

Col 3:1-7 "So Heavenly Minded that You Are No Earthly Good"

If then you were raised with Christ,  
seek those things which are above...  
set your mind on things above, not on earthly things.  
If we have received new life in Christ,  
then our priorities will be different.

Paul has set forth in chapter 1, who Christ is:  
He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation,  
By him were all things made,  
and all things are sustained by him.  
And he is the head of the body, the church,  
and just as he is the firstborn over all creation,  
so also he is the firstborn from the dead,  
Therefore Christ is supreme over all things.

In chapters 1-2, Paul also sets for what Christ has done:  
He has reconciled you to the Father through his death,  
so that you might be presented pure and blameless in him.  
He has circumcised you through baptism,  
snipping off the old sinful nature,  
and granting you new life and forgiveness of sins.  
He has utterly defeated all of the enemies which held you captive  
--making a mockery of them on the cross.  
Sin, death, and the devil are defeated foes.

So we have seen who Christ is, and what he has done:  
now we are beginning to learn who we are in Christ,  
and how that affects our lives.

Since you have died with Christ,  
therefore Paul insists that you also have died to sin,  
that you also have been set free from the restrictions of the Law,  
that you also have made alive with Christ.

Since this is true, Paul declares:  
you are no longer to live in the way you used to.

Your whole perspective on life should change,  
because you are no longer the old sinner that you used to be.

The Christian life is not based on our experience or our feelings,  
but it is based upon what Christ has accomplished.

The imperatives of the Christian life  
--the command to seek those things which are above, for instance--

are rooted in the new reality of who we are in Christ.  
Since you have been united to Christ,  
live like it!

Or to put it simply:

Be who you are in Christ!

(read 1-4)

Union with Christ is the heart and soul of Paul's gospel.  
You can find it in every letter he writes.

But what does it mean to be united with Christ?

What does it mean that his life has become ours? (v4)

To understand this, let us look at two things:

1) what it means to be heavenly minded?

To seek those things which are above?

2) what it means to die and be raised with Christ,

### **I. What does it mean to be heavenly minded?**

In verse two Paul contrasts setting your mind on things above  
with setting your mind on things on the earth.

The Christian must not be earthly-minded.

We must not allow ourselves to be focused on the things of this world,  
but rather we must be centered on the things of Christ.

Some people have taken this the wrong way.

Some people think that this means  
that we should completely ignore the affairs of daily life.

Such people become "so heavenly minded that they are no earthly good."

But they have misunderstood what it means to seek those things which are above.

Paul is going to spend the rest of the chapter talking about  
how to relate to one another in the church, at home, and at work,  
so obviously he is not telling us to ignore everyday life.

So what does it mean to "set your minds on things above"?

It means that in the midst of your daily routine,  
your heart and mind are constantly focused on Christ.

It means that you find your identity and purpose in Christ,  
and not in the rat-race of life.

It means that when your kids are driving you nuts,  
you find rest in Christ;  
when your husband is blowing a fuse,  
you understand that God's grace is sufficient for you;  
when your co-workers are sniping at you behind your back,  
your heart finds contentment in Christ's promises.

But what are these "things above"?

What are you to set your heart and mind on?

Paul says that these things are where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.

Well, where is the right hand of God?

Heaven.

Okay, what is heaven?

God says in Is. 66:1

"Heaven is my throne,  
and earth is my footstool."

So heaven is where God resides,  
and earth is merely a place for his feet.

Or as the Psalmist says in Psalm 11

"The Lord is in his holy temple,  
The Lord's throne is in heaven"

Solomon, in I Kgs. 8:27, recognized this when he built the temple:

"But will God indeed dwell on the earth?

Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain you.  
How much less this temple which I have built!"

When we are told to set our minds on things above,  
we are being told to orient ourselves to the way things really are.

Heaven is the center of the universe--because that is where God dwells.

If our lives are to give glory to God,  
then our lives must be centered on heaven as well.

Heaven is not some sweet, happy place where people sit around and sing all day long.  
Heaven is the most important place in your lives.

Why?

Because Heaven is where the most important decisions in the universe are made:

Heaven is where God's judgment is proclaimed

Heaven is where God decides whether to have mercy or not.

Heaven is where the immortal, invisible, only wise God determines the path of history.

But there is another reason.

Heaven is where our Lord Jesus Christ is.

Revelation 4-5 recount the ascension of Jesus to the right hand of the Father.

[summarize]

[hit 5:8--the prayers of the saints]

Paul tells us that you are to focus your heart and mind on things above,  
because it is in heaven that your hope resides.

It is in heaven that your Savior has sat down at the right hand of the Father,  
and you have been made complete in HIM.

Therefore, your identity,

your purpose in life,  
your whole future,  
is found in heaven.

And so,

setting your mind on things above  
means that you renounce the idolatries of your heart,  
forsaking the pleasures of sin  
for the glories of knowing Christ and him crucified

--because you too have died.

## **II. What does it mean to die and be raised with Christ?**

It means that you have been crucified with Christ,  
and you no longer live;  
but the life that you now live in the flesh,  
you live by faith in the Son of God who loved you and gave himself for you.  
(Gal 2:20)

You have died.

