

Well, let's take our Bibles, turn to Colossians 3:1-4. I decided just to jump right in to our new series on heaven. I'm going to call the series Life After Life. We're going to look at a study in scripture of heaven. We're going to begin this morning with a message I've called Heaven Can't Wait. Some day, we'll be in heaven but we're to live as if we're already there. We're to set our affection on things above.

But here's the point I want to get before we get going into the series. You've got to live it now. Don't be waiting for heaven like someone standing at a bus stop, okay? By the way, I haven't started my sermon, so take your Bible and turn to Colossians 3. Let's stand as we read God's word together. Colossians 3:1-4, listen to God's word. "If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth, for you died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory." You may be seated.

Richard Sibbes was a Puritan during the reign of Queen Elizabeth the First. He was a reforming conformist within the Church of England, a Puritan. He taught at Trinity College in Cambridge, pastored a church in London. He was known as a warm and an affectionate preacher of the gospel. In fact, one of his favorite statements was that, "There is more mercy in Christ than there is sin in you." He tried to encourage his people. In fact, he was called the Sweet Dropper, the Sweet Dropper, because he just dropped these beautiful, sweet thoughts about Jesus that warmed the heart of his people.

But he was not only known as the Sweet Dropper, he was known as the Heavenly Doctor because of his godly, heavenly life, because of his heaven-centered eternity-focused preaching. In fact, he was so heavenly minded, he was so godly in his manner, that someone said of him, quote, "Oh, this blessed man. Let this just praise be given. Heaven was in him before he was in heaven."

Now is that not beautiful? That's a beautiful sentiment. That's a beautiful statement about a man of God. Heaven was in him before he was in heaven. You see, the life of Richard Sibbes, the Puritan, would remind us that heaven is simply not a destination to which we're going, it's an orientation of the heart that we're living, day in and day out.

Heaven isn't simply an expectation. It's an experience. Heaven begun the day you and I got saved. Why would I say that? Because of Jesus' description of the salvation experience. Remember in John 3:3, "A man must be born again or he will not or cannot see the kingdom of heaven." But the Greek is, "A man must be born from above or he cannot see the kingdom of heaven." See, salvation is heaven begun. Salvation is the God of heaven, loving us through his Son who came from heaven to die for our sins, to rob the grave of it's terror, who ascended to heaven and then sent from heaven the Holy Spirit who indwells us as the promise of heaven.

Heaven has begun the day you put your faith in Jesus Christ. In fact, you're described as a citizen of heaven according to Philippians 3:20-21. That's why here in Colossians 3:1-4 we're told to set our mind on things above. Heaven is in us before we're in heaven.

That's where I want to start this series. Look, before we're done, we're going to answer all kinds of questions about heaven. Where is it? Who gets to go there? What will we look like when we get there? Will we know each other when we're there? What will we do for all of eternity?

But before we answer all of those questions, I want to remind you that heaven can't wait. You're to set your affection on things above. Heaven needs to be a reality now, an every day impulse and inspiration in your life. Heaven ought to be the North Star of your earthly journey. The future is already underway. The kingdom of God is among us and in us and we'll wait it's full expression in the millennial kingdom and the new heaven and the new earth. We've already tasted of the power of the ages to come. You need to believe it. You need to behave it. I'm going to challenge you about it.

Let me just take that thought, by the way, Philippians 3:20. "Our citizenship is in heaven from where we wait for Jesus to come back to change our bodies into a body like his glorious one." Philippi was several hundred miles from Rome, but it was a Roman colony. It was a Rome from Rome. The laws were Roman, the entertainment was Roman, the culture was Roman, the dress was Roman. Rome affected life in Philippi.

That's in Paul's mind and the Philippians got it. "Hey, we're a colony of heaven. We're an outpost of the kingdom of God on earth and the laws of heaven, and the king of heaven, and the culture of heaven, and the atmosphere of heaven should affect the way we live on earth." Isn't that why old Vance Havner, the Southern Baptist, said, "Christians are not citizens of earth trying to get to heaven, Christians are citizens of heaven trying to get through this world."

And we're going to see this this morning in Colossians 3:1-4. This is a passage that's going to challenge us to be heavenly minded. Let me put these verses quickly in their context. In the preceding verses, Paul dealt with how we're to fight sin. He was dealing with a heresy, an early form of gnosticism, that kind of was infecting the believer's thinking in Colossi that gave them the impression that the material world is evil, that material things are evil, their body is a thing to be discarded, that salvation is pure spirit, it's the spirit released from the prison of the body.

