

99-01-22a Colossians

As we prepare to resume our study tonight in the Epistle to the Colossians, let's take a moment to pause and clear our minds of the distractions of the day and of the week, to seek to be sensitive to the ministry of God the Holy Spirit as we meditate on God's Word, shall we pray? We thank you, Father, for your grace toward us each and every day, expressed in so many ways. You maintain the environment around us. The sun rises.

The provision is in place for us every day that we so often take for granted. We are brought to the place this evening where we can assemble with believers of like mind and gather to study your Word and to be nourished and enriched in our souls through the ministry of your Spirit. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will enlighten us and give us insight and perception of these things, not only to understand them at an academic level, but to see the implications and the meaning that it has for us as we seek to live in the light of your grace.

We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. We resume tonight in Colossians chapter 3, and we have come to a turning point in Paul's argument.

You will remember that in the first two chapters, Paul has established the fallacy of the false teaching, the false perspectives, the twisted truth that is swirling in the environment of his audience. He has reminded them of the fundamental truth about the Savior, about the Lord Jesus Christ, who He is, where He stands, and it is our connection with Him as believers that defines us, that establishes us, that vindicates us, and nothing else. If your vindication and your worth and your standing before God is established in Jesus Christ, what else do you need? That's fundamentally Paul's argument.

He reminds us of this because people are seeking to hook into the guilt or the feelings of inadequacy or the desire to be favorably looked upon by others. All of us have this built into our nature. All of us.

All of us have this in our nature. It's a part of being a human being in a fallen world with a fallen nature. We seek approval.

Look at any psychological text. Our administrative assistant where I work today had her car broken into in the parking garage. Somebody broke the driver's side window of her minivan and reached in.

The thing that she was in tears about was that she's on a very tight budget and she had just purchased all of her books for college. She's going to Dallas Baptist University and all of her books were on psychology. There were \$300 worth of books in there and they were all stolen.

A couple of other cars were broken into. But before the end of the day, just right before we left this afternoon, the books were found a couple of blocks away. In this collection of books was her

address book and they figured out how to get a hold of her.

She was so grateful that that expenditure was not lost. Obviously when you think about deductibles on car insurance and so forth, a lot of times you can't recover a loss like that. But those books, I saw the stack of books and it reminded me of all the psychology books I've had to wade through.

Any perspective you want, you can go into Skinner or Freud or any of the other psychology guys. All of them have observed the same thing. We have an innate, inborn, natural desire for approval.

It's one of the basic drives of humankind. Well, people have figured this out and it's going to be something that is attractive as a target for people to shoot their harpoons at as they try to manipulate us or try to bring us on board for their program or their scheme. However well-intentioned they may be, however altruistic their motive is, sooner or later if someone is pushing something other than biblical truth, they're going to have to find a way to make it appealing and attractive.

They're going to have to find a hook or a niche in our soul that this is going to somehow seem to fill. A lot of times they're going to fumble around in there until they find some insecurity, some feeling of inadequacy, a feeling of guilt. All of us have cracks in our pots.

I heard somebody say we're all psychoceramics. We're cracked pots. The Bible says that we are earthen vessels that carry this great treasure from God.

This is like the chink in the armor, the Achilles heel that's going to attempt to be exploited. Paul knows this. He says, what is the truth that fills all cracks, that satisfies all needs, that renders us perfect and whole and complete? It's the truth of our standing in Jesus Christ.

The thing that strikes me, it's always great to be doing more than one study at the same time in the Word of God because no matter how far apart you think they may be, you inevitably find the self-consistency, the internal consistency of God's Word, and you see things that complement each other in any two or three studies you might be doing. We're studying Genesis on Sundays. We're in Genesis 17 where the rite of circumcision has been instituted by God as a sign of the covenant.

In connection with that study, we have noted that there is a physical circumcision, there's a literal circumcision involving the flesh, and yet there is a more profound and more meaningful circumcision in the heart that it represents. God's command to Abraham and to his seed is that this sign of circumcision, this outward thing that is accomplished even as a child, you can be eight days old as a male and be circumcised, but this is a sign, this is a reminder. It's something that's supposed to bring the covenant relationship with God to mind so that Israelites will make it a reality in their soul.

