

Seeking the Heavenly Things

By Dr. Joe Miller

Bible Text: Colossians 3:1
Preached on: Sunday, July 10, 2016

This morning we have the privilege of continuing on with my four year series in Colossians and we're actually, hey, we're going into a chapter. Turn the page, chapter 3 and this morning's sermon is entitled "A Key to Our Present Sanctification: Seeking the Heavenly Things." Seeking the heavenly things and we're just going to be in one verse. In one verse.

In the evening, the young father came home from work. His wife greeted him with excitement and announced that she was sure the baby was about to take his first step. The baby was all clean and dressed and at his best. The father got his video camera, pointed it towards his baby boy. The mother held the baby by his armpits, his little feet on the ground. She began relaxing her grip so that the child carried all of his weight on his own two feet. The baby sensed excitement that was in the air. He balanced precariously as he stood all by himself. He lifted up one foot, took a tiny step, and he held his balance while the video camera was taking the record of this historical event in the life of this family. There were exclamations of delight from the parents. Now, did the thought occur to this baby boy of how exciting this moment would be? "Evidently that is just what I'm supposed to do," he said to himself, "lift up my right foot and put it forward." So he lifts the same right foot and puts it forward, loses his balance, falls to the ground and starts crying yet does the father rush over to the child, pick him up and spank him? No. Does the mother scold him? Not a chance. The mother picks him up with his eyes filled with tears, yet hers filled with love and joy saying, "This is my little man. He took his first step today and he's going to take a whole lot more."

You see, folks, this story, this illustration illustrates really in part our heavenly Father's attitude toward us. We are because of Christ, his children, and he is our Abba Father, and he desires for us to take many steps and these are parts of the steps of the process of sanctification. In this present time, through his present grace, we are engaged in growing to be more made into the image of Christ. That's what we do. That is what we do and he is the heavenly Father that is encouraging us to take one step after another. He is loving and he is gracious. He is a Father who leads us and encourages us so that we would strive toward greater spiritual maturity, and this is the same attitude that the Apostle Paul had with the Colossians saints. These are his spiritual children whom he desired to see grow, to become made more into the image of Christ. He was there at their first steps and now he's there as they continue to take those steps towards greater Christ likeness.

Now, in the first two chapters of the letter to the Colossian church, Paul is writing to them doctrine, doctrine, doctrine. It's all doctrine. It's all theology. Now, here in this chapter, he pivots and now he's going to be talking about what do you do with the doctrines and the

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creeds and the theology. What do you do with it. You've got to do something with it and here he's going to explain this is what we do. We use the doctrines, we use the creeds, we use the theology, we use the memory verses, Awana, not just to build up a knowledge base but to do something with it; to take those steps, to become more like Christ. This is what we are called to do, to walk, talk and speak like the Savior and that's exactly what Paul's intention was, to take that doctrine and actually apply it as a daily life application. He understood that sobering reality but he also understood that it does little good if we come here week after week, study the word of God, exposed to these deep deep truths. Over the last three weeks, we've been exposed to the future, eschatology, and we get it all and we're learning what is going to take place, the antichrist and the tribulation period and the devastation that's going to occur because God is going to pour out his full and complete and perfect wrath upon this nonbelieving world, and yet, folks, if we come here week after week and fail to take the doctrine and the theology that pours from this pulpit, if we fail to apply it to our hearts, if we fail to allow it to transformed the things that we think, say and do, then we are missing it. We are missing it.

J. C. Ryle in a sermon he preached called "Christ Is All," he said this, "But alas, how little fit for heaven are many who talk of going to heaven when they die, while in their present life on earth, they manifest little evidence of saving faith and no real acquaintance or relationship with Christ. They give Christ no honor here, they have no communion with him, they do not love him, alas, so what could they do in heaven? It would be no place for them. Its joys would be no joys for them. Its happiness would be a happiness into which they would not desire to enter. Its employment and service would be so wearisome and a burden to their spiritual heart." And yet if your life and the testimony of your life and your involvement here at this church is you come to study and learn all you can about doctrine and theology but it is not transforming your life, then heaven is not for you. Heaven is not for you and the actual work of this ministry here at Calvary Bible Church is not for you because we're not about coming and learning deep Reform theology for the sake of learning. If it's not transforming your children, if it is not transforming your marriage, if it is not helping you take spiritual habitual sin issues and putting them off, if this teaching is not helping you become more righteous in your thoughts, words and deeds, then this is not the place for you.

