

The Purpose Found in Jesus Christ
Colossians 3:1-17

Introduction

1. What is the purpose of life for the Christian? Depending on who you ask, you get different answers:
 - a. The author of Ecclesiastes concluded that the purpose of life is to fear God and obey His commandments
 - b. Back in 1646, the framers of the Westminster Confession of Faith said that a man's chief end is to glory God and enjoy Him forever
 - c. Back in 2002, Pastor Rick Warren published his book, "The Purpose Driven Life" and claimed that God has five purposes for which He created us:
 - a) The first is to know and love Him
 - b) The second is to love others
 - c) The third is to grow spiritually and become like Jesus
 - d) The fourth is to serve as practice for serving in eternity
 - e) The fifth is to carry out the personal mission for which God uniquely created us as individuals
 - d. Probably one of my favorite descriptions of our purpose, however, comes from the Apostle Paul in Philippians 3:8-14 (READ):
 - a) In this passage, Paul says that he considers all other things in his life to be loss and rubbish compared to knowing Christ, gaining Christ, and being found in Christ
 - b) He speaks of knowing the power of Christ's resurrection, Christ's sufferings, and being conformed to Christ's death
 - c) Paul describes his purpose here as pursuing the "**upward call of God in Christ**" and he uses words and phrases like pressing on, laying hold of, reaching forward
 - d) What is absolutely clear about Paul's purpose in life is that it completely and totally revolved around Christ
2. We've seen this same sentiment throughout Paul's letter to the Colossians through the first two chapters, and we will continue to see it today as we start chapter 3
3. I've titled this session, "The Purpose Found in Jesus Christ" because Paul highlights three theological realities regarding our relationship with Jesus and follows each of these with something we should have as a purpose as a result:
 - a. Since we have been raised up with Christ, we should keep seeking the things of Christ
 - b. Since we will be revealed with Christ in glory, we should put to death the old sinful behavior and desires of our past
 - c. Since we have been chosen by God in Christ, we should put on the virtues of Christ

A. Since we have been raised up with Christ, we should keep seeking the things of Christ (READ 3:1-3)

1. The "**if**" here should be understood as "**since**" — "**since you have been raised up with Christ**":
 - a. When it comes to if-then statements in Biblical Greek, there are at least four classes or conditions (named 1 through 4) that tell us how to translate the first part of the statement (known as the protasis)

- b. The first class or simple condition means that the first part of the statement is assumed to be true for the sake of the argument
 - c. We know that's what Paul is doing here—he isn't in doubt about their having been raised up with Christ; he assumes it true and this is evidence of what he wrote earlier:
 - 1) He referred to their faith in Christ back in 1:3-7 (READ)
 - 2) He has already described their having been raised up with Jesus in 2:9-15
 - d. Those of us who have placed our faith in Jesus Christ have been raised up with Him; this is the reality of our life in Christ
2. So, what does it mean to have been raised up with Christ? According to Romans 6, there are at least five implications (READ Romans 6:1-11):
- a. It means that we now have a new life, and this is true even here and now in this earthly life (6:4)—2 Corinthians 5:17 says that we are new creations in Christ, the old things have passed and new things have come
 - b. It means that just as Christ was raised from the dead, we too will be raised from the dead (6:5)
 - c. It means that our old self has been crucified and our body of sin has been done away with so that we can be free from sin (6:6)
 - d. It means that we are spiritually alive and will never face spiritual death (6:8-9): Jesus died in our place and did so once for all so that we don't have to die spiritually
 - e. Ultimately, it means that we are now dead to sin and its power and penalties, and alive to God in Christ (6:10)
3. Because we have been raised up with Christ, and all these things are true, we are to keep seeking the things of Christ:
- a. Paul uses two present imperatives (or commands) here:
 - 1) The first is **"keep seeking"** which means to keep pursuing something with the goal of obtaining or acquiring it
 - 2) The second is **"set your mind on"** which means to keep thinking about something
 - b. The things we are to keep seeking and keeping thinking about are **"the things above, where Christ is"**:
 - 1) Paul is referring to heavenly things because that is where Christ is, **"seated at the right hand of God"**
 - 2) This is clear because Paul contrasts the things above with **"the things that are on earth"**:
 - c. Since Paul introduces these two verses with **"therefor"**, the **"things above"** and the **"things that are on earth"** refer to what Paul has already discussed:
 - 1) The **"things above where Christ is"** refers to all the spiritual truths revealed by Paul in chapters 1 and 2:
 - a) In Him all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are found
 - b) In Him they had been firmly rooted and were being built up and established
 - c) In Him all the fullness of Deity dwells
 - d) In Him they had been filled, made complete, circumcised, buried, raised up, forgiven, and made alive
 - e) And, in Him they had triumphed over all the dark forces of the world

