be a great knowledgeable person as far as the Bible goes.

How knowledgeable are we of the Father? How knowledgeable are we of the Father's plan? Of the Father's heart? What He longs for? What He has called us to? What pleases Him in His children? That's the knowledge that saves us. That's the knowledge that delivers us. That's the gospel of Christ that as believers delivers us out of this present evil age and gives our lives an eternal weight of glory.

It's knowing what pleases the Father. When we set our minds on things above, we're not saying, well, I've got to go learn eschatology and become a master of the things future in the plan of God. It means because that's where the Father is and that's where the Son is and that's where the Holy Spirit was sent from, bringing us the ability to understand these things that are above.

I was trying to figure out a birthday present for my brother. He lives in another city. He lives in another state.

I don't get over to his house often to look around and say, well, he could really use a holder for a platter or a certain kind of an implement or he could really use an air pod or he could really use an American flag. Those are my two favorite gifts when I was single or somebody was getting married. You could always give him an American flag.

Anybody establishing a household probably didn't have one. I thought, what a great gift. Be sure everybody's got an American flag.

Well, I happen to know my brother already has a flag, so I couldn't figure out what to get him. I could go try to get a bunch of knowledge. I could go in and do a reconnaissance of his house, try to make a visit and go by and see what appliances he does and does not have, what he does and doesn't have by way of tools and so forth.

But it was easy for me to pick a gift for my brother because I know him. I've known him since he was little. I've known him since he was born.

I know the kind of individual that he is. Although they don't make this particular piece of software for the Macintosh, I got him a piece of software that was very much in tune with his psyche and the things that he's liked ever since he was a little boy. I don't know if you've seen this software, but it's called Army Man.

It's a game you play on a computer, but it says, I forget what the slogan is, something about real combat plastic men. These little plastic men, when somebody gets killed on the screen, there's not all this blood and gore like you get in a lot of the things. They're plastic men, so they melt or they shatter or they do what a little plastic army man would do.

It's really an interesting, you've got a little squad leader there, and if he gets shot, these little plastic pieces just start chipping away. He's running around and he's just like a real army man. My point is that if you know the person, you don't have to know a lot of details.

A lot of us have relatives and friends. If you know them, maybe you haven't been to their house in a long time, but you can recognize something that will appeal to them because you know them. We know what pleases the father because we know the father.

We may not know all the chapter and verse, and occasionally we may find it embarrassing that we can't quote a chapter and verse to defend a particular decision that we're making. We can't

write a theological paper about why we're doing what we're doing. We don't have to.

If we set our minds on things above, we will know the father, and we see the reflection of the father in the son, and we look at Jesus Christ and the way he lived his life and how he set his priorities, and we'll know how to please the father because we know him. Learning about Jesus Christ, growing in grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, is the way to know how to please the father because we come to know his heart. How do we do that? What are the specific things we can set our minds on? It goes beyond just academic knowledge.

It's not knowing how to decipher the little secret book. It's not being able to overwhelm somebody with the fact that we happen to know that in a particular verse there's a particular Greek word that changes the face of the thing, and we know what the verse really means and other people do not. This borders on the masonic lodge approach to Christianity where we've got the inside track, we've got the secret knowledge, we're among the fraternity that's been initiated into the mysteries of what it really says and what it really means.

If we start finding this attitude cropping up, we are just as much in the weeds as anybody else that has missed the point of Christianity. The point is that we set our minds on what pleases the father, not on what impresses or amazes those around us. So what are those things? We've already seen in Psalm 16:11 that the things that reflect glory, the things that reflect eternal joy, eternal pleasure in the presence of God are at the right hand of God, and of course Jesus Christ is at the right hand of the father.

You might also look at Psalm 110:1, also an Old Testament passage, also one with which everyone we're studying here in Colossians would have been familiar with. Psalm 110:1. This is a messianic psalm. It's an announcement of the Messiah's reign.