And there came along with that a kind of disgust and a detachment from things physical. That's beginning to affect their thinking and you'll see in verse 21 of chapter 2, "Do not touch. Do not taste. Do not handle." They were thinking, "You know what? Here is how I become spiritual. I detach myself from the world." It was kind of an aestheticism, denying physical appetites and physical pleasures. It's a monasticism, kind of disengaging from the world.

Paul's saying, "No, that's not how you fight the indulgence of the flesh," verse 23. Now, here's what he's going to go on to say, "If you want to fight the temptation of sin and the pleasure of the flesh, you've got to fight it, not with just a no, not with prohibition, not with denial, but with a greater pleasure, a greater power. So, set your affection on things above where Christ sits at the right hand of God."

We're moving from the negative to the positive. Paul's going to make an argument that your life can be under control when it's captivated by the majesty, glory, beauty of Jesus Christ, risen, reigning and returning. It's in union with Christ. It's gauging how glorious he is and the promise of what he has for his people. It is that and that alone will break the cycle of sin in your life.

If the permanent glory and pleasure of Jesus Christ is kept to the forefront of your mind and it embeds itself in your heart, it is that which will keep you from the hollow, passing pleasures of sin. Paul is saying, "Look, let your present life in Christ and your future life in heaven, trump your past life and the hangover sins of your life apart from Jesus Christ."

So, let's jump in. Four things, Heaven Can't Wait. We're going to see our position, our priority, our predicament, our prospect. Look at verse 1. "If," it would be better translated, and your translation might have this, since, because that which is spoken of is being spoken of in the past tense, "Since then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above."

That's the believers position. Notice this, "You were raised with Christ and Christ is at the right hand of God on high." This is an echo of the book of Ephesians, right? You and I who were dead in our sins we've been made alive through Jesus Christ, through the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. And according to Ephesians 2:5-6, "We are now seated in the heavenlies with Jesus Christ."

See, one of the great doctrines of the New Testament in describing our relationship to Jesus Christ is that we are in union with Christ. That's why the prepositions of the New Testament are so important, in and with and through and by. So, since you were raised with Christ, what does that mean? We're still in our bodies on the earth. We're still here. He's there.

This is talking about our position, or as the old preachers would talk about our standing, not our state. Our state is we're in our physical body, fighting with the indulgence of the flesh. We've got the world and the devil that are pressing in against us. That's our state. That's where we're living day by day. But our standing, is that we are in Christ, justified. That what God has done in Christ, he's going to do in us, and that process has begun.

That's such an important little idea. Think about this. In union with Christ, whatever Christ has done, God will do in the believer. That's why you've got this language. Verse 3, "For you died when he died." That's why you've got this language in verse 1, "You were raised when he was raised." God sees us in relationship to Jesus Christ. We're dead, we're buried, we're raised. Our identification with Christ is based on his substitution for us.

The point is this. What God did historically in Christ in his death on our behalf, where our sins were paid for and the power of Satan was broken and the terror of death and the grave was removed in what Jesus did by dying and being buried and being raised, God's going to do that in us and is already beginning to do that in us. We have already been raised. You were dead in your sin, but you've been made alive. That's a spiritual resurrection. That's being born from above. That's regeneration. That's newness of life, Roman 6.

And then we'll have a physical resurrection, so that's the point. In union with Christ, we've been raised. We've been elevated. The Christian life is the high life, the elevated life. We're enjoying an exalted position. And as Christ has been raised to a place of honor and glory and power and victory at the right hand of God, we enter into all of that. All the benefits and blessings that come from his exalted position come to us.

Let me try and illustrate this. Sometimes it helps us get our heads around this. Look, when a man or a woman is elevated to a place of king or queen, all their friends and all their family are elevated alongside them, alright? When the king sits down, when the queen sits down, that's good for everybody that knows them, loves them and is connected to them. Because that king's elevated position is to their benefit because if they're with the king, they're going to enjoy the benefits of what the king enjoys, what the king secures, what the king owns.

That's what's being talked about. "You've been raised with Christ. So seek those things which are above where Christ sits at the right hand of God." Jesus is enthroned, Acts 2:33, Hebrews 1:3, "He sits down at the right hand of the Majesty on high." And according to Ephesians 1:19-22, that speaks of his inherited power and his kingly authority and he's going to sit there according to Paul's letter to the Corinthians until he has made all of his enemies his footstool. Jesus risen, Jesus ascended, Jesus enthroned, Jesus returning and we're connected to him so all of that and the benefits of that and the implications of that will be worked out in our life.

And you've got to think that way. You've got to see yourself seated in the heavenlies with Jesus Christ, that you are heirs with Christ and his kingdom. That's why you're to seek the things which are above because your king is seated at the right hand of God. That's where your life is and that's where your life is headed.

Now, on a practical level, that means that you should be able to rise above your circumstances, rise above your fears and rise above the threats of your enemy because you've got to attach your circumstance to your standing, your position. You're with Christ, you're in Christ, he's in heaven and he intercedes for us. He gives mercy and grace to those that approach him. His victory is your victory. He's leading the Church in triumph. The gates of hell will not prevail. Do I need to go on? That's the point. That's our position. Always understand your position. Fixed, glorious, justified, sure, secure, all that we need in Christ is ours.

I like the story of Dr. Donald Grey Barnhouse, who was a magnificent expositor. I've got his, I think it's six volumes in the Book of Romans. He taught at Tenth Presbyterian in Philadelphia one Sunday morning. He was preaching on Christ's victory and the cross and what Jesus had achieved through his death. As he kind of came to the close of the sermon, he nailed it and he went on this kind of diatribe about our sins are forgiven, forgotten, cleansed, pardoned, atoned for, remitted. It went on and on. He roused the people.

And this 12 year old boy who was sitting in the balcony. He was kind of gobsmacked. He was just hanging over the balcony, drinking it all in, going, "Wow." After the service, he comes down. Dr. Barnhouse is talking to several adults. The twelve year old goes up, interrupts him, pulls on the sleeve of his jacket and he says, "Good sermon, Doc. Gee, we sure are sitting pretty, aren't we?"

He's right. We sure are sitting pretty because Jesus has died and we died with him. Our sins were atoned for but Jesus didn't stay dead. He was buried and then he arose. And he's been received into the heavens until the time of restoration.

What's he doing now? He's pleading his death on your behalf. He's showing his wounds to the Father so that you and I are secure in the Father's love. He has sent the Holy Spirit. He's praying for us. He's watching our every move. He's standing up and cheering us on like Stephen when we do something bold for Jesus Christ and someday, he's going to stay standing, gather 10,000 saints, he's going to gather the armies of heaven and come back and do some stuff. That's where your head needs to be. You were raised with him. You've got to think through all those steps in his enthronement, his present intercession, his coming in glory, because your life's all tied into that and the benefits of it. We sure are sitting pretty this morning. That's our position.

Number two, our priority. The one follows the other. When you understand your position, which is what? You've been raised with Christ. You're seated with him in the heavenlies. You're heir to the kingdom with the Lord Jesus. He's at the right hand of God.

It follows that, you're going to set your mind in that direction. You're going to seek the things which are above and you're going to set your mind to think about those things which are above. We're going to think about eternal realities, eternal personalities, eternal outcomes, eternal values. That's why I've decided, "Hey, let's do a series on heaven." We need to be reminded of our position and our priority.

Let's look at these two commandments. Seek, verse one, set, verse two. They are each present tense imperatives in the Greek which means each are a command, a duty and they are a present tense imperative which means we've got to keep doing this. This is what we do Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday. If we skip a day, we've got to remind ourselves to get back on track because this is our constant perspective. This is our constant priority. We're to seek the things which are above.

What does the word seek mean? It means, as you would guess, search, inquire. It speaks of a quest. It's used in Luke 15 of the shepard that sought for the sheep. It's used of the woman who couldn't find her shiny coin and went dusting the whole house to find it, pulling up the settee, and the cushions and whatever. She went on this intense search. And it's used in Matthew 13 of the merchant who sought to buy a costly pearl. It's used of Jesus, isn't it, in Matthew 6:33, "Seek first the kingdom of God." It's a priority.

And the other thing is, this Greek word carries the idea of, not just seeking the thing in a half-hearted manner, but to seek it with the intent of obtaining it. We're not to be like the 10 spies when it comes to our spiritual blessings, when it comes to our eternal inheritance. Remember how they got to the land flowing with milk and honey and they went on a little reconnaissance mission? And then they come back and said, "Hey, we've seen it, grapes, honey, milk, it's all that God described it to be, but I don't think we should go in there." And they stayed on the border of blessing. They didn't obtain what they sought and you and I are to learn from that.

Set, fixed, firm, focused, singularly devoted, that's the idea here. Set your mind on things above. Your inner disposition, your impulses, your thinking, your meditation, it goes towards heaven. Paul says, "I want you to have an internal bias." Consciously and unconsciously, I hope you're turning towards eternal things on a regular basis. I hope that, you know what, you're not going through life looking down at your feet, but you've set yourself to think about things which are above.

You get caught up in raising your family. You get caught up in building a business. You're in a long fight with illness, whatever life circumstance is and that consumes you. Paul would understand that. But you've got to constantly be bringing your mind back to the thoughts of heaven and the eternal. That'll help you be a good sufferer. That'll help you keep things in perspective. That'll help you do those things which are necessary and most important.

If I would put it like this, Paul says, "You know what? Have a bent towards those things which are above." Set, bent. Maybe the best illustration now is you go to a Walmart or Target or Kohls or whatever. We've all had that experience where, you know what, you grab one of those shopping carts and one of the wheels are stuck, you know. And instead of doing the wise thing, which I don't do and

you don't do, instead of taking it back, we often just spend the next 15 minutes in frustration trying to steer this thing in the right direction when it wants to go somewhere else, you know? They need to fit those things with horns or something because you're dodging, you know? You're living in fear of knocking all the soup cans over in Walmart or whatever, you get the point. The things bent in a certain direction. The wheel is stuck. It's set. It's fixed.

And that's what Paul wants us by meditation, study of the Word, thinking about heaven, we start to create this groove in our mind where our mind constantly is getting set in the direction of heaven. Habit of the heart.

Let me talk about what it is and what it's not for a few moments. What it is and what it's not. What's Paul talking about here? "Set your mind on things above," verse two, "and not on things on the earth."

Let me tell you what he doesn't mean. Paul's not encouraging, like we talked about just a moment or two ago, what we find with the gnostics, here in chapter 2:20-23, we're not talking about aestheticism. Remember, there's some form of early gnosticism infiltrating the Church in Colossi where the material world is evil, your body is a straitjacket, a prison, you want to be free from it. And so, it's this discarding of the material, this detachment from life.

Paul's not encouraging that. When you read here, don't set your mind on things on the earth, that doesn't mean, "Hey, you know, don't worry about changing the oil on your car. You know, don't shop in the department store. You know, your house can be a pigsty, you know, all that stuff." Meanwhile, in the light of eternity, what is that stuff? Paul isn't saying that.

In fact, he warns, doesn't he, the Thessalonians in chapter 4:11-12, who were infected by a prophetic virus that was taking them away from life and daily duty. They were so caught up in the thought of the rapture, the coming Day of the Lord, the appearance of the Antichrist that they kind of gave up on their jobs, their chores around the home and life began to pile up.

Paul writes them, "Hey, I encourage you to live a quiet life, mind your own business, be busy with your hands." No, when we read about those things which are above, and those things which are below, don't be thinking they are directional categories or Paul's just got us fixated on geography, above and below.

No, when we read a word above, we're talking about heaven where God's throne is, where his son is exalted, where God is worshiped, where the departed spirits worship him before the throne, and angels serve him day and night. It's a place where righteousness dwells. It's a God-centered place.

What's below? It's the earth. It's the god of this world. It's rebellion. It's man making himself the center of the universe. That's what we're talking about. Don't be like that.

The issue is more moral than it is material. That's why he'll go on in verse five to say, "Therefore, put to death your members which are on the earth, fornication, uncleanness, passions, evil desire, covetousness," that's the stuff we've got to watch out for. Paul's not talking about, "Hey, don't do your domestic or civic duties." No, that's not what he's talking about. He's talking about, "Hey, don't get caught up in the spirit of rebellion. Make sure you're living for God's kingdom and the life to come."

Let me talk to you about what it is, what it is. Well, it's many things. What is it to seek those things which are above? What is it to have a bent in your mind to those things which are above? It's many things.