This is not just a figure of speech.  
This is not something future.  
This has already happened.

You are dead.

Just as truly as Christ died on the cross,  
so also those who are united to him have died to sin.  
Remember my three circles...

Paul says in verse 6 that the sons of disobedience will receive the wrath of God.

And you were ONCE one of them!

But you are NO LONGER a son of disobedience,  
you are a son of God.

Your basic identity--your heart--your life--who you are  
has changed.

The old self died with Christ,

And your life is now hidden with Christ in God.

This means that your new identity, your new life,  
is secure.

You are not vulnerable to attack,  
because your new life is hidden with Christ in God.

And when Christ appears,

you also will appear with him in glory.

And it is for this reason that Paul commands us to  
[v5]

So, in one sense, according to Paul,  
you are **supposed** to be so heavenly minded that you're no earthly good!  
Because Paul says that the things of earth are sinful things--"fornication, uncleanness, etc!"  
You are to be so wrapped up in the new reality which Christ has given us,  
that as you go through your daily life,  
everything you do and say is to be overflowing from that new life.  
You are to PUT TO DEATH your members which are on the earth.  
In other words,  
you are to destroy whatever is left over from your old way of life.  
There is no place in the Christian life for idolatry of any sort.  
Since you have died to sin with Christ,  
Therefore, put to death whatever remains of those sinful patterns and idolatries.  
Paul warns in verse 6 that the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience,  
precisely because of these things--  
precisely because they're hearts and minds are fixed upon earthly, sinful things.  
But then notice what he says in verse 7:  
"IN WHICH YOU **USED** TO WALK--in the life you ONCE lived"  
BUT YOU DON'T LIVE THAT LIFE ANYMORE.

YOU DIED, and your life has been hidden with Christ in God,  
And when Christ, who is your life appears, you also will appear with him in glory.

Your heart and mind are to be so focused on the things of Christ,  
that you have nothing left to focus on sin.  
The new life that you have in Christ  
is to utterly destroy the remnants of the old life which has died with him.

Beloved,  
THIS is what Christ has done for you.  
Nothing less.  
He has forgiven all your sins.  
He has washed you clean.  
And now he has called you into newness of life--  
placing his own life within you by his Holy Spirit.  
Since this is who you are in Christ,  
Act like it!  
God will give you the strength to walk in his ways.  
Don't let Satan fool you into thinking that you have to remain a slave to sin.  
Christ says that you no longer belong to this world.  
You belong to HIM.

So when those evil desires well up in your heart,  
put them to death.  
Set your heart and mind on things above--

set your heart and mind upon Jesus Christ,  
and what he has accomplished on your behalf.  
Then do what Christ has given for you to do.

But, you ask,  
I fail so often!  
I am too earthly minded!  
I am all wrapped up in my work and my family,  
and I don't know how to get on track!

### **Conclusion: Worship as a Call to Heavenly-Mindedness**

Christ has given us many ways to get on track.

The most basic way is worship.

As you gather together in worship,  
you are to remember who you truly are.

In the early church and in the reformation the church maintained daily worship.

Not everyone could attend every day,

But they understood that the corporate worship of the people of God  
is the basic means of reminding the people of God who they really are.

We only worship once a week,

therefore we must work that much harder at remembering who we really are.

(Walk through the liturgy)

Call

Confession/Pardon

Praise

Word

Prayer

Creed

Offering

Supper

In the Lord's Supper, we see Jesus Christ,

as he was once offered on the cross as a sacrifice for our sins.

It is a visible reminder of who we are in Christ.

That just as he has died to sin once for all,  
so also, we have died with him.

And as we partake of the bread and the cup,

we are proclaiming the Lord's death until he comes.

But we do not merely proclaim HIS death,  
we also proclaim our own.

For Paul tells us that we eat from the one loaf,

because we who are one body, ARE one loaf.

The cup of blessing which we bless; is it not a participation of the blood of Christ?

The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?

Through this Supper we partake of the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In this Supper the Holy Spirit offers us a true communion in his glorious life.

Jesus taught us that those who do not eat his flesh and drink his blood have no life in them.

He is the bread of life--the living water--  
to partake of this feast is to be raised up into heaven  
and partake of Christ himself--by faith.

Lift up your hearts to the Lord!

Set your minds on things above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of the Father;  
For that is where we are.

Hebrews 12 tells us that we have not come to an earthly mountain,  
but rather that in our worship,

we are gathered at Mount Zion--the city of the living God,  
the heavenly Jerusalem,  
to an innumerable company of angels,  
to the general assembly and church of the firstborn  
who are registered in heaven,  
to God the judge of all,  
to the spirits of just men made perfect,  
to Jesus the Mediator of a new covenant,  
and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.

We are gathered--not merely in on planet earth,  
but we are gathered with all of God's people at the throne of heaven.

Christ himself is in our midst,

and by his word and sacraments he now offers you himself--his own body and blood--  
as the food of eternal life.