That's how it's labeled in the New King James. It is a psalm of David, and it starts out, The Lord said to my Lord, sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet. This is a verse that was quoted by the Lord Jesus Christ himself to his contemporaries.

How can David call him his Lord if he is his son? This is a question the Pharisees should have been able to answer, and they could not because they didn't really understand God's plan. They didn't really understand God's word. They didn't really understand God's heart.

How can David say to his son, you are my Lord? This is the crux that Jesus brings up this verse in context. But this is a truth contained in the Old Testament, that the Messiah is going to sit at the father's right hand for a period of time. David calls the Messiah his Lord, and yet the Messiah is David's son.

That's the point Jesus brings out of this verse. What we see here is David reminding us that God the Father, the Lord, has said to my Lord, God the Son, sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet. So in Colossians chapter 3, when Paul goes out of his way to

remind us that when we set our minds and when we seek those things that are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of the Father, this tells us something.

This is a reference back to the Old Testament. How do we know he's seated at the right hand of the Father? The Old Testament tells us that he is, and he's going to remain there forever? No, for a set period of time until his enemies are made his footstool. This is a temporary condition.

It is a reminder to us that there is a future that we look forward to. There's a movement in the future. This is not setting our minds on the streets of gold.

This is not setting our minds on the pearly gates, on some static eternal future. Jesus Christ is seated at the right hand of the Father temporarily. It's not a permanent condition.

And it is a reminder to us, when is he not going to be seated at the right hand of the Father? When he stands up and returns and comes to get us. And ultimately, when that last 70th week of Daniel is going to take place, and then he's going to return to earth and resurrect the Old Testament saints and deliver them. It is a reminder to us, when we set our minds on things above, when we seek those things that are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of the Father, he's not going to sit there forever.

There is a day coming when he's going to stand and return. So when we think about Christ seated at the right hand of the Father, we know that reminds us of his return. Because he's only going to sit there until his enemies have made his footstool.

And then he's going to return and he's going to reign. When we set our minds on things above, when we think about Christ seated there, it's inevitably got to remind us of his return. It reminds us of what he toasted with the disciples in the upper room.

When he said, I will not drink this cup again until I drink it new with you in the kingdom. I'm going to go away, and where I'm going you cannot come, but I'm going to go prepare a place for you. If I go, I will come again and receive you to myself so that where I am, there you may be also.

And so he accomplished his work. He ascended into heaven and he is seated at the right hand of the Father. But there is a clock ticking.

There is a deadline moving ever closer. With every tick of the clock, with every passing second and minute, we're closer and closer to the time when Jesus Christ will return. That's our hope.

That's our expectation. That's our motivation. When we think about the things above, when we think about Christ seated at the right hand of the Father, we remember at the same time that that is a temporary condition.

He doesn't say set your mind on the eternal throne of God where he is seated in glory and majesty forevermore. He says think about Christ sitting at the right hand. There is more to come

in the plan of God regarding Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ is currently in a phase of the Father's plan, and then it's going to change. Keep in mind that Jesus Christ is returning. That's what Paul says.

When you think about Christ at the right hand of the Father, think about the fact that he's coming back. That there is going to be a day when he appears. Seeking the things that are above, this is the Greek word *zateo*, look for, search for, go after, seek and find.

This is the same word that's used when Jesus says, Ask and it shall be given. Seek and you will find. Seek those things that are above.

What are the things that are above? It is the forward progress of the plan of God, the culmination of the plan of God, and the return of Jesus Christ, and the millennial reign. I say the culmination in terms of what is yet to come. I think the culmination is probably at the cross as far as the high point.

But the denouement, the fulfillment, and the enjoyment of the victory that Jesus Christ accomplished is future. So when we set our minds on things that we remind ourselves, it's like the old gospel song, this world is not my home, I'm just passing through. Jesus is at the right hand, but not for long.