- f) These are heavenly things, the things of Christ, that we are to keep seeking and keep thinking about
- 2) In contrast, the **“things on the earth”** refer to the worldly things Paul mentioned:
 - a) Their legalistic food laws and strict observance of festivals and certain days
 - b) Their false humility
 - c) Their pursuit of knowledge through philosophy, elementary principles (or principalities) and the worship of angels
 - d) Their self-made religion and severe treatment of the body
 - e) These are all earthly things and the direct opposite of the things above; we are not to keep seeking or setting our mind on these things
 - 3) The reason we are to keep seeking the things above and setting our mind on them, instead of seeking earthly things like man-made religion and practices, is found in v. 3: **“For you died and your life has been hidden with Christ in God.”**
 - a) Paul’s use of **“hidden”** here implies safety and security; like hiding something to protect and secure it
 - b) Our lives have been hidden in Christ in the sense that we are secure in Him because He now lives within us
 - c) The perfect explanation of what this means is found in Galatians 2:20: **“I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.”**
 - d) Essentially, what Paul is saying here is that our faith in Christ has made our salvation and relationship with Him secure because HE NOW LIVES IN US; we can’t do anything to make ourselves more secure through earthly things like man-made religious practices; we simply have to live by in Him and trust that He has already done everything that needs to be done!
 4. Takeaway: Because we have been raised up with Christ, we should make it our purpose to keep seeking and keep setting our minds upon the things of Christ:
 - a. We should set our minds on the wisdom and knowledge found in Him, the reality that we have been firmly rooted in Him and are being built up and established in Him, that we have been filled and made complete in Him, crucified, buried, raised up and made alive in Him
 - b. We should not be setting our minds on the weak and worthless religious things of the world

B. Since we will be revealed with Christ in glory, we should put to death the old sinful behavior and desires of our past (3:4-11)

1. One of our great hopes as Christians is that when Jesus Christ returns—when He is revealed—we will also be revealed with Him in glory:
 - a. John wrote in 1 John 3:2 that **“when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.”**
 - b. But, John followed this up with an expectation (1 John 3:3): **“And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.”**
 - c. So, John links our being revealed in glory with Christ to our obligation to purifying ourselves which is a reference to putting off sin and seeking to live righteously

2. Paul does the same here:
 - a. He begins with a reminder that when Christ is revealed, we will be revealed with Him in glory (READ 3:4)
 - b. He then follows this up with a call for us to put to death and put aside a host of sins and he provides two reasons for this (3:5-11):
 - 1) First, we are to put to death the old sins of our past because it is on account of sin that God's wrath comes upon the unsaved (READ 3:5-7):
 - a) A more literal rendering of v. 5 is **"Therefore, put to death your members that are upon the earth"**
 - b) This is Paul's way of saying we are to put to death whatever sinful earthly behavior and desires still reside in us; this includes things like **"sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed"**
 - c) It is because of these things that God's wrath is coming so we should have no part in them
 - d) Look at what Paul wrote in Ephesians 5:3-7 to those believers who think they can somehow profess Christ but still continue to walk in sin (READ)
 - 2) Second, we are to put aside the old sins of our past because we are continually being renewed according to the image of God (READ 3:8-11):
 - a) This list of vices all have to do with interpersonal relationships: anger, wrath, malice, slander, abusive speech, and lying to one another
 - b) We should not engage in such things because when we placed our faith in Jesus we **"put off the old self with its evil practice"**
 - In Colossians 2:11 Paul wrote that we were circumcised by Christ and the **"body of the flesh"** has been removed
 - Roman 6:6 says that our **"old self was crucified with Christ, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin"**
 - c) As a result, we have (my rendering) **"put on the new self who is continually being renewed in knowledge according to the image of the One [God] who created it"**
3. Takeaway: when Jesus Christ returns and is revealed in glory, we will be revealed in glory with Him; as such we should make it our purpose to prepare for that day by putting off sin (READ Titus 2:11-14):
 - a. We should deny ungodliness and worldly desires and live sensibly, righteously, and godly in this present age
 - b. He gave Himself up for us to redeem us from every lawless deed and purify us as a people for His own possession, so we should no longer live in sin

C. Since we have been chosen by God in Christ, we should put on the virtues of Christ (3:12-17)

Dealing with Candy at Harding—ignored me, then rebuked me, then didn't even look at me when helping me; I could have responded in the flesh with my own sinful rebuke, but chose to turn on the Christian charm instead!

1. In Ephesians 1:3-4 Paul wrote that God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world

2. God has always desired more for His chosen people than avoiding sin; this was true of Israel in the Old Testament and it's true of us, the Church
3. As His chosen people, He desires that we be like Him and this happens not just by putting off sin, but by putting on the virtues of Christ:
 - a. We are to **"put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience"** (12)
 - b. We are to **"bear with one another"** and **"forgive each other"** and do these just as Christ has done for us (13)
 - c. We are to **"put on love, which is the perfect bond"** (14; lit.)
 - d. We are to **"let the peace of Christ rule in [our] hearts"** (15a)
 - e. We are to **"be thankful"** (15b)
 - f. We are to **"let the word of Christ richly dwell within [us], with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in [our] hearts to God"** (16)
 - g. Finally, we are to do **"whatever [we] do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father"** (17)
 - h. You may have noticed, like the list of vices above, all but one (maybe two) of these virtues is interpersonal in nature; they have to do with how we treat one another
4. Takeaway: As God's chosen people—holy and beloved by Him—we should make it our purpose to not just avoid sin, but to put on the virtues of Christ
 - a. Paul sums this up perfectly in Romans 13:14: **"But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts"**
 - b. The Colossians were being led to believe that spiritual wisdom, knowledge, and growth, including overcoming sin, came through things like self-made religion, legalism, false humility, mystical visions, worship of angels, and severe treatment of their bodies
 - c. But these things were all according to the traditions of men and elementary principles or principalities, rather than according to Christ, and were nothing but empty philosophical deception
 - d. We are no different today when we look to such things instead of just looking to Christ and putting on Him