The sobering reality is that due to a greater love for the things of this world rather than a greater love for the heavenly things, it could be the primary reason of why some of us are not growing; why some of us have refused to actively participate in the process of sanctification; that the love and excitement that you have for Christ at that point in salvation has grown cold. You have become indifferent and distracted by the present things of this world; that you have become more and more challenged with the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, in fact, not challenged, you're running

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after them. In fact, those are your best friends, and as a result, you have grown cynical and disappointed. You come to church and give a nod to the Scriptures, you fellowship just for a little while and then you head on home and you pursue life the way that you want it and not necessarily the way that Christ would have it. You settle for the desires and the lifestyle that the old man has more than willingly presented to you. It's very easy just to do the things that feel good to you; do the things that minister to you. You have allowed personal sin to take you hostage and now for many of you, for some of you, maybe the world is having a hard time identifying just who it is that you love because you seem to be more earth focused and earthbound than you are heavenly focused.

Folks, I'm speaking not to anyone in particular but I am certainly speaking of my own life. I have seasons where it would be very difficult for someone to say, "Oh, that's a follower of Christ." Very difficult. I think there would be times when my children would say, "Alright, where is this regenerated father?" But here's the practical incursion for us this morning: nothing makes you and I more glorifying and pleasing to God in this present life here on earth than when we live with a more heavenly focus. That's a truth. We'll all agree with that, right? If we're more heavenly focused, then God is going to be pleased and glorified, we would all agree with that, right? Nod your heads and say, "Yes, we would agree with that. Oh, Pastor Joe, we would agree with that." So that's not the issue. We all agree with that truth. The issue is how do we do that? How do we actually live that way? What is the motivation that desires for us to live and fulfill that statement because when we are heavenly focused, desiring to savor and see Christ, to want to look upon the heavenly wonders that are to come, that we are living with that anticipation of one day hearing that voice, that shout and flying to be with the Lord in glory, these are the evidences of a soul and a spirit that is driven by a process of sanctification. They want to be involved in that process. They want to be more involved in who Christ is in their life, but unfortunately, many of us, too many of us, are remaining as spiritual infants. You've been a part of the local church for years and you've heard biblical teaching, you've been disciplined, you've experienced fellowship and yet you're still living with a more earthbound focus than you are a heavenly focus. You're experiencing a lack of conviction, a passion for Christ. You're just unmotivated to take those next steps, unlike that little baby. That little baby wasn't really concerned about whether he was taking that right next step, he just wanted to take the step. And why did he want to take the step? He's like, "Mom and dad are really happy and I don't know why, but man, I'll just do that same thing again." Boom and they go down. Are you motivated to please Christ in your thoughts, words and deeds, or are you motivated by something else? Maybe you're enticed by those idols of the heart; idols of the heart, anything that you find joy in that you can't find in Christ, that is therefore an idol.

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There are many things that could be an idol. A spouse can be an idol. Money can be an idol. Position and power can be an idol. A car can be an idol. A business can be in idol. A cruise can be an idol. Anything that you must have in order to be complete, to be content and have joy because Christ can't meet that need, then it is an idol and such idols will keep us from growing up, taking those necessary steps that are committed to following Christ, that are committed to finding joy only in Christ, and those idols will keep us from fulfilling God's sovereign plans and purposes in our lives. You see, each one of you as a follower of Christ, you have been written into God's narrative, that historical plan of redemption; each one of you have a role to play, a purpose in the great commission to seek and save that which has been lost. But yet when you are so pivoted toward your idol, you are no earthly good at this point for the kingdom because you're more committed to following the things of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life, then you are glorifying and pleasing God in your personal life.

You see, Paul knew that. Paul knew that was a struggle for himself, right? "The things that I want to do, I don't do, and the things that I do, I don't want to do those things." But that issue didn't really impact Paul at all, right? He actually did everything right. Even though he had all these thoughts, he actually did everything right. He never struggled, never had issues where he was more focused on earthly things than he was on the heavenly. Not Paul, right? I disagree with that. We all have those seasons we are more focused on self than we are focusing on pleasing and glorifying God and that makes it very difficult for us to fulfill that great commission where we are to go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching and discipling them. When we are so earthbound then we are of no good to the great commission and we cannot fulfill the things that we need to fulfill, that we have been commanded to fulfill. We have to be willing to lay behind and leave behind those desires of the world.