His enemies will be made his footstool and he's going to return. If we live our lives in that light, it doesn't really matter how many dents are in my car. It doesn't really matter how much I spent on my suit.

It doesn't really matter what somebody down the street or down the block or during my family gathering or during my meeting or whatever, what they think of me or the way I worship or how I live or how I part my hair. Jesus Christ is sitting at the right hand of the Father and he's ready to stand up and return. That is the measure of truth.

That's the measure of priority. That's the measure of emphasis in our lives to think about the soon return of Jesus Christ. The return of the Lord Jesus Christ for us is no farther away than the end of our life.

Because at the point that my life is over here, I will be face-to-face with Christ. I believe that that will be at the rapture. I don't think I'm going to float around in a disembodied form.

I don't think I'm going to be stuffed into an interim body. I don't think I'm going to be up in some interim bosom, heavenly realm place, some place twiddling my thumbs, absent from the body, face-to-face with the Lord. When my soul and spirit leave this clay, I will be on my way up.

I'll be looking down on those who are alive and remain. If I pass away before the Lord returns, then I get to go first. All those believers who have passed away, they're going to be looking down

at the tops of our heads as they ascend to meet Christ.

Then those who are alive and remain will be lifted up and joined together. Paul says, so shall we ever be with the Lord. You want to know how you're going to be with the Lord? It's at the rapture.

It's at the return of Jesus Christ, the resurrection of church-age saints. Seven years before, the same thing happens for those who are a part of the age of Israel. Equally glorious, equally wonderful, different part of God's plan.

This is what we think about. Does it really matter, this circumstance that I face? What is the perspective? Sure, I have to cope. I have to accomplish my responsibilities.

But we can keep everything in perspective when we set our minds on things above. When we are seeking, when we set as our goal and our standard of measure the things that are above. Because those things above are going to be coming back down here to earth.

That's what we're going to live under for a thousand years and beyond. Not the temporary fleeting opinions of people. Not the temporary fleeting impression that we leave on others in our generation or in our periphery.

But the eternal standard of an eternal, almighty God. And the Savior who currently sits at his right hand. We find this emphasized in the Old Testament, as I pointed out.

Psalms 16, 110 and Psalm 110, 1. Look at Psalm 17, verses 14 and 15. Psalm 17, verses 14 and 15. David contrasts the earthly and the eternal with your hand from men, O Lord.

He says, deliver my life from the wicked with your sword, with your hand. Deliver me from men, O Lord, from men of the world who have their portion in this life. And whose belly you fill with your hidden treasure.

They are satisfied with children and leave the rest of their possession for their maids. This section of Psalm 17, although it seems a little cryptic in the New King James English. He's talking about David's confidence that the eternal God will deliver him in an eternal way from temporary men with their temporary goals.

He says, they have their portion in this life. They are satisfied with children. They say, boy, isn't this wonderful that I've got kids.

But when they die, everything they've worked for, all of their possession and the fact that they had children, perishes with them. They're dead and gone. Where is their eternal heritage? David says, I will be satisfied with my portion before you forever.

I will be reflecting your glory in your deliverance of me from these temporary men eternally. So David contrasts that viewpoint in Psalm 17, 14 and 15. The things that are below and the things

that are above.

Same thing in Psalm 72, verses 24 through 28. We won't look at all of these passages, but David says here, actually this is a psalm of Asaph in Psalm 73. He says in verse 23 of Psalm 73, I am continually with you.

You hold me by my right hand. You will guide me with your counsel and afterward receive me to glory. Asaph remembers that after this life is over and he's been guided by the counsel of the Lord, he's going to be received into glory.

Whom have I in heaven but you? There is none upon earth that I desire beside you. My flesh and my heart fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. For indeed those who are far from you shall perish.

You have destroyed all those who desert you for idolatry. But it is good for me to draw near to God. I have put my trust in the Lord God so that I may declare all your works.

The implication there is that that's forevermore. So this is an Old Testament. This is a concept and a principle documented in the Old Testament.