There is, in fact, a covenant established with God. Now, because of that fact, make it a living reality in your heart. So there is a positional truth of covenant relationship with God, and then there is the living out or the making real and implementing of that fact so that not only are you a son of God, but you are a son indeed.

You're a son in the true and deep sense of the word, a chip off the old block, a reflection of the character and the truth of the Father. We find the same thing here. Paul often in his letters talks about positional truth.

We are dead to sin and alive to God in Christ. We are heirs of all the spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. We are pre-designated as co-rulers and co-heirs with Christ.

All of that is positional, and then the exhortation is, these things are accomplished facts that God has done for us. Live in the light of those. Make them true.

If you have been adopted into a royal house, a royal family, if you've been adopted by the king like Moses was when he was adopted into Pharaoh's family, you have a choice. You can take that for granted and disregard it and live just like any other person, or you can live like you belong to the royal family. You can learn the customs and the procedures and the responsibilities and learn to faithfully and properly execute the authority that comes to you because you are brought into that royal house.

That's our responsibility. We've been adopted into the family of God, into the plan and program of God. It's a fact, but we can still live as though we weren't.

There's all kinds of stories, the prince and the pauper and all these others, about what it means to not only have the designation, but to live out that truth. We just saw the movie, and I can't speak French, but *Les Misérables*. We saw that this past week, and that's another great story about someone who is imprisoned and who is branded as a criminal, and yet who has a change of heart.

Someone on the outside is constantly believing that you haven't changed, that once bad, always bad, and so forth. There is a responsibility to live up to your truest and finest self, regardless of what others may think. All of these things enter into Paul's argument in the first two chapters.

He says, you are in Christ. Christ is the issue. Christ is acceptable.

Christ is the bridge between man and God. Christ has satisfied the righteousness and justice of the Father, and you are alive in Him. He died the death to sin.

He lives a life to God. You're in Him, so you share that same status, therefore. There's a big therefore that constitutes the first three verses of chapter three.

If then you were raised with Christ, how should you then live? How can you convert this from

positional truth, from declarative truth in the mind of God, to experiential, actual truth that's borne out in daily life? Seek those things which are above, where Christ is. If you are one with Christ, if you share all of His accomplishments before the Father and His standing before the Father, His future and the Father's plan, then keep your eyes on Him. Do what He does.

Live like He lived. This is turning from the theological arguments and the logical arguments to practical exhortation. If these things are true, then here's what needs to happen.

All of Paul's letters, especially in the latter half, after he has made the doctrinal points, the points of principle, and has reminded us of promises and of statements of God's truth, he then says, in the light of this, here's what ought to happen in the practical realm. We're right at that bridge or that turning point in this letter. If you were raised with Christ, seek the things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.

We explored the richness of meaning that that short statement has. What does it mean that Christ is sitting at the right hand of the Father as a human being, acceptable in God's sight? He's sitting there for a time. It's an Old Testament reference.

Sit thou at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool. Jesus Christ is going to return. Paul is going to refer to that more explicitly in future verses.

He puts, set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

This idea of death, this is a restatement and a summary of the positional truth that he's presented in the first two chapters, isn't it? He doesn't say, even like he does to the Romans, consider yourself dead to sin and alive to God. Do not any longer yield your members as instruments or weapons of unrighteousness. He says, you died.

It's just a simple declarative statement of fact. You died. Where does he get that? Well, he spent the first two chapters establishing our union with Christ and his death.

His being cut off from sin and resurrected to a new and eternal life to God. Your life is hidden with Christ in God. Now, we could dwell on the positional truth here, but I think we all pretty well understand what this means.

Our challenge is to convert that understanding into practical outcome, into something that makes a difference two hours from now, 12 hours from now, 24 hours from now, over the next few days, over the next few weeks, for the rest of our lives. It ought to make a difference. If positional truth doesn't do anything for us, unless it changes our perspective and causes us to live differently, and Paul knows that, and so he's now going to get right down where the tires hit the pavement.