Folks, we've been called as Brother Dave said, to live in this world but be not of it. What does that mean? What does that mean for you? What does it mean to reach the world Christ's way? The Apostle Paul points out that we have an opportunity in our daily lives to seek those heavenly things. To seek those heavenly things. He reminds us in Philippians 3:20 that, "our citizenship is," where? "In heaven from which we also eagerly are await for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ." Then he goes on in Galatians 1:4 and he also reminds us that Christ, "saved us and he gave himself for our sins that he might," do what? "Deliver us out of this present evil age." Deliver us from our habitual sin issues. Deliver us from that earthbound focus. To deliver us from no longer being a part of this world but belonging and laboring for that heavenly kingdom. In 1 Peter 2:11, the Apostle Peter tells us that, "we are not of this world." We are in the world but we are not of it. But until we realize that basic truth, until we realize what Christ has saved us from and what

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he has saved us for, we will continue to be not as effective as we could be for the cause of Christ.

You know, I had somebody ask me a couple of weeks ago, "Why is it that the elders decided to have a series on Wednesday nights based off of the Puritans?" Here's your answer: if you have attended any of those summer nights and you have listened to some of those lessons, you will discover that the Puritans were and are great examples of how to live in this world but be not of it. They tried to strike that balance of living in this world and enjoying the blessings of this world, the blessings that God gives us, but without allowing those things to distract them from their ultimate call, and that is to live for the glory and for the pleasure of Christ. They aspired to possess that heavenly heart attitude, one that anticipated that at any time they would be in the presence of Christ.

You see, folks, Christianity, Calvary Bible Church, our intention is not about just teaching creeds and doctrines and theology. That's not our goal. That's the means to the goal, right? I mean, in the first century, they didn't call that Christian movement "the doctrine or the creed or the theology." They could have, that makes for a great movie, "The Creed," right? No, they called those people that were just acting so differently than the rest of the world, they were part of "the way." The way. A different way of living. A different heart. A different perspective, one that was no longer focused on the things of this world but the things of heaven. Yes, they realized the importance of creed and doctrine and theology as the means which would drive that lifestyle called "the way." We don't live a life to please and glorify the Scriptures, we live a life to please and glorify the writer, the author of the Scriptures. And yet in our realm and in our circles, we can get caught up and we possess the only right doctrine. We are the only legitimate preachers. That we are the only ones that have the pristine Reform theology and that everybody else falls short. Folks, I would contend that we focus more on what we do as a family, as a couple, as parents, as workers, that we focus on what we know is right and God glorifying and pleasing. Let's focus on what we do and on a life that pleases and glorifies God, that's what will make us extraordinary and that's what will draw people to the attention of Christ because something has changed in our lives.

Our present hope and joy doesn't lie here in the things of this world, quite frankly, the things that should be the most important to us today are the heavenlies, the heavenly things, and yet we find ourselves ignoring those wonderful gifts, those wonderful future hopes, because we are more focused on those various idols of the heart. So the problem lies in our attitude, our heart attitude as God's children, that we are living lives from time to time, and this is true of all of us, that doesn't seek and savor Christ but desires to seek and savor those other idols, and you can just fill in the blank on what that idol is: money, love, respect, sex, vacation, a new car, a house, position, power, a spouse, another spouse,

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children, no children. You fill in the blank. And we get to that place because we really fail to habitually and intentionally put ourselves in the position of understanding what it means to seek the Savior, Christ, and his Gospel. Rather than finding ourselves just completely content with the multiple, the multifaceted blessings that we have in Christ, we zero in on the lame things of this world; the things that are temporary; the things that will end up ceasing to exist; the things that promise us long-term pleasure and joy and yet fail time and time again to keep that promise. You see, folks, what we believe not here, but what we believe here, this is what will determine our behavior. Data in and of itself does not change a person, but the desire to live out those truths, the desire to be that child of God that wants to take those next steps not knowing if they're going to fall and take a digger, but is trusting in God's goodness in that Romans 8:28 mindset, that all things are going to work out for God's glory and for my good, that's what's going to change our behavior.

So in this one verse this morning and expeditiously, we're going to look at how Paul explains to us how the true believer can live a heavenly focused life while also living in this present fallen world. Our first point: the basis. The basis of seeking the heavenly things. So right there at the beginning of verse 1, verse 1, the first word, two letters, "if," and it's a conditional "if." It's a conditional statement. "If then you have been raised with Christ." That word "if," it's the idea of something that is a vivid reality, something that has taken place in the life of the Colossian believer or in your life as a believer. If or since or on the basis of the glory of Christ revealed in the Gospel and of that grace, if you have been graciously raised up with Christ, then there is no doubt on your present condition and on your future hope because Christ promises those things. Your life is locked in. You are in union with Christ. It wasn't based off of anything you did, it's based off of everything he did. You are locked in. That is your future hope. You have been raised up. It's the idea of being co-resurrected with Christ. Because of that past grace that was realized in the Gospel, the Colossian believers, you and I, we have experienced regeneration, salvation. That is an accomplished fact and on the basis of that, we have died with Christ. We have been buried with Christ. We have been raised with Christ and we are now seated with him in his presence.