Number one, it's focusing on Christ, isn't it? It's got to be because where's Christ? He's at the right hand of God. We were raised with him. Thinking about those things which are above, you'll be thinking about Christ and his love for you and his continuing presence in your life through the Holy Spirit. But you realize, as near as you are to him, there's so much nearer you can become. You long for that day. You desire to be with Christ which is far better.

That's what it is to think upon things which are above. It's to remember that heaven is a real place and you're going there forever and what you do today matters 10,000 years from now. So, is what I'm about to do today, how will it matter in 10,000 years from now?

That's the kind of thinking we need to be involved in. It means fighting the flesh as I've said, cultivating a spiritual life. It means resisting the urge to settle down and make peace with the world. It's to remind yourself that your citizenship is heaven. And according to Peter, you're an alien and a stranger. Or to use the old hymn, "This world is not my home. I'm only passing through. My treasure is laid up somewhere beyond the blue."

Again, that doesn't mean we detach from life, it just means we remember that we're pilgrims. And you know what? For pilgrims, the destination counts rather than things around the journey. That's the kind of mindset. That's what it means to think about things which are above. Don't settle down.

I remember when we were moving to the United States, we had dinner with Alistair Begg up in the north coast of Northern Ireland near Portrush where the British Open was just played. Over dinner, he said, "Look, one of the things that's going to challenge you, is when you get to America you're going to feel the tug of home." He says, "Here's what I did. For three years, I didn't go home. My first three years in America, I didn't go home. I needed to break that tug."

And it's the opposite for us as Christians. We've got to fight that urge to settle down. We've got to maintain that tug homeward and heavenward. That's what it means to pursue those things which are above.

I'll tell you what it is, too, it's meditating on your own death. Meditate on your own death, you know? Your best life later. That's what we're talking about. And you know what? You've got to meditate on your own death. You say, "Pastor, that's morbid. That's negative." To some degree it is. None of us are comfortable imagining our cold, dead body being lowered into a piece of dirt. But that's the end of all men and when that happens, all that we can do in the body will have been done and we'd better make sure we die with the least amount of regrets.

It's good to meditate on your death. It prepares you for heaven. The Puritans said that often. It's in the middle of your suffering, anticipating the non-stop joys of heaven, the glory that we're going to is not to be compared to the suffering that we're in. That's meditating on heaven.

It's thinking through the stewardship of your resources and what you have and what you're doing with them. Because what we have has been given by Christ for his glory and therefore, how we spend our money, how much we save, how much we give, the kind of house we're living in, the lifestyle we're

pursuing, we've got to think that all through. Again, not aestheticism, not that there's anything necessarily wrong with those things, but you know what? Prosperity knits the soul to this life. We can get too comfortable and while God's work suffers, we're buying stuff to replace stuff that doesn't need replaced. We need to think ahead. We need to lay up treasure in heaven.

I was watching one of my favorite programs the other night, Shark Tank. It was an old episode, they're reruns, and you know what? This episode had this guy on and he was selling the DudeRobe. It was just these robes that he had made, very, very casual and comfortable for guys. Nobody was buying. In fact, he didn't get any shark to bite, but before it was done, it was an interesting story emerged. I thought about it and go, "Wow, this is what we're talking about on Sunday."

This guy had been a law graduate. In his first year out of school, a particular man, I don't know if it was a friend or just a friend of a friend, asked him to write a contract for a sports company he was beginning. It was a start-up. So, this young lawyer wrote a contract for a sports start-up company and when he had written it, the man said, "Look, I'm a bit strapped for cash. It's a start-up. I'm investing all that I have in the company. Could I give you some stocks in my company instead of cash?"

And the guy thought about it. He went to his wife. His wife said, "No, you don't know where that's going. You don't know if you'd ever get any dividends on that. We need the money right now." And he took it. He went on to say that guy was Kevin Plank and he started Under Armour.

And one of the guys on the Tank said, "How much would those stocks be worth today?" You want to know? \$250 million. Man, he's been in therapy a long time. Can you imagine that? Getting up every day going, "I blew a quarter of a billion dollars?" And you could tell it in his face. The sharks didn't give him anything. And he went out, and you could just, I felt sorry for the guy.

I thought about it and go, "Hold on a minute, Philip. This is the challenge for you." Let's be fair to him and his wife. It's got to gnaw at them but let's be fair to them. They didn't know the future. Did they know that Kevin Plank was Kevin Plank and that that start-up company was Under Armour? No. If he'd have known that, do you think he would have taken the stocks? Of course.