This is where it all either happens or doesn't happen for us. So, starting in verse 5, this is the

practical section of the letter to the Colossians. Therefore, he's already made his logical argument, if then you were raised, you need to seek, you need to set your mind, you need to look at eternal things, not temporary things.

Therefore, put to death your members which are on the earth. There is a slight change that needs to be made to that translation, because although some manuscripts have the word your, the best manuscripts do not. It's a real interesting, at least it's interesting to me, it may just bore other people to tears, but when there's a textual problem, it's very fascinating to me to look at the evidence, to see which manuscripts have what reading.

I don't mean to leave the impression that there are so many manuscripts that have so many different readings. There are over 6,000 Greek manuscripts of the New Testament, in whole or in part, and their agreement is better than 99%. It's amazing the agreement that there is, but inevitably because of human copying procedures, there are going to be omissions and additions.

Some people think God needed a little help saying what he wanted to say, and so they try to clarify it. They'll add a little word here or a phrase there, or they'll be absentmindedly copying, and they look over at the verse, and they start copying on a fresh manuscript, and there's a very similar verse in another book that may have another phrase, and they'll inadvertently include that phrase that has actually come from a similar verse. This is real common between Ephesians and Colossians, because they're written around the same time, the thoughts and phraseology are real similar, and you'll find things creeping in, and it's a scribal error.

There's nothing intrinsically wrong with what is said, because you can find it other places in the Bible, but it's just not a part of that particular passage. Well, here, the word your is not there, and it really does make a difference here. This literally says, put to death the members which are on the earth.

And I think it's important to point this out, because when it says your members on the earth, then it starts saying fornication, uncleanness. You can say, I don't have any fornication members. I don't have these awful idolatry and terrible covetousness and these other things.

These aren't my members on the earth. And it seems to limit it to just what we may perpetrate, what we may have in our heart, or some failure or some opportunity that we might have. But this is put to death the members, and this widens the responsibility beyond just our personal life.

We have a responsibility to keep these things out of the church. Look at 1 Corinthians chapter 5, which is where we will be a little bit later tonight. The man who was engaged in a relationship with his father's wife, his stepmother.

Paul says, you all ought to have put this out of your church. You should have broken fellowship and expunged this. And this is a reminder to us that we not only have personal responsibility, which is implied if you take the translation your members, but the members.

This is any manifestation of these fleshly things that rear their head. We've got to find a way to cope with it. Now it doesn't always mean find the guilty party and expel them, excommunicate them, banish them, give them the silent treatment or whatever.

But we've got to put it to death. We have to put an end to it. Just like, and this is very similar, in fact I think Paul has probably got in the back of his mind, or the Holy Spirit does, what Jesus said about if your eye offends you, pluck it out.

If your hand offends you, cut it off. If your foot offends you, cut it off. If it causes you to stumble, if it is acting like an earthly member, if it is trending you and pulling you in the direction of these evils, you've got to put it to death.

This word for member, *mele*, m-e-l-e in Greek, is the word used for hands and feet and your appendages and your body parts. Put to death your parts that take you in these directions. The parts.

It could be yours, it could be someone else's. We have a responsibility to encourage one another unto love and good works. And to put to death, to pour water on these fires of passion and so forth, that tend toward evil.

Well, what exactly does this get us into here? It's easy to say put it to death, but what are we really talking about? Well, this word put to death is the Greek verb *nekro*, n-e-k-r-o-o. And those are the two different o's in Greek. You have omicron and you have omega.

And so you have *nekro*, the first o of those last two there is an omicron and the last one is an omega. When we transliterate this in English, a lot of times we'll put n-e-k-r-o-w. And the w stands for the long o in Greek, which is omega.

Nekro. *Nekro* is the verb form. We have nouns.

Nekros, which means dead. *Nekrosis*, which means death. You have this coming over in English, not necessarily in happy forms, but *necrophilia* comes to mind, people that get a fixation on dead bodies and want to party with them and so forth.

Nekrosis is a medical term for the dying of your flesh and that sort of thing. You can have *necrosis* take place around a spider bite. Spider venom will kill the flesh around the bite.