Same thing in Proverbs 15, 24, which I will let you look at. It's a single verse, but it contrasts the things that are above and the things that are in Sheol. Jesus talks about this in Matthew 6, verses 19 and 20.

He talks about lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven. Not on earth where moth and rust corrupt and where thieves break in and steal. We're familiar with that.

Same thing in Luke 12, 33. That one is not visited as often, but the same idea in different words is communicated there. In Luke 12, verse 33, Jesus is talking and he says, Do not fear, little flock, for it is your father's good pleasure to give to you the kingdom.

Sell what you have and give alms. Provide yourselves money bags which do not grow old, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail. Where no thief approaches nor moth destroys.

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. So when we look at things above, we recognize that's where our treasure is. That's where the things of value are.

Our Savior is at the right hand of the Father. Our future with him is in heaven. Our citizenship is in heaven.

Philippians chapter 3, verse 20. Palatuma. There's been whole studies done on that concept.

It's a hapax legomena. Our palatuma, our citizenship is in heaven. There's a lot you can say about that in terms of these retired soldiers who were granted Roman citizenship even though they didn't live in the Roman Empire.

They had citizenship privileges given to them as a reward for their service as mercenary soldiers in the Roman army. And this palatuma privilege was something that was granted them because of faithful service. And even though they didn't live in Rome, they enjoyed the privileges of a Roman citizen.

And Rome would reach out and bless them as it were because of, in the same way that Paul is delivered from prison based on his Roman citizenship, even though he's down there in Israel. 2 Corinthians 4, verses 17 and 18 reminds us that these things above are invisible. 2 Corinthians 4, 17.

Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Is that our reality? When we're faced with affliction, do we remember and do we concentrate on the fact that it's momentary and it's light compared to the eternal weight of glory that we have the opportunity to seize and lay hold of in that affliction? It's easy for us to focus on the details of the affliction. Look at how I am suffering.

Look at how I am abused. Look at how I am neglected. How I am unappreciated.

How I am misunderstood. How I am wrongfully accused or how I am denigrated or how I am hurt or somehow wounded, injured. Anything you want to put in that circumstance that constitutes affliction.

We make a choice when we face a test of that nature. Are we going to concentrate on woe is me? It's the reverse side of the coin from the kind of worship that focuses exclusively on how I feel. Another Barbra Streisand song, I love the way he makes me feel.

What a rotten way to look at a love relationship. Well, I love him because I love the way he makes me feel. It's kind of a pretty melody for that song, but the words are just atrocious.

I love the way he makes me feel. If he ever stops making me feel that way, well, I wouldn't get a nickel for him. But because I'm feeling good, why, this is a wonderful romance.

We have worship and Christianity that is based on how it makes us feel. And we focus on how we feel when things are good. Well, the odd verse of that is in affliction, am I going to concentrate on how I feel? Am I going to have a subjective Christianity in the negative area as well as the positive? Paul says, remember, this is a momentary light affliction.

And it works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Look at verse 18. While we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen.

For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal. And when you see that seen and not seen language, it puts us in mind of Hebrews. Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

This is another way of saying that we live the life of faith. We are confident that God is faithful and will not forget our dedication to the things which are above, our focus on the things which are above. And that it may look like we are going to be short-changed in this life, but this is only temporary.

Same thing in Hebrews chapter 10 and verse 34, where it talks about concentrating on our enduring possession in heaven. Hebrews chapter 11, verses 13-16, where it talks about all these died in faith, not having received the fulfillment of the promise. Abraham dwelt in tents because he was looking for a city whose founder and builder is God.

Abraham had his eyes and his mind on things above, not on things on the earth. Again, in his best days and when he was establishing the example that the scripture points to. He had his failures as we do.

But he is forever on record in the word of God as a man who refused to build a city, who refused to settle down because he knew that God was going to build him a city. And God was going to give him a land that had been promised. And he didn't expect it to necessarily be in this lifetime.