But that's the challenge here and we know that heaven's coming. And yet, we're not banking there. We're not buying stock and treasure in heaven through our giving, our living. That's what it means to think about things which are above. It's having a life dominated by the pattern of heaven.

Maybe a good illustration of this from the Bible would be how the Jewish men and women thought about Jerusalem. In 1 Kings 8:48, when Solomon builds the temple, he says to the Jewish people to pray towards the temple. Which means that wherever you were in Israel, some of us will be there in the next three weeks, you may be many miles away from the temple but your mind was directed that way.

In fact, Jeremiah 51:50, when Israel is in exile in Babylon, you know what it says there? Let Jerusalem come into your mind. I haven't often sat under my father's preaching because he's not a preacher, per se, but I once let him speak in a church I pastored in Ohio and he preached on that text. And he told it. He wasn't original. He stole the thought from Spurgeon and preached the great message in that and said, "But for the Christian, it's the new Jerusalem." It's heaven. It's the heavenly city. It's the life to which we're going. Let Jerusalem come into your mind. Tomorrow, at the machine, let Jerusalem come

into your mind. Elbows deep in diapers, let Jerusalem come into your mind. Wreathing in pain, longing for a new body, let Jerusalem come into your mind. Set your affections on things above.

Great story. Dr. Martin Luther King, when he was a little boy, rode a bus across town every day to his high school. It was the days in which blacks had to go to the back of the bus. And he describes how when he was a little boy, he would come on to the bus and there was the white section and the black section. Even if the white section was empty, he had to go to the back of the bus and take a seat in the black section.

And even if he got to the black section and every seat was taken and there were some seats empty in the white section, he had to stand in the black section. And here's what he said about that experience as a little boy. "I would end up having to go to the back of that bus with my body, but every time I got on that bus, I left my mind on the front seat." He said, "Someday, my body will catch up with my mind." He longed for a day in America when every man would be judged not by the color of his skin but by the character of his life.

And thankfully, that day did come when Martin Luther King and every African-American could sit at the front of the bus. That's a beautiful thought. "I left my mind, every time on that bus, on the front seat because I was determined to get there some day." And he did.

And is that not what Paul is saying, hey? Set your affection, your mind, on things above because that's where you're headed, where Jesus is at the right hand of God. Are you thinking that way? Are you acting that way? Is heaven already at work in your life?

Let's move to number three, the believer's predicament. I'm not going to spend a lot of time on this one or the next one. That really was the heart of the message that which we've just said because we're starting this series on heaven and before we talk about it's climate and it's furniture and it's mansions and it's streets, we'll get there. But heaven can't wait. Our minds have already got to be there.

And this is the believer's predicament, verse three. There is this language again of union. "For you died with Christ," implication just as verse one, "You were raised with Christ." Jesus now is your life and where is Jesus? He's at the right hand of God. So that means in many ways our life source, Jesus Christ, and the life he promises is hidden with Christ in God.

That's interesting language. He's already given them one reason for seeking the things which are above because that's where Jesus is and that's our position, but now he's giving them a second reason because we died with him and our life is hidden with Christ in God.

Here's the point. I'm just going to explain it for you. Having died with Christ, past tense, at Calvary, through his substitutionary atonement, we have been brought to new life in Christ, through the work of the Holy Spirit and regeneration. We have been raised with him and that new life in Christ who is risen and ascended is now with God and it's hidden, hidden.

From who? Most commenters agree from the world. It's in heaven, not on the earth. They don't understand us. The life we live, the actions we take. As Derek Tidball says, "The divine mystery, which has been disclosed to believers has not been revealed to everyone and the truth lies concealed to many." Our life in Christ is, for the most part, a hidden fact. It's hidden with Christ in God.

Let me reinforce this thought. I think this is where we're at, it's over in 1 John 3, right, verse 1. You know it, but there's a little phrase in there we often skip over. "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us that we should be called the children of God." Now listen, "Therefore, the world does not know us," how interesting, "because it didn't know him." That's where we're at, I believe, in Colossians 3:3. Our life is hidden with Christ in God and what we know to be true they don't believe is true. The heartbeat of our life is a mystery to them.