If you've ever had a spider bite or seen somebody with a spider bite, gracious sakes, the flesh dies and decays right on your living body. It's a terrible thing. But *necrosis* is the root of these words and it has to do with death.

In the King James, it says, Mortify your members. Put them to death. Interestingly, the verb *nekrosis* only occurs three times in the New Testament.

You would think it would just be all over the place. And the word for dead and death occurs more often. But nekrosis is a verb that only occurs three times.

Here and two other places. And the other two places both refer to Abraham. Who is the study of our subject or whom we have studied in Genesis with regard to his age and his inability to father children from a human point of view.

So you find this in Romans 4.19. We remember Romans 4 as the chapter that talks about Abraham as the example of righteousness by faith as a believer. Right in the heart of Romans. Also Hebrews 11.12. Both of those passages use nekrosis to talk about Abraham's body.

And if you go to either one of those, we won't turn there tonight because we've got a lot of ground to cover. But you can look at Romans 4.19 and look at Hebrews 11.12 and it is used there as it is here. In English translations it kind of smooths it out.

He said he considered himself to be dead or some such thing. It doesn't say he considered himself dead. It says his body was dead.

It just flat out uses the verb and says his body was dead. Well obviously he was walking around having conversations with God, fathering Isaac and so forth. And he wasn't dead in the sense of no breath in his body.

But the Bible says in Romans 4.19 and Hebrews 11.12 that Abraham's body was... Actually in both places it's in the perfect tense. It had been put to death or it had died. His body had died.

And what does it mean? You can be alive and walking around and yet you're dead in that sense. You cannot bear fruit. You cannot give birth to a new life.

That's the idea. It's the same thing here. We are to put to death these members.

It doesn't mean we're going to literally kill our body. Our body can still be walking around. We can still be living in an earthly world.

We can still be associating with other human beings, with fallen natures and so forth. But it means don't let anything spring to life from this. Don't let it give birth to anything.

Don't let it generate fruit. Don't let these things generate issues. Don't let it grow and function in any meaningful way.

These things are going to exist. Just like Abraham existed. But his body could produce no fruit.

It didn't generate any issue. Nothing came forth from him when he was dead in that way. It wasn't until God put supernatural life in him that he fathered a child.

The same thing here. When you put to death your members, and this puts to rest, by the way, the

sort of spurious arguments. Should we really pluck out our eyes? Should we really cut off our hand? If you put these members to death, they do not produce anything.

They don't give birth to anything. They don't generate anything. If you have to pluck out an eye or cut off a hand or a foot, if you're going to put to death a member, that means anything that produces this list of things we're about to see, get rid of it.

Neutralize it. Make it ineffective. Render it harmless.

Render it useless. That's the idea. That's necro.

The noun form that I mentioned, necrosis, only occurs a couple of times itself. By far the most common part of this word group is necros, which means dead, Christ raised from the dead, all the normal usages of dead. But necrosis is only found a couple of places.

Romans 4.19, the very same one that talks about Abraham's body, also talks about Sarah's womb, and necrosis is used to describe it. The other place that necrosis is used is real interesting. It's 2 Corinthians 4.10, where Paul talks about we're always carrying about in our body the death of the Lord Jesus.

And that death of Jesus is specifically the death to sin that Paul is talking about here in Colossians. He's dead to sin, alive to God. And Paul says we constantly remind ourselves of this very fact that he's teaching here in Colossians.

We carry that about in our body, the death of the Lord Jesus. We try to make sure that we are just as dead to sin as he was when they took him down from the cross. So it's a fascinating use because you might expect necros or some other word there, but necrosis is used there, and it harks back to this idea of fruitlessness, of non-functionality.

And with reference to the death of Christ, that specifically refers to his death to sin. Okay. Therefore put to death your members.

Why? That therefore harks back to something. Therefore put to death. What for? Why get excited about trying to expunge every form of this death that might crop up, this form of earthly fleshly function? What's the motivation? What's the reason? Why does he say therefore? Well, it goes back, doesn't it, to what he says in the first three or four verses there.

Specifically, the last two verses there, verses three and four. You died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

Remember when we looked at verse one, when it talked about Christ sitting at the right hand of the Father. It's an Old Testament reference back to the Psalms. Sit thou at my right hand, till I make your enemies your footstool.

When the enemies are defeated, when the enemies are made to footstool, which is the 70th week of Daniel, the tribulation period, the battle of Armageddon and so forth, then Christ will return to Israel. Of course, before the 70th week, at the beginning and the rapture, Christ will appear for us. But he's going to get up from the right hand of the Father to come get us.

And then all those 70th week things are going to happen and then he's going to come down and spend the next thousand years on earth ruling over his father David's kingdom. So this is put forward as a reason all the way from verse one through verse four. He says you're bound together to Christ.

Your life is in Christ. Your destiny is with Christ. Christ is going to appear and you're going to appear with him.

Therefore, put to death these members. It's because Christ is going to appear. Now what do we typically think of when we think of the return of Christ? What is it that puts us in that mind? I can tell you one thing that puts us in my mind is when I think about the fact that I have two daughters who in a few years are going to be teenagers.

And I think about the world and all the things that are potential dangers and snares and pitfalls and sources of pain and potential stumbling blocks and so forth. All of the terrible influences in the world and in their generation. And I think, boy, I sure hope the Lord comes back before they hit 16.

I sure hope the Lord comes back before we get into the dating mode and so forth. And I think about deliverance. And I think a lot of us think about the return of Jesus Christ as deliverance.

And we think, if I can just hang on until the deliverance. If I can survive the tests and make it through the challenges until the day of deliverance. And we look for it as the day of rescue.

And that's fine, I think, and legitimate. But Paul gives us another thing to think about in terms of the return of Christ. When we think about the return of Christ, it ought to motivate us to live in a particular way now.

When we think about the return of Christ, it's not just deliverance from testing, deliverance from trial, deliverance from suffering. It is also the day of reckoning. It is the time of recompense, of things being set right.

It is the day of vindication. And every time we think about the returning of Christ, it ought to change the way we think about today. It ought to change the way we think about, what are my thoughts right now? What is my motivation right now? What is going on in my mind and my heart right now? This is the good application and the proper understanding, I think, of the idea of the imminency of the rapture.

There's been all kinds of funny arguments made about whether or not the return of Christ is genuinely imminent or if there aren't some things that had to be in place and He could not really have come back last week because not everything is in readiness for prophecy to be fulfilled. To me, that is angels dancing on the head of a pin. The Bible tells us, when you think about the return of the Lord, think about how you ought to be living in the light of it.

That is a beacon. It is a lighthouse standing in the future, shining its light back to us, guiding us in a certain direction. And every time we think about the return of the Lord, it ought to remind us that we are living in a certain way.

What does the Bible say about the appearing of Christ? Take a look at 1 Corinthians 15. All of this idea about the death of the body and so forth, and yet our body is not yet truly dead. We're supposed to be thinking about life in Christ and yet we haven't actually seized and laid hold of that life.

How can we convert? It's just like physical circumcision moving into the realm of spiritual circumcision. How can we convert these spiritual truths to reality? Look at 1 Corinthians 15. This is another one of those chapters that just by hearing its location, we should know what it is.

There are some chapters you should just know. 1 Corinthians 13 is the love chapter. Romans 4 is the Abraham righteousness by faith chapter.

Hebrews 11 is the faith chapter. John 3 is the great dialogue with Nicodemus about being born again. There are just some chapters that as believers we ought to know.

This is one of them. 1 Corinthians 15, this is the resurrection chapter. This is Paul's fullest explanation of all the things that happened as far as the resurrection of the dead, how important it is, what the nature of it is, and so forth.

When you look at 1 Corinthians 15, you get up into the 50s, and in 51 he tells you a mystery, we shall not sleep, we shall all be changed, and so forth. You get down to verse 58, the last verse in the chapter. He says, after talking all about resurrection, he says, therefore, my beloved, in the light of all this, he spent 57 verses arguing and stating and proving that the resurrection is real, that it's coming, that Jesus Christ is coming and we're going to be like Him.

Then he says, therefore, brethren, because resurrection is a fact, and the return of Christ is a fact, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord. Resurrection, the return of Christ, what does it mean? We know that our labor is not in vain. Sometimes it seems like it's in vain.

A lot of people like to go to this and say, well, it's my labor in the fields white for harvest. It's my labor in ministry. It's my labor in taking care of the needs of others.

It's my labor in evangelism or whatever. This is the labor of bringing our own hearts and minds, of taking every thought captive for Christ. It's work, but it's not in vain.

These people that come in with other ideas about how to live the Christian life, how to live a righteous or religious life, like to say, well, here's some merit in it somewhere. This is what tells us where the merit is. It's not in vain to work on our hearts and our minds because Christ is returning and there's a resurrection.

Don't think that it doesn't make a difference how well you bring your thoughts into captivity. Don't think that it doesn't make a difference whether or not you're bearing the fruit of the Spirit. Don't think it doesn't make a difference whether you are growing in the realm of patience, in the realm of long-suffering, in the realm of confidence, in the forgiveness of God, in the realm of love, in the realm of returning good for evil, where unexpected things can happen or stresses and strains and pressures can be put on and you find greater strength.

You're more relaxed. You're less reactive. You are more of a thermostat and less of a thermometer as days go by.

Don't think that that's just a waste of time or that the only benefit is to you personally. Your labor is not in vain because there's a resurrection and the Lord is returning. You find this turned like a gem in the light in different passages in the New Testament.

Look at Philippians chapter 3 and verse 20. Philippians chapter 3, when Paul is exhorting in verse 17 the brethren to join in following his example and following his pattern, there are people who he says in verse 18, Many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you, even weeping, they are the enemies of the cross of Christ. Why is Paul weeping over this? Because these people are believers.

He's not weeping over unbelievers in this passage. Many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you, even weeping, they are the enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their mind on earthly things. To set the mind on earthly things is death.

And there's an irony and a juxtaposition. We don't want to die to spiritual things and live to earthly things. We want to die to earthly things and live to spiritual things.

We have to decide where our life is. Is our life in the world? Is our life in the earthly realm? Or is our life and our citizenship in heaven? Look at verse 20. Our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body, that it may be conformed to his glorious body, according to the working by which he is able even to subdue all things to himself.

But notice the juxtaposition of ideas here. Paul says there's a pattern and an example that we

need to be following. It's the apostolic example, which is in turn the Christ example of dying to sin, dying to the flesh, and living to God.

There are many who don't walk that way. Paul weeps over them and says they're enemies of the cross. Their end is destruction because they set their mind on earthly things.

Now this is not the problem with unbelievers, is it? This is a problem for believers who don't recognize their sonship, their heirship, their priesthood, their calling, their adoption, their status as the many brethren that Jesus Christ is the firstborn standing in the midst. Our citizenship is in heaven, from which we eagerly wait for the Savior. The motivation to pursue that example and that walk is the eager anticipation of Christ's return.

There's an old Christian song. It will be worth it all when we see Jesus, when we look into His face. It will be worth it all when we see Christ.

And that's what we need to keep in the forefront of our mind. The warfare that we engage in will be worth it. It may not seem like it pays off in this life, that there's a sort of a success Christianity that's being preached, which is another of the perversions that says, well, you know, if you do the things that please God, it's going to pay off.

You're going to be healthy, wealthy, and wise. You're going to have prosperity. You're going to have all of these.

Well, you may not in the physical realm. You may do the right thing. You may walk with integrity and suffer financial loss.

You may suffer ostracism. You may suffer rejection. It may not pay off in this life.

Check with John the Baptist and see if his righteous walk in this life paid off handsomely as far as earthly circumstances. Check with those who lived in caves and holes in the ground, who were sawed in half, who were treated as fugitives and vagabonds in the world. Read Romans 11, the last half.

It doesn't always pay off in this life. And that's why Paul says don't measure your success and don't be looking for your satisfaction and your measure of achievement in this life. Set your mind on things above where Christ is.

When Christ appears, He will transform our lowly bodies to be conformed to His, according to His glory. Don't set your mind on earthly things, Philippians chapter 3. These ideas of following the example and dying to earthly things, we find these joined over and over again in Scripture. And it tells us that there's a motivation, there's a reason, there's a rationale.