And he was content to wait for God to establish that's a thing above. Ephesians chapter 1 tells us that God has in Christ given us all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places, in the heavenlies. Philippians chapter 3 and verse 14 is a reminder to us of our upward call.

I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. If you ever climbed a hill, you know that you don't look at your feet when you're climbing a hill. You look up.

If you're on a high place, especially if you have some sort of phobia of heights, you get vertigo. Everybody tells you don't look down. Don't look below, keep your gaze pointed upward.

When you're climbing a very, very tall ladder, I had to do this when we had our Christmas decorations. And a tall ladder I got from Paul Stanton that had been hanging outside. I don't know how sturdy it is, but it's amazing.

It doesn't look very high from the ground, but when you're up there teetering on the top of it, it feels really high. Well, I don't look down, I look up. I concentrate on the things above, not on the things below.

I can't afford to concentrate on things below because it messes up my attitude. This is what we're encouraged to do in Philippians 3. Paul gives himself as an example. He says, I don't count myself to have apprehended.

The one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead. What are the things that are ahead? It's the eternal weight of glory awaiting for us. It's guaranteed by the presence of Jesus Christ, who is a human being, who is acceptable in

the sight of God, who is sitting at God's right hand, with whom we are united.

Whatever philosophy, whatever twist of Christianity gets floated our direction, these are the things to concentrate on. You cannot go far wrong. We will not be led astray if we remember Jesus Christ sitting at the right hand of the Father.

If we remember that the standard by which we are measured in our daily decisions, in our motivations, in the thoughts and intents of our heart, is who are we trying to please? Are we trying to just ascertain the facts so that we can get our circumstances to come out well? Or are we seeking those things which are above? The things that are true and noble and of good report. The things that are sterling and of eternal quality in the eyes of God. It doesn't matter what the opinions, it doesn't matter what the outcomes are in this life.

People might judge John the Baptist a failure because he was imprisoned and beheaded for what he said and what he did. But in God's eyes, Jesus Christ said, man born of woman, there's none greater than John. Well, John had his eyes on things beyond whether or not he would be in prison, whether or not Herod and his pseudo-wife would be ticked off by what he said.

He did his job of pointing the way to the Savior, pointing the way to the Lamb of God. And he didn't worry about the consequences. We say, well, but he was John the Baptist.

Or look at the apostles who were martyred for their faith. Well, they were apostles. We have an equal opportunity and an equal calling.

And in our own way to treat the things of this life as dung, as refuse. As Paul says, I count anything in this life as refuse for the sake of Christ. Where are Paul's eyes when he's in prison getting beaten without just cause, wrongly, illegally? As a Roman citizen, he could have many times have claimed his rights.

He's got his eyes on things above. If we maintain this perspective, we are a success. It doesn't take cute books and programs and seminars and stadiums full of people and all the other permutations that have cropped up in Christianity to know what is true and right requires concentrating on the Lord Jesus Christ and the truth is revealed about him in the Word.

When we're doing that, we're on the straight and narrow. We're on the narrow path that leads to life. We need to take heart and take confidence and recognize, as David did, the joy and the eternal pleasures that await us at the right hand of God the Father.

This is what Paul encourages his audience, which includes us, to consider in Colossians 3, seeking and setting our mind on those things above. Because in verse 3, he says, That's where we'll pick up when we resume our study of Colossians next week. What does it mean to have our life hidden with Christ in God? Let's close in prayer.

Father, we thank you for the deliverance that you have given us in grace through our Savior

Jesus Christ. We're delivered out of this present evil age. We're delivered out of superficiality, out of the often meaningless pursuit of temporary things in this life.

We pursue, seize, and lay hold of eternal things through the grace that you've given us. We pray that these things will live in our hearts and motivate us and guide us aright, that we will ask and seek and knock and lay hold of these things day by day through the power that you've given us in your Word and through your Spirit. We pray these things in the name of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen.