

Intro

There's a sense of beauty in living according to our design. There's a joy in living according to our function rather than against it. Like enjoying food and drink instead of saying, "*Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch.*" It's a good thing to live in light of what we are.

An eagle doesn't try to swim underwater.

A frog doesn't try to fly.

A person gifted mechanically doesn't aim to be a bank teller or a receptionist at a medical office or an attorney at law. They aim to put their skills to use in occupations like auto repair or hospital maintenance or engineering or construction. Pardon my ignorance if you're a person gifted in multiple and diverse ways. What I'm saying is a person generally follows a profession that suits their skillset. They live in light of what they are.

This morning, Paul reminds us who we are. And what that means for our lives today.

READ PASSAGE (2:20-3:4)

Body

Recap

- 1) The Christian life is all about continuing...continuing how we began...continuing with Christ at the center... continuing in faith and repentance.
- 2) The Christian life is all about moving towards maturity, completeness...no area of life untouched by God's word.
- 3) You build on the foundation...you don't stop at the foundation.
- 4) Methodology matters...there's right and wrong ways to do spirituality.

Passage Focus

This morning: where should we set our attention as we pursue completeness? And why?

Point 1: Pursue above things (3:1)

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. – 3:1

What are “the things that are above”?

1. They exist where Christ is.

Above speaks to a location. A location above the earth. A place where Jesus is presently. Dwelling at the right hand of God. Above things = the things of heaven. Activities that happen in heaven. The character of heaven. Like the love that exists between the Father and the Son. Like the worship the angels give the Father and the Son.

2. They're discussed in 3:12-17.

READ 3:12-17

This way of doing life reflects God's character and the relationships which presently exist in heaven.

3. Brief summary.

"the things that are above" are the ways in which the Trinity conduct themselves. Peace. Kindness. Joy. Purity. Holiness. And the worshipful attitude towards the Trinity. Humility. Thanksgiving.

What does seek things above mean?

Seek these characteristics. Seek these attitudes. Seek speaks of a pursuit to obtain something. Seeking what we desire. Think Herod's pursuit of the newborn Jesus. Think a treasure hunter's pursuit of gold. Think the FBI's pursuit of a killer.

Seek speaks to our pursuit of spiritual goals that we long to be true in our lives. Things like love and joy and humility and thanksgiving.

Paul says there are spiritual goals we should be pursuing.

Why seek above things?

Because *"you have been raised with Christ."* Since you were raised with Jesus (raised to newness of life, heart circumcision), pursue the character of heaven.

In other words, seek the things that fit with the nature of risen, Christian existence. In light of who you are in Christ (spiritually resurrected), go after this sort of life.

Pursue a life consistent with spiritual resurrection.

Application individual

And spiritual resurrection gives us confidence spiritual growth is possible. Newness of life = change is possible. Change is certain. Because heart circumcision.

So change is possible and even inevitable, but change requires effort (*"seek the things that are above"*). Pursuit is necessary.

Kind of like the pursuit to obtain hard to get items.

I wanted an Xbox Series X. I wanted the newest video game system so I could play the newest games with the best graphics and the best features. It was a miserable pursuit that required sustained effort and whole-hearted devotion.

The system was released on November 10, 2020. I wanted it for August, 2021. New sports games. That's nine months after it came out. It was still unavailable.

Because of COVID shutdowns, there weren't enough semiconductor chips being produced. So they couldn't make enough video game systems to keep up with demand. Additionally, scalpers use bots (software applications that speed up the online check-out process) to snag all the systems. And then sell them for \$300 extra. It's the same with Air Jordan sneakers. Impossible to buy at retail price.

I wasn't paying the scalpers, so the only way to get an Xbox Series X was to devote my life to it. Constantly checking websites for stock updates. When Walmart had a limited stock online, trying to get one the second struck 3pm or 5pm or whatever. Because of the bots, they were sold out before I started. Or maybe waiting in line all night at Best Buy in hopes I would get one. Not going to do that.

I gave up and settled for the lesser model, the Xbox Series S. What's my point?

Without devoted pursuit, I wasn't getting an Xbox Series X. Likewise, without devoted pursuit, we'll be lacking in the character of heaven.

I concluded the Xbox Series X wasn't worth the hassle. Are the things above worth your hassle?

Are they worthy of your pursuit?

Application local church

This speaks to our goals as a church. We want to be a people who pursue godliness together. We want to be a people who read our Bibles and receive the teaching of the church and come away with spiritual goals that we expend ourselves in pursuit of. The more Scripture shapes us, the more our goals conform to Scripture.

Application non-Christian

This speaks to the human problem. Disordered goals. Wrong life aims. Listening to the wrong voices.

Devoting our lives to the pursuit of Xbox Series X, Air Jordan's, etc. while never pursuing the things above.

Point 2: Ponder above things (3:2-4)

Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. – 3:2

What are “things that are on earth”?

1. “*elemental spirits of the world*”

See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ. – 2:8 (see also 2:20)

- a) philosophy = manmade worldviews, ways of thinking
 - b) according to human tradition = manmade, not from God, religious practices
 - c) worship of angels, boasting about visions (2:18)
 - d) “*Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch*” – 2:21
 - e) “*severity to the body*” – 2:23
2. They're discussed in 3:5-10.

READ 3:5-10

This way of doing life reflects fallen humanity on earth. Disordered living.

3. Brief summary.

“the things that are on earth” = fallen living. Sexual immorality. Sinful passions. Coveting. Anger. Slander. Lying. The opposite of the character of heaven.

What does set your mind on things above mean?

It means keep thinking about the things of heaven. Dwell on these things. Ponder the character of heaven. Elsewhere the Bible uses the word meditation.

What is meditation?

Answer: to go over a matter in your mind repeatedly. Something you give considerable time to think about. Silent or out loud. We can actually meditate together in conversation. It's constantly thinking about God's word throughout the day (Ps 119:97). Bible meditation is thinking about what we've read and requires taking time to ponder God's word.

Why set your mind on things above?

1. Because *“you have died”*

“For you have died” (3:3) = died to sin. We were once dead in our trespasses (2:13) = enslaved to sin, but we've *“been raised with Christ”* (3:1) = heart circumcision (2:11) = the new birth.

Because you've been given a new heart, why would you return to the world from which you've been rescued? Why would you set your mind on fallen, broken things instead of the things of heaven? That's what Paul's saying.

There's a second reason.

2. Because *“your life is hidden with Christ”*

“and your life is hidden with Christ in God.” (3:3)

Hidden speaks to something that is unseen, invisible, secret, unknown. Like a hidden treasure that is buried. The Greek verb tense suggests a past activity (conversion) that has ongoing results = our invisible to the human eye new birth has ongoing effects. Newness of life enables us to set our mind on heavenly things.

Hidden may also point to the fact that we're safe in Christ. A hidden treasure is safe from theft.

3. Because we *“will appear with him in glory”*

When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. – 3:4

What is presently hidden will one day be revealed publicly. When Christ returns, we will appear with him. Our unseen to the eye union with Christ will be publicly known when we appear with him in shining radiance (glory).

This speaks to the bodily resurrection of dead believers (second resurrection). Jesus will return for his people. He won't leave us to endure this fallen world forever.

Application individual

Let's consider the idea of meditating on God's word. As a newer believer trained from a kind of legalistic faithful Christians don't do anything other than read their Bible, pray, fast, attend church, have Bible studies, evangelize, etc. I once took this command to mean something like we shouldn't spend our time thinking about the mundane things of life: sports, television, movies, the news, fishing, hunting, or any other recreational/leisure activity.

I was out to lunch. I didn't consider the context of things on earth in Colossians. I assumed my legalistic context into the passage. Caution: our assumptions and background can keep us from seeing what's in the Bible. That's why we've read surrounding verses. Paul isn't saying we're only allowed to think about the Bible.

But Paul is saying we need to think about biblical things and the spiritual goals God has for us. What does this look like? Not every waking minute. But not five minutes a day either. It's meditating on the truths of Scripture throughout the day intermittently.

There's a time to think about basic household duties like food preparation, the dishes, vacuuming, the laundry, etc. There's a time to think about your job. What's going on today? How can I improve my performance? There's a time to think about people. Friends I need to reach out to or pray for or evangelize. People who could use encouragement. People I'll be seeing today. There's a time to think about leisure. What am I going to do on Saturday?

But throughout the day God should be on my mind. Direct engagement (blocked off times) with Scripture like reading, pondering meaning, pondering personal application, journaling, praying about what I've read.

There's also opportunities to think about God in other ways throughout the day. Listening to sound sermons, podcasts, Christian music. Reading sound Christian books and articles. Check out some of the helpful links on our church website. Click on resources tab. You might find some amazing material. Try Desiring God or Gospel Coalition.

Five minutes a day with God is better than nothing. But how good will the basketball player be who limits their training to five minutes a day? How skilled will the carpenter become who puts in five minutes a day? How shaped by the Bible will the person be who gives God five minutes and TV, phone, video games six hours? Who makes the Olympics giving their sport 5 minutes a day?

What I'm saying is we shouldn't limit God to one, five minute period a day. We don't have to limit our time with God to formal devotions. We can meditate on the truths of the Bible all day long, intermittently. Here and there. But first we have to memorize Scripture, or at least concepts of Scripture, to have truth available at all times. We can commune with God and meditate on Scripture while we're driving the car or walking to the bathroom.

Application local church

In terms of our life together, here's a revolutionary thought. We can talk about the Bible together. We can share what we're reading and studying and think through truth in personal conversation. Have a question about what you read in the Bible this morning? Ask a fellow believer.

Meditation can be something we do together. We can be reading sound Christian books and discussing them when we come together.

Application non-Christian

What's the bear essence of Christianity? The Bible assumes our lives are disordered and broken. We need to come to grips with our broken condition. We need to be raised with Jesus. That's spiritual resurrection.

Jesus takes central stage in the Bible and he's the answer to our broken condition. He died on the cross to bring forgiveness of sins. That's mercy. Peace with God despite our rebellion. He died to purchase the new birth. That's rescue from the power of sin in this life.

The Bible calls us to respond to Jesus. In faith and repentance. Turning from rebellion to trust in his death, resurrection, and return.

If you find yourself disturbed by your sin, there's rescue in Jesus. But only in Jesus.

Conclusion

In the path towards completeness, no area of our life untouched by Scripture, Paul provides two instructions.

Pursue above things.

Pursue obtaining godly character with all your heart.

Ponder above things.

Discipline your thoughts to ponder, from the Bible, the life you should be pursuing.