

Warroad Baptist Church
May 3, 2009

“The Believer’s New Perspective – Part 1”
(Co 3:1-4)

Illustration: (750 Engaging Illustrations, Craig Brian Larson & Leadership Journal, p. 410, “The Lordship of Christ” #387).

“There’s a picture hanging on your living room wall and it’s crooked. Because it bothers you, you push up the side of the picture that’s low. You step back, squint your eyes, and decide that the picture is now straight. You leave the room feeling good about getting things to look the way they should.

The next day you walk through the living room and are surprised to see that the picture is crooked again. You conclude that your perspective must have been a little off the day before and you nudge up the low hanging side a little, step back, eyeball the picture extra carefully this time, move forward, give it another slight nudge, step back, take a final look and decide that it’s now level.

The next day you happen to glance at the picture as you’re walking by and become annoyed to find that it’s crooked again. You’re convinced you had it right the day before, you straighten it, once again, and walk away wondering if it will be crooked again tomorrow.

The next day it’s crooked again and you say, “What’s wrong with this picture?” You’re a little more irritated this time and decide that more serious measures are necessary to take care of this. So you give it some thought and conclude that the real fix is to check out where the center of the bracket on the back of the picture is in relation to the nail in the living room wall and discover that it’s not exactly centered. You re-hang the picture, now centered, place a level on the top of the frame and square it up so the bubble is perfectly centered. The next time you return to the living room, you confirm that this time the picture is hanging straight and true.

Unless a picture is centered on the nail any adjustments you make will only be temporary. In the same way, until we center ourselves in Jesus Christ, no matter how many times we try to get our lives straightened out they will eventually fall out of line again.”

There are many perspectives out there on what life is all about and how to live it, but there is only one perspective that can give us an accurate picture that is always on the level and it is God’s perspective that He gives us in the Bible. You’ll never get life straight any other way.

Chapter 3 marks Paul’s transition from the doctrinal or teaching section of his letter to the practical application section. Christ had radically changed the lives of the Colossian believers. Their focus was no longer on their old way of looking at things and living their lives. Paul’s appeal in the opening verses of Ch. 3 was for them to set their regenerated hearts on something completely different. As heirs of a new heavenly estate they were to become in experience what they already were by the grace of God. They were by virtue of salvation in Christ, children in God’s family and citizens of heaven. It’s the responsibility of a believer in Jesus Christ to declare and defend the truth’s of God’s Word, but failing to demonstrate them by your life is not practicing what you preach and makes your claims suspect. This is Paul’s point in Ti 1:16 “They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny Him.” If we’re not living what we say we believe do we really believe it? Sharing in the life of Christ means following the example of His life given us in the Bible.

There’s an insightful corollary between v20 of Ch 2, which we looked at last Sunday, and v1 of Ch 3. Do you see it? V20 says, “Since you died with Christ” – an established fact. V1 states, “Since, then, you have been raised with Christ” – an established fact. As believers in Jesus, we died with Christ to sin as the controlling influence in our lives in 2:20 and we were raised with Christ to a completely different way of life with God the Holy Spirit as the controlling influence in our lives.

Paul's passion filled words in Php 3:18-20 make this point, "As I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is their shame. Their mind is on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven."

Jesus said in Jn 15:19 "... you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world." Peter describes believers in Jesus as "aliens and strangers in the world" in 1 Pe 2:11. In Ro 12:2 Paul instructs, "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of you mind."

There's a remarkable statement in Eph 2:6 about believers in Jesus Christ that I think bears repeating. When we were saved by God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ, "... God raised us up with Christ and seated us with Him, in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus." Our place in heaven is so secure, that God speaks about it as an accomplished fact. Our lives as believers are to reflect our relationship with God as His children, which is different from what our lives were before believing in Jesus. He begins in Co 3:1 by saying,

V1 "Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God."

Our primary passion is to be for the things of God which are centered in Christ.

The verb "raised" means "to be co-resurrected." It is an accomplished fact. Spiritually speaking, we are already by our position in Christ, in heaven.

I'd like us to consider for a few moments Jesus' words in Matthew 6:19-21 and then v33. "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also; ... seek first His kingdom and His righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well."

As God's children we are to be living in a way that fulfills God's purposes for our lives not our own purposes in all that we do not just some of what we do. This requires a settled mindset. I believe that's what Paul is getting at in the first two vv of Co 3. In fact, he uses the word "set" twice, once in v1 and then again in v2. 'Set' means *to seek or strive for earnestly* and suggests an undivided and decisive fixed focus. In 2 Co 4:18 Paul writes, "... we fix our eyes not on what is seen (physical earthly things), but on what is unseen (spiritual heavenly things). For what is seen is temporal, but what is unseen is eternal." The twist is that in v1 he speaks of a 'heart-set' and in v2 a 'mind-set.'