In fact, according to 1 Peter 4:4, they are surprised that we don't run with them any more. "Where's the guy who used to get sloshed on a Friday night?" "I heard he's going to church on a Sunday with a Bible in his hand. Can you believe it?" "Nuts." "Crazy." "Who took him over?" "What happened to him?" "Is he frightened of the wife?"

How do you explain this change in this man's life? They scratch their head that we don't run the way we used to run with them. Our lives have changed. They scratch their head when a Christian business man says, "You know what? I can't make that contract because there's something there that's illegal and you know what? I'm not going to do this kind of under the table deal. I'm not going to fudge the numbers. I'm not going to dodge the IRS." Everybody in the office doesn't know him. What's going on here?

The young girl at college, single, attractive, pushing back on the advances of men who want to sexually entice her. I mean, everybody's doing it but she's not doing it. I mean, she's beautiful, attractive. "Why's she keeping herself for one man?" "Why doesn't she play around a little bit?" "Everybody else is doing it." They don't know her. They don't know her hidden life, what makes her tick. I could go on, you get the point. You can make those scenarios out yourself. That's the point. They don't understand.

See, we're caught between times. We're caught between what we have become in Jesus Christ and what we will eventually be when he comes again. And we're living in the light of that and it encourages us and it shapes our thinking and it directs the decisions we make.

They don't get it because they don't see what we see. They only see what's seen. We look at those things which are unseen. The Holy Spirit, which is the promise of heaven, is at work in us changing us. They don't get that and that puts us in a predicament because we can feel like fish out of water, which we do often as Christians. We look odd to them and crazy to them and they have to pass laws to prohibit our values and lifestyles because they don't want us interfering in life because we're out of touch and different.

We're caught between that time, but that's okay. That's our predicament. We'll kind of live between times. We'll need to remind ourselves that we are pilgrims and aliens. And while we can see in our mind's eye what Jesus is doing, what he's yet to do, they don't see it and they don't understand it. And we live in the tension of that. Does that not help you when you're feeling a little bit out of sorts with the culture around you, a little bit behind the times?

I like what one writer says. Occasionally, a story surfaces in the media describing someone who died leaving millions of dollars. No one had a clue that the person was so rich because he or she led such a simple life shunning all luxuries. The same may be said about the glorious future of Christians. Outsiders may mistake them for weak, insignificant, dishonored fools for Christ, little knowing that they are tied to the ruler of the universe and destined to reign in glory. I love that. You know, we find out that this person died and they had a million dollars. They were rich, never saw that. They don't see what's coming

for us. They don't understand what's going on in us. That's our predicament. Our life is hidden with God in Christ. But let me say this to finish. That's not going to last forever.

The position, the priority, the predicament, the prospect. Verse four, "When Christ who is our life appears," he's hidden in heaven until the times of restoration. He's going to appear. "When Christ who is our life appears, then we will also appear with him in glory." The glorious nature, the wonderful prospect that every Christian has in his heart will become manifest someday, not hidden, not hidden. The foolishness of the world will give way to the wisdom of God. The rule of Satan will give way to the reign of Christ. The Church militant will join with the Church triumphant. Faith will give way to sight and our experience will catch up with our position. And what we're becoming, we will become. That deserved an amen. Are you asleep this morning?

What about 1 John 3? Let me finish what I started. "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed up on us, that we should be called the children of God. Therefore, the world does not know us because it did not know him. Beloved, now we are the children of God and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be."

There's our predicament. There's what's hidden. There's what's yet to take place. But we know that that hiddenness, that concealment, is going to be visible and manifest when Jesus comes and, "We shall be like him and we shall see him as he is. And every man that has this thought purifies himself." That helps us to stay pure, helps us to stay focused, helps us to keep going, helps us to be different, helps us not to conform to this world.

It's going to be a glorious consummation. We are already risen with Christ. Heaven has already begun. The Spirit of God is changing us. We are yet to be glorified. That fact is hidden. Sometimes it's even hidden to us when we look at ourselves on a given day. We wonder, "Am I truly a Christian? There's not a lot there today." It's even hidden from us and it's hidden from the world that doesn't understand us in the first place.

And some day, you know what? We're going to be made perfect when Jesus comes and that which is hidden will be revealed and that which is yet incomplete will be completed.