I could stand up, some preacher could stand up, somebody could write a book or film a video and say, you know, you've got to get in there and straighten out your heart and never answer the

question, why? You've got to set your mind on things above because the Bible tells me so. There's a reason, there's a rationale. We need grist for the mill of our mind.

We need to have reasons for what we do. We need to have motivation. You can tell somebody, you know, eating oat bran is really good for you.

You ought to be eating oat bran. Well, why? Well, it's good for you. You ought to do it.

It's healthy. You need to do it. Why? Well, maybe you can trot out some medical evidence and say it reduces the likelihood of colon cancer.

And then somebody will get motivated and say, oh gosh, I know somebody that got that colon cancer. That's a bad deal. They had to have so many feet removed and, you know, had to go on a strange diet and this, that and the other.

Of course, then you find out, well, guess what? We were wrong. It doesn't really care how much bulk and fiber you eat. It doesn't have anything to do with cancer.

But people will change their lifestyle if there's a reason, if there's a motivation that's sufficient in their mind to compel them to change. Sometimes the reasons aren't compelling. You can hold up a pair of old, black, diseased, collapsed lungs and say you ought not to smoke.

Well, that's not compelling to some people. It's compelling to me. I saw a picture of those ugly things when I was a child and swore I would never pick up a cigarette.

I've done a lot of bad things, but I've never picked up a cigarette. Every time I even think of it, I just see those old, black, nasty lungs and I think, that is a compelling motivation to me. Whatever else happens to me and I've messed up my back and different parts of my body in different ways, but I'm going to die with a nice, clean, healthy set of lungs.

Because something motivated me. Something was compelling enough that no amount of persuasion could steer me otherwise. We need that in the spiritual realm.

It's not enough to say you ought to do the following. You ought to keep the Ten Commandments. You ought to have love for everybody.

We're built to run on motivation. We're built to reason and to understand and to act accordingly. Well, the Bible doesn't just give us the ought-tos.

It gives us the motivation. And the motivation for putting to death the members that are on the earth, before we even look at what they are, we know, and this is what Paul does, he stacks the motivation up before he talks about what it is we're not going to do and what it is we are going to do. He puts the motivation out there and it's the Lord Jesus Christ.

He's there. He's in the heavens. He's at the right hand of the Father and He is coming back.

The extent to which we are motivated to do whatever it is Paul is going to say in chapter 3 depends entirely on how real it is to us that Jesus Christ is coming back. That He is currently seated at the right hand of the Father and that He's going to stand up and He's going to return and there's going to be things taking place when He appears. He's going to appear and we're going to be with Him.

However real that is to us, and that's why Paul spends a whole chapter in 1 Corinthians on the resurrection, arguing and persuasively stating the facts about resurrection. Why does he do that? Look at the last verse, verse 58. Therefore, brethren, this is how you ought to live.

You know the resurrection is coming. You know the Lord is coming. If this doesn't motivate you, what will? If the prospect of being face to face with the Lord Jesus Christ who died on the cross, rescued us from eternal damnation, who has extended grace after grace on us to see Him, if that doesn't motivate us, nothing will.

It's the most powerful motivation there is for a believer and that's why time and again in these passages, it's linked to how we should live. Why should I bother? Why should I try to cultivate the fruit of the Spirit? Why should it upset me if I continue to have a problem with patience or if I continue to have a problem with anger or if I continue to take pleasure in mentally torturing other people in some way, shape or form, if I backbite or I gossip about them or if I make their life uncomfortable in some way, shape or form, if I inflict myself on them, if I control them, whatever it is I do, what motivates me to change? Well, the reality of standing before the Lord Jesus Christ, the prospect of being face-to-face with Him ought to be both a negative and a positive reinforcement to live as God would have us. We're going to pause here and take our break.

When we come back, we're going to see a couple of passages in Timothy that tell us additional things about the returning of the Lord Jesus Christ and why that is such a powerful or ought to be such a powerful motivation for us. Let's pause here and take a break.