Look at those promises there. You look at all those things: you died with Christ, you have been buried with Christ, you have been raised up with Christ and you've been seated with Christ, nothing in this world, no other idol of the heart can promise you those things, can match those truths, and yet we find ourselves willing to go back to those idols that keep promising that they're going to fulfill but fall short every time. The Scriptures tell us that all true believers, we are spiritually entered into Christ's death and resurrection at the very moment of salvation and therefore on the basis of that truth, Paul reminds us in Galatians 2:20, we have been crucified with Christ, it is no longer us who live but who? Christ who

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lives in us and the life which we now collectively live in the flesh, we don't live by the idols of the heart, we don't live by the flesh, we don't live by the impulses of our flesh, we live by faith in the Son of God who loved us and delivered himself up for us. We have now this shared life with Christ.

But if somebody came up to you and said, "What does it mean to have a shared life with Christ?" Would you know how to explain that? Could you give vivid examples of what that means in your life? What it means for you to live a shared life with Christ? Could you explain that to someone as a means of giving them excitement of why they should consider Christ and why "the way" is much better than doctrines and creeds and truth? Because "the way" takes those doctrines creeds and truths and puts them into action. Can you explain from your own life experiences what it means to live a shared life with Christ? That on the basis of the Gospel grace, you possess a different more pristine heart attitude, and an attitude that you actually find joy in living in loving obedience to Christ, not because you have to but because you want to, because you want to please your Abba Father, because you have studied him and you realize, "Wow, he has made me part of this historical plan of redemption and he sent his Son to die for me. He brutalized his Son so that I might be called his son." That should motivate something in us, folks.

We have a shared life with this God, with this Savior, who has died for us and he has made us part of his family and we now have, because of Christ's perfect standing with the heavenly Father, no longer condemned and as a result of that, we are no longer desiring to seek the things of this world because we tried that. You tried that. I have tried that. We have tried that. We have sought out the things of this world and we should find them lacking and we do but we keep going back to them. Why? Why are we so easily distracted? Why are we so easily enticed by the things of this world? Could it be that we are not seeking the things of heaven? That we're not spending time doing that on a daily basis?

There's a mother and there's a wife in this sanctuary, in this worship center, who has penned the phrase, "feet on the floor." When the feet hit the floor, what is it that you are focusing on? On the heavenlies? On the truths of the Gospel? Or are you focusing on the things that you need to get accomplished today or on the worries of the day? Whether it's looking for a job; or taking care of the next patient that you're not quite sure what to do with; the person that you're counseling; struggling children; a new job; are you going to be able to afford the vacation; you're looking at your retirement account and wondering if the next president is going to cause you to lose 40% in that account. Folks, we are no longer looking for the things of this earth but we are aspiring to the things of heaven on the basis of our new identity in Christ.

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In August, we're going to have a baptismal service and that baptism, there is nothing supernatural about it. There's nothing supernatural about those waters, in fact, those waters are probably going to be a little cold and probably a little dirty, but we'll make sure that we put a little chlorine in their just to make sure nobody gets an ear infection, alright? There's nothing supernatural about that but what is supernatural about the baptism service is the opportunity for us as individuals to proclaim the goodness of Christ and what he has already done: he has already saved me; he has regenerated me; he has now called me his child; he is my God. I now have a shared life with him. Romans 6, beginning in verse 3, "Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life." This is our joy. This is what we are proclaiming at our baptism service, that even though we are contained, we are cocooned, we are surrounded by this fallen flesh, what lives within us is supernatural and pristine and wonderful and it's eternal, and it's far more powerful than the things of this world and the power of your flesh.

God no longer sees us on the basis of who we were, beloved, he sees us now on the basis of who we are in Christ and who we are in Christ is wonderful. We are no longer held captive to the desires of the old man. That old man has been crucified. That old man is dead. He has left his bad habits behind but we don't have to follow those habits, in fact, we have the power to kill those habits. We have the ability in Christ to live on an entirely different plane, a heavenly plane, that are no longer seeking the things that are below here but seeking the things that are above. This is the basis of every follower of Christ's testimony in saving faith and this is what motivates us to be a part, play an active role in our own process of sanctification.

Point 2. Not only the basis but what is our responsibility? Look back in the middle of verse 1, it says we have shared in Christ's resurrection life. It is our responsibility as the children of God, like the Colossians, to now, zeteo which is that command, a present command verb in the Greek, the idea of keep seeking the things that are above. It's a constant commitment that you and I have, a continuous action of daily seeking those things that are above. It's pointing out that you and I are not preoccupied with the next meal, or the next movie, or the next credit card charge, or the next event their children might have, or the next vacation, but we are preoccupied with eternal realities. We are you occupied with Christ. We are preoccupied with living a life that models the life of Christ in our own life. That is our responsibility, to live a life that is pleasing and glorifying to God and when we do that, it will result in joy.

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Folks, if you're doing those things and you're pursuing trying to live a life that pleases and glorifies God and you're not finding joy in that, then let's go back to the Gospel because that's just works, that's just legalism, that's just traditionalism, and you're missing it. It's like baking the best chocolate cake ever and never being able to take a bite and enjoy the flavor of that. If you're trying to live a life that pleases and glorifies God, you find no joy in that, then let's go back to the Gospel. I'm not saying you're not saved but I'm saying you're missing something there. You forgot something. You've been distracted away from a really key truth and we go back to the Gospel, because the things that we are forsaking, they are not burdensome, in fact, we find joy in letting those things go so that we can live for the kingdom.

That's what Jesus tells us. Here's our responsibility. Matthew 6:33, Jesus describes our responsibility, "seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." Everything that you want to find joy in. Everything you'll find joy in, he'll make sure you get those things. He'll make sure that you experience that. But first and foremost, if you're living without loving obedience to seek his kingdom and his righteousness and you are doing that with that right heart attitude that wants to please and glorify God, then, man, you're going to experience joy. You know, there are people in this room that are experiencing that joy right now. That's not a figment of someone's imagination. That's not some sort of a fictional statement. That's reality. So we're not doubting that that is somehow not true. That is true. The problem is if you're not experience it, let's find out why. Let's find out why. You've heard me make this statement multiple times, we think what we think and we say what we say and we do what we do based off of what we want. We don't do anything without our heart driving the things we think, say and do. The question is, who is driving your heart? What is driving your heart? What is the passion that is driving your heart? Is it Christ and is it that good gifts of God that drive your heart? Is it Christ crucified, Christ buried, Christ resurrected, Christ returning that drives your heart? Which drives your motivation? Which drives your life? Or is it the things of this world? I mean, you're going to have to fill in the blank there. Is it the various idols? Are you more concerned about glorifying and pleasing yourself in your daily life? Or are you more concerned about glorifying and pleasing God? So the big question and this is a question that each of us needs to leave here with and to consider: do you love the gifts of God more than God who is the giver of those gifts? Who do you love more? Do you love all the blessings and eternal security gifts of Christ, do you love those more than actually Christ himself who is the giver of those gifts? Because if you do, then heaven isn't for you because it won't be a place of joy for you because you'll be going there with the wrong impression and expectation.

Who is it that you love? Are you preoccupied with the heavenlies? Are you committed to the one who reigns there? Are you committed and desirous to fulfill his purposes, his

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plans, through his provision of power in your life? That's our responsibility, folks. That's what we have been called to do. If you go back to the first point, the basis of our salvation, now because of that, what is our responsibility? To live out those plans and purposes which Christ has empowered us to do. That's our motivation, to fulfill the great commission, to be a part of that intentional historical plan of redemption. But is that what motivates you?

There is a letter that was sent to Billy Graham back in the 1980s right before the fall of communism and it comes from a young communist and he says this, just listen to this and see how this young man's thoughts, how they relate to you as a believer. "We communists have a high casualty rate. We are the ones that get shot and hung and ridiculed and fired from our jobs and in every way made as uncomfortable as possible. A certain percentage of us get killed or imprisoned. We live in virtual poverty. We turn back to the party every penny we make above what is absolutely necessary to keep us alive. We communists do not have time or money for many movies or concerts or T-bone steaks or decent homes or a new car. We have been described as fanatics. We are fanatics. Our lives are dominated by one great overshadowing factor, the struggle of world communism. We have a cause to fight for, a definite purpose in life. We subordinate our petty personal selves into a great movement for humanity, and if our personal lives seem hard or our egos appear to suffer through subordination to the party, then we are adequately compensated by the thought that each of us in his small way is contributing to something new and true and better for mankind. There is one thing in which I am dead earnest about and that is the communist cause. It is my life, my business, my religion, my hobby, my sweetheart, my wife, my mistress, my bread and my meat. I work at it in the daytime and dream of it at night. It holds on me, grows on me, not lessens as time goes on therefore I cannot carry on a friendship, a love affair, or even a conversation without relating it to this force which both drives and guides my life. I evaluate people, looks, ideas and actions according to how they affect the communist cause and by the attitude toward it. I've already been in jail because of my ideals, and if necessary, I am ready to go before a firing squad."

My question to all of us is: does our passion for Christ outdo this young man's passion for communism? A failed humanistic philosophy? But does his passion for this failed philosophy outdo our passion for what is perfect and what is eternal and what is good and what is great and what as John Piper would say is marvelous and beautiful? If we fail to have the same kind of passion that this young man has, at least at the level, then we have to ask ourselves why. What did we miss and what did we forget? In fact, our passion should be far greater than this young man because that's all driven by the flesh and yet we have a power that lives within us that is far greater than this man's power. Is our purpose to live and love in obedience to Christ so that we might be committed and diligent to

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seeking the heavenly things and as we seek those heavenly things inspires us and compels us to want to live more intentionally every day for the cause of Christ and for the great commission? Are we committed to pursuing those heavenly things even like this young communist who is dedicated to his man-made philosophy? We have something far greater. Hebrews 9:28, the author tells us that, "Christ having been offered once to bear the sins of many," and Lord willing that's happened to each one of you, "will appear a second time," we've been studying that over the last 3 to 4 weeks, "will appear a second time, not to deal with our sin anymore but to save us who are eagerly awaiting for him."

Is that your passion? Is that what drives you? I mean, you can't help but listen to the last three or four weeks of this eschatology from 2 Thessalonians and not be shocked and awed and inspired and sort of on edge. He's coming. He's returning. But what is he going to find you doing when he returns? Are you going to be passionate and have you been one seeking the heavenly things? Or when he returns, are you going to be the one that's like, "Not yet, Jesus. I'm not done here," because you have anchored yourself to too many of the things of this world? Are you eagerly awaiting the return of Christ? Are you presently living as if he is returning today? Do you possess a spiritual heart attitude that eagerly longs for his coming? Or do you want him to wait just for all little longer so your love affair with the idols of this world can be complete and finished? Or are you like the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 1:7, waiting for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ? Or the Philippians in Philippians 3, citizenship, realizing that their citizenship is in heaven and from it they await a Savior? Or are you afraid that Jesus is going to return today to interrupt your plans?

These are not cliché statements, folks. I live with that challenge too. I have my fair share of idols and I have my fair share of indifference towards Christ and I have my fair share of at times thinking, "Well, not yet, Jesus. I'm still not done." Let's just be honest, be honest with yourself at least, but also realize that that kind of heart attitude is only going to lead you down a road where personal sin is going to take you even more captive, but in God's goodness, he's going to do what? Make you fearful, make you anxious, make you experience depression, put you in an incredibly uncomfortable place, cause lack of sleep and frustration and tell you, "Tap out," and you repent of that and you draw your attention back to the heavens, forsaking the things that you were trying to find joy in. In God's goodness, he makes us miserable. He will make his children miserable until they beg for mercy and in mercy you will receive because he is faithful to forgive you.

So as verse 1 says, are you seeking the things that are above? Are you seeking the tenderness and the kindness and the meekness and the patience and the wisdom and the forgiveness and the strength and the purity and the love of Christ? Are you seeking those things? Are you zeroing in on the things of heaven or are you zeroing in on the things of

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this earth? When we come to a point where we're facing either financial turmoil or physical health turmoil, the only thing that you will find as a believer satisfaction and joy in is Christ. As a parent that is dealing with children that are struggling with sickness and disease, the only thing that you will find hope in is Christ. Seek the heavenly things, beloved. That is our responsibility. Seek those things that reveal evidence that we love Christ more than we love our own life; that we love Christ and the things of his kingdom; we love those heavenly things more than we love these temporary earthbound things.