And you know what? That moment's going to be a moment of vindication, a moment of manifestation when the Master's minority that get laughed at in the media, they get poked at at work, they get rejected in homes all across the world, that the little flock of Jesus among the wolves will someday be manifest, where the saints will be glorified.

In fact, according to 2 Thessalonians 1:10, "He comes to be glorified in his saints." God's going to put his glory on display in our glorified bodies. He's going to throw his arms around us before the world and acknowledge us as his people. He's going to take us to heaven. That's the Cinderella moment for the Church. Where all the ugly sisters we have to live with in this old world, that look at us and mock us and say we'll never be anything, "You're nothing." They give us a hard time, but our Prince is coming and to the world's utter surprise, he's going to pick us out from among them all and he's going to take his bride home, a moment of vindication when it will be worth it all.

You know, I was thinking about that. This isn't the best illustration but it was fun for me to think about it. In 1993, with this we're done, in 1993 I come out to the Shepard's Conference at Grace Community. I

hosted Dr. MacArthur in Belfast and, in a kind gift to me, invited me to come out to Shepard's Conference and come and enjoy that. He said, "Look, I can't be sure right now," when he was visiting with me in Belfast, "but, you know, when you come out to the conference in March, if I have nobody staying with me," he said, "you could come and stay with me."

Woo, you know? 10 days in the home of John MacArthur. And I started thinking about it. I tried not to get my hopes up but, you know, I kind of got the message a week or two to go that looked like that was a real possibility so, long story short, I fly from Belfast to London and I pick a flight into LA with several English pastors. You know what, I don't want to be kind of stereotype, but many of them were kind of snooty and, you know, here's the dumb Irishman and they kind of half ignored me. Throughout the flight, I kind of kept to myself.

I had hosted Dr. MacArthur. There was a chance I'm going to be staying with him and they talked about reading in his books and they talked about, "Hey, it's going to be great to actually sit under him," and I'm sitting there going, "I've met him. I've met him. But I'm not telling you guys." And then they kind of, I got the cold shoulder.

But the beauty was, the best was yet to come where we get to Grace Community that night, get off the plane, we're ferried over to the church. I think it was Lance Quinn or Jerry Wragg and Phil Johnson were there to meet us. We were seated in the front two rows of an empty auditorium. There was about 20 of us and they were kind of fanning us out and they were telling us what our assignments were.

So, they said, "Hey, Mr. Jones, you will be staying with Mr. and Mrs. Smith. Mr. Smith, you'll be staying with Mr. and Mrs. Jones," and then at some point in it they go, "and Philip, you'll be staying with Dr. MacArthur and Patricia." And you could tell, all these guys looked around and went, "The Irishman?" And I'm kind of going, "Oh." It was bad. It was a lot of ego, a lot of pride and a lot of arrogance. "You know, I'm going to the MacArthur's. Where are you going?"

And, to some degree, I don't know if it's the best illustration, if we can take the sin out of it, it's a good illustration, the point was vindication. They had no idea that I knew him and out of his kindness, he was going to have me in his home. And I lived in the hope of that and that hope was realized. When I sat on that pew and it actually happened, "Philip, you're staying with John and Patricia." And I had a wonderful 10 days in his home and the man is a wonderful host and his wife is a wonderful hostess. You get the point. It was a moment of kind of relished vindication, glory.

It'll be nothing, won't it? It'll be nothing when that moment comes, when that which is hidden will be revealed and what we shall be, what we're hoping will take place will take place and Jesus will be glorified in his saints. Set your affection on things above. Anticipate that moment, live for that time.

Father, we thank you for our time in the Word this morning. Old Richard Sibbes, we look forward to meeting him in heaven, that godly old Puritan, of whom it was said, "Heaven was in him before he was in heaven."

Oh, God, I pray that my family, our friends, our workmates will see in all of us a desire to be there more than here. They'll detect something in the way we handle ourselves, in the way we spend our money, in the way we live, in the way we think, the choices we make that, you know what, our anchor is somewhere else. That we're citizens of heaven, aliens and strangers.

That we understand that we're already there in the mind of God. We've been raised with Christ who is at the right hand of God and the Spirit of God has been given to us as the promise of heaven. And the change is already underway, hidden, misunderstood, not fully realized until that glorious day when we'll be with Christ.

Lord, I pray that this series would change my life, would change our church, and would allow us to make a greater impact in life for Jesus' sake, amen.