The contrast Jesus makes in Mt is between earthly treasures and heavenly treasures. Paul was advocating that the Colossian believers were to be striving in their hearts and concentrating with their minds on spiritual and eternal things. If we allow our hearts to be captivated by the things of earth that's what we'll invest ourselves in and cling to, but Jesus says these things can be destroyed and taken away. Having our hearts set on the things of heaven, on the other hand, is an eternally secure investment that can never be destroyed or taken away. It's what we set our hearts on that determines what we value most. And it's what we set our minds on that becomes our preoccupied concern.

Don't misunderstand the emphasis here. There is nothing wrong with the things of this world, they are not in and of themselves sinful. And it is not sinful to want them or to have them or to enjoy them. Paul himself speaks to this in 1 Ti 6:17-19 where he is instructing his young pastor protégé, Timothy, "Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life." True life is centered in Christ.

Jesus' resurrection to life was a physical resurrection out from among the physically dead. Our resurrection as believers in Jesus Christ is a spiritual resurrection out from among the spiritually dead to spiritual life.

If someone were to ask you to describe what your relationship with Jesus Christ is like, how would you respond. Jesus' appeal in Mt 6:33 is this: Seek God first. God wants to be first in every area of your life. This aligns with v2 of Co 3. "Set your minds on things above."

The heart is the seat of the emotions, which are incredibly powerful motivators within us. We are very emotionally oriented in our behavior.

But it is with the mind that is the seat of discernment and decision-making that we are to be continually living with God's eternal perspective view and not our temporal earthly perspective.

The rules and regulations of the false teachers focused on the earthly realm whereas Christians are to be oriented to the heavenly realm.

Spirituality or living the Christian life is the ongoing day by day process of being turned inside out by God. The work of God in our lives begins on the inside, it's not visible to others, God doesn't change how we look, He changes who we are. This is backwards from what we do. We do our work on the outside which is fundamentally superficial – why? Because it revolves around what we think of ourselves and what we want others to see or what we think they want to see.

Illustration: (Ian Thomas, *The Saving Life of Christ – The Tale of the Tardy Oxcart*, Charles R. Swindoll, p. 314)

Ian Thomas, in his book *The Saving Life of Christ* writes, "We are representatives of the Lord Jesus Christ ... like a hand fitting into a glove. We are the glove. He is the hand. People see us. They see our movement. They see our impact. They feel the squeeze of our life, the warmth of the hand. They can't see Him but through the glove. And people spot it when there is peace in our lives, because there isn't peace in our world."

Jesus said in Jn 14:27 "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you, I do not give as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." Jesus' peace within in us gives us the confident assurance that we are safe and secure in His care and need not fear in the present nor for the future.

V2 Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.

In Php 4:8 Paul writes, "... whatever is true, whatever is, noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things. In Co 3:2 the Gr. term translated 'Set your minds' can be rendered simply 'Think.' What would it be like to view the things, people, and events of this world through God's eyes and from His perspective – to think like God thinks? If we thought what He thought and we looked at life the way He does, we'd have an eternal perspective which would result in our valuing what He values. Being centered in Christ means our life squares to the level of His life as revealed in the Bible. Isn't this what Paul is saying here? The more we look at life and live life the way Jesus did the more we will be like Him because He is the perfect example to follow. Our orientation in life is to be Christocentric or centered in Christ. The verb 'set' is a present imperative and suggests ongoing action in present time, "Keep on seeking."

V3 For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.

How much life does a dead body have in it? None! We are to be like a dead body – lifeless to our old way of life before believing in Jesus. Believers have died to sin's controlling influence in their lives and to the world's way of thinking and doing things. Our life as a believer is safely concealed in Christ – that's the sense of 'hidden' in God.

Verse 3 underscores in no uncertain terms the security of the believer in Jesus Christ. 'Died' is a past tense verb. Ro 3:23 clearly states that "the wages of sin is death." Sin earns death as its just payment. Jesus' death was sin's just payment for the believer in Jesus at the moment of salvation. The presence and power of sin are grim realities that we all have to contend with in this life, but in Christ we cannot be condemned to death, because we're already dead in

Christ. Ro 8:1 “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” In Christ, believers are safe and secure.

1 Pe 1:3,4 “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In His great mercy He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade – kept in heaven for you.” He 7:24, 25 “... because Jesus lives forever, He has a permanent priesthood. Therefore He is able to save completely those who come to God through Him, because He always lives to intercede for them.” Jn 10:28 “I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of My hands.”

V4 When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

When Jesus appears at His second coming we will appear with Him. 1 Jn 3:2 tells us that “when Jesus appears, we shall be like Him” Jesus in us is the One who shapes us to be like Him. Like the hand in a glove, Jesus gives His shape and movement to our lives to accomplish what He desires through us.

In Christ, distinctions of race, social class and culture are non-existent because the relationship is different. We are all members of the same heavenly family which is spiritual and heavenly not natural and earthly.

Ro 6:8-11 “Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with Him. For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, He cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over Him. The death He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life He lives, He lives to God. In the same way count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.”

Benediction: 1 Thes 5:23, 24 And now “May God Himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The One who calls you is faithful and He will do it.”