Then very quickly, our final point: our aim. We have looked at the basis. We have looked at our responsibility. And now we are going to look at the aim. The aim. The aim in our life is Christ. It's Christ. Right there at the end of verse 1, what are we doing? We are "seeking the things that are above where Christ is seated at the right hand of God." Ephesians 1:3 tells us that all spiritual blessing which is located where? Where is all that spiritual blessing located? It's in heavenly places, and in heavenly places, that's where Christ is at. So where is our aim? Our aim is there, at the heavenlies where Christ is at. That is our future residence. That's where we are currently citizens of that new heavenly realm. Our future grace will bring us to a point where we will come to actually live in that heavenly realm. Right now, we are in union with Christ perfectly because of what Christ has done. Right now, we at different levels, are in this communion with Christ that is not consistent. Sometimes we are on that hilltop and things are great, we are living with great commitment and great joy in Christ, some of us are sort of on that downward slope and we're starting to entertain habitual sin, we're starting to embrace the things of this world that we don't need to be embracing and we're going to be diving into that valley, right? But in God's goodness, he will redirect you and he will bring you out of that valley. He will bring you out of that valley. You will not bring you out of that valley. He will bring you out of that valley. He saved you, he sanctifies you, and he will glorify you. He just wants us to take responsibility to do what? To participate in that process. We as good Calvinists, as good Reformers, we understand our moral responsibility to God's great power that he interjects into our life. We do it not because we have to, we do it because we want to, because we love him, because we love what he has done and we love what he has in store for us. It is our aim to seek to commune where Christ is at seated at the right hand of God. That is our aim. We seek him through the study of his word, this pulpit, through corporate prayer time, through praise and worship time, through small group time, through personal quiet time. That's how we focus our aim. Philippians 2:9 tells us that we aim at where Christ is at. He is constantly at the right hand of the Father. This tells us that his redemptive work is finished and we are now in that process of coming to fully understand and realize and take possession of all of the hopes and promises of the Gospel.

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Does that excite you? I mean, we're almost there, folks. These things are going to be a reality for us. One day we're going to see that, Christ exalted in his position of power. Psalm 110:1, "The LORD says to my Lord: 'Sit at My right hand Until I make Thy enemies a footstool for Thy feet.'" Acts 7:56, "Behold, I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." This should be our great desire to see that. Christ coronated, Christ exalted, it should be exciting. I mean, it's amazing how people get excited about Prince Harry and Prince Charles and all the sort of nonsense that goes on in England and you're staying up at 12 o'clock, 1 o'clock in the morning to watch some sort of marriage or coronation. That's nothing compared to what is in store for us. Christ exalted. Folks, focus your aim at where your true fountain of blessing is located it's Christ, not this world. It's not in drugs. It's not in alcohol. It's not in pornography. It's not in the money. It's not in an adulterous relationship. It's not in anger. It's not in the shopping malls. It's not in the vacations. Your fountain of blessing is Christ. That's where your joy is going to be found. Aim at it. Seek after it.

I want to close with this thought. I've done a lot of counseling. I counsel believers. Now, if somebody comes to me and he's not a believer, then I'm focusing on what? The Gospel, right, because biblical counseling doesn't work unless a person is indwelt with the Spirit of God. So the people that I'm counseling, I'm counseling believers, and so when a believer comes to me, they come to me after they have driven into the ditch, is basically why they're coming. There in a ditch. They're stuck. They can't get out. They try to get themselves out and they're just not getting out, whether they're unable or unwilling, but they're stuck in a ditch; some habitual sin issue or multiple sin issues, but they're stuck in a ditch and so they're coming to me to find hope. Folks, in my counseling, while I do focus on the present hope of God's present grace, I tend to focus more on future grace. I tend to focus on what is to come because it's hard for people in the midst of their sin that they are struggling with to sort of see anything good that's going to happen in the immediate, right? They're like, "Nothings good. My wife's no good. My husband's no good. My children, they are going south. My boss stinks. I'm losing my job. Or I don't have any friends," or whatever it might be. In that present, they just can't see anything good, but if I get them to focus on the future and point them towards the great future promises of grace coming, then I can get their attention. "Right now things stink and I get it and I understand it, I understand you're struggling, but look at what is coming. Let this be the motive to start addressing this sin issue. Don't find yourself being stuck in this ditch and not enjoying the hope that is to come." And what is that hope? That hope is a future home.

Right now my family is looking for a home. We've been here for four years and it's time for us to buy a home. We've rented long enough and so my children are all excited about that. When I told my children we were going to start looking for a home, they were like,

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"Oh, really!" And actually Koda does it best. And they are excited, right? They're excited. They're going to have their own home because they no longer have to share one bathroom with one basin amongst four, and one of them is a boy, so that doesn't work well. So when that boy's in that bathroom, all three girls have to exit, right? But when those three girls are in there, Hunter is like, "Come on." So they are all excited about one day getting into this future home. I'm excited but what do we know about the things of this world that we are excited about? Exactly. It's going to come, and what's going to happen with my children in about, prediction, about 10 days later? "What are we going to do tomorrow?" Right? "Are we going to go and see Star Trek Beyond?" Or are they going to find out that the Haylee's went and saw the Ark and so they're going to be, "When are we going to go to the Ark?" Right? And so this whole excitement about the house thing, it will come and it will go.

The same with our sin. Our sin is like that. We get really excited about it, we find great joy in this, great pleasure in it, and it's going to come and the joy, it will fade away and we're left empty. And that's what happens with people when they find themselves in that ditch and they cannot find themselves aiming back at the heavenlies because they are so focused on being stuck in that ditch. The best thing that I can do for them is say, "But you have a new home and it's going to be great, and this is how great it's going to be." The Scriptures describe what this new home looks like. It's not like the homes that other Old Testament, New Testament or other Old Testament saints have been familiar with. Eden was our first home, perfect, yet we blew that one, right? Hard. Then it was Sinai. Then it was the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. But our new home, it's Jesus' home. It's Jesus' home and I'm not meaning for that to be anything more than its Jesus' home. It's his home and it's going to be a great home. I mean, we get some explanation on what this home is going to look like, where we're going to eat with him and we're going to dialogue with him. He is going to serve us, right? And we're going to be part of his new kingdom that we're going to labor in and we're going to have responsibilities. But John in Revelation 21 describes it, "And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, behold, the only place that God is with man and he, Jesus, will dwell with them and they will be his people and God himself will be with them as their God." That's the future hope that gets people out of that ditch. That is what compels people to say, "I get it. I've been distracted. I've bought into this sin. It has paid out zero. I am now sort of bankrupt right now but I do have a promise of that future hope, that union with Christ which I didn't earn, I didn't pay for, I don't deserve but it is mine and I am going to cling to that right now so that I can get my communion with Christ back on track." That's that process of sanctification that we want to be actively involved in.

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The basis of our future hope is Christ. Our responsibility is to pursue that and we do that by keeping our aim singularly focused on the heavenlies and for us, Lord willing, knowing that that home is going to come quickly. And I guarantee you this, folks, we're not going to turn after a week or after 1,000 years or 10,000 years later, I'm not going to turn to Dave Hoffman as we're walking down one of those avenues of the new Jerusalem made of translucent gold, I'm not going to turn to him and say, "This place is getting sort of lame," right? Can you imagine me saying that? What would you do if I said that? Would you drop me? You would drop me. We're not going to say that because it is so far beyond our comprehension on what that is going to be like for us. We're not going to have the impact of sin and yet we're going to be living in something that Christ has been eagerly at work at for a very long time. It's going to be perfect. It will never be lame. We're never going to hear our children, which are now our brothers and sisters in Christ, saying, "This is it? Nothing else?" No Christmas is going to compare to that day.

So folks, be encouraged by that. Seek the heavenly things. Quit focusing your eyes on the things of this world. They are fleeting. If you're in retirement mode or you're approaching retirement, whether you have a bazillion dollars or not, it is all going to burn, it is all going to end. You don't find your joy or your hope in that. Whether you have never gone to the doctor, never had an ailment, you don't find your joy and your hope in that. You don't find your joy and hope in any of that. Those are just blessings. You rejoice in those blessings but, folks, our eyes are singularly focused on Christ and his return and one day experiencing those heavenlies.

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Let us pray.

Father, thank you for your word and thank you for the hope that you'll word brings us. Father, we are a people, we're like the teenager that is learning how to drive the car and we just find that we're constantly hitting the speed bumps, we're constantly in the ditch, we get distracted by the things of this world, by the desires of our heart, by our lust of the flesh, by our own pride of life, but, Father, in your goodness, you are constantly drawing us back and reminding us of who you are and through your word or through the Spirit of God, through our time of meditation and prayer, through other believers in Christ, we are reminded of the wonders that are yet to come. We are reminded of what Hebrews talks about, that better country, that marvelous city. And so, Father, may those truths, those future realities motivate us as that little child taking those first steps, even when we take diggers, to get up and to take that next step knowing that the heavenly Father, knowing that a kind and generous and gracious Father is there to pick us up and to move us down that path. We don't do anything on our own, we do it all based off of the empowerment of Christ and his Spirit in our lives. So besides this world which is fleeting, our focus and our joy is found in this statement, it's an answer to a question: whom have we in heaven but you? The earth has nothing for us, nothing that we desire. The only thing that we desire is one day being in the presence of Christ. So Father, thank you for that future grace and hope. So Father, thank you for this time. I thank you for these dear saints and I pray that as they leave here, they leave here with at least one nugget of truth that encourages them to seek the Savior and to savor him this week. It's in his name that we pray, Jesus Christ. Amen.