

## Our Eternal Hope in a Temporal World # 9

Colossians 3: 1-4

In the preceding verses Paul has addressed the dangers and pitfalls that were abundant in modern society. Although we have advanced some 2,000 years in time, the same dangers are prevalent among us today. After dealing with and exposing the dangers associated with various false doctrines, Paul immediately brings the reader right back to the foundation of our faith, the Lord Jesus Christ. He knew that temptation abounded on every hand and many were confused about what to believe. Paul was aware of the need for a proper perspective and focus. If the believer is to overcome the difficulties and pitfalls of life, his focus must be upon the Lord, having a spiritual perspective rather than a worldly one.

This is a very familiar passage in the Colossian letter. Believers are challenged to set their affections on things above, rather than on the things of the earth. Paul knew the importance of a right relationship with the Lord and a proper attitude while traveling through this life. Much that we see, know, and experience in life is temporal at best. Many today place their faith and trust in things that cannot last. The Christian does not have to live in such uncertainty and dread. Our hope has been placed in the Lord. These bodies, as well as the earth on which we live, will one day fade away, but that which we have in Christ is eternal. Let's take a moment to consider the [assurances](#) afforded the believer as we think on: [Our Eternal Hope in a Temporal World](#).

**I. An Eternal Position** (1) – [If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.](#) Paul begins this series of thoughts with a comforting reminder of the believer's eternal position in Christ. In this verse we are reminded of:

**A. Our Relationship** (1a) – [If ye then be risen with Christ.](#) Keep in mind Paul had just addressed several false doctrines that had gained widespread approval and notoriety in that day. These doctrines did not embrace Christ alone as the Savior and source of eternal life. While others were bogged down and distressed with various activities and expectations, the believer could rejoice in the liberty they enjoyed in Christ. These were set apart from all others. They had been resurrected in Christ, delivered from the bondage of sin and ordinances of man. They had been accepted in the beloved, made part of the body of Christ and partakers of the eternal inheritance. That relationship was not earned or deserved, but it is eternal.

- We have discussed on many occasions the temporal nature of much in life. There is much that I am unsure about, but my relationship with Christ is certain. It is absolute and eternal. I have been delivered from sin, redeemed and reconciled to God, quickened by His Spirit, and destined for eternity in heaven through Christ!

**B. Our Responsibility (1b)** – *If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above.* While the world searched for truth and was carried about with every wind of doctrine, the believer was set apart and different. We have been delivered from the demands of the flesh and the traditions of men. We have been born again in Christ, and because of our relationship with Him, we are not to be entangled with the bondage and false doctrines of the world. Our focus is not to be on the teaching or traditions of men. We are expected to seek those things which are above. In essence, seek the things of God rather than the foolishness of men.

- In an effort to defeat us, Satan would have us become so consumed with the cares of this world that we fail to focus on the Lord and our obligations of Christian service. Many believers live defeated and fruitless lives because they do not seek the things of God. The psychologist says, “Look within;” the opportunist, “Look around.” The optimist would say, “Look ahead,” while the pessimist declares, “Look out!” The legalist would advise you to look down – in an effort to find a new set of shackles to put on, being bound by human tradition. God declares, “Look up!”<sup>1</sup>

**C. Our Resource (1c)** – *If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.* Paul knew the world was looking to popular philosophy or human tradition. The believer was not hindered by such limitations. They had a resource the world knew nothing of, one that exceeded all human wisdom and resources. Our Lord lived and died upon the earth, but He didn’t stay dead. He rose victorious from the grave, ascending back to the right hand of the Father, where He continues to sit today.

- We have a resource that is beyond comprehension. His wisdom is beyond explanation. His power and abilities are limitless. He is the omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent Lord. While the world offered wisdom and resources limited to the abilities of men, the believer had no such fear. We enjoy complete confidence and assurance in our Lord. *Heb.12:2 – Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.* *1 Pet.3:22 – Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.*

**II. An Eternal Perspective (2-3)** – Rather than having a temporal outlook and mindset, Paul challenges the believer to develop and maintain an eternal perspective. This involves:

**A. Our Desire (2a)** – *Set your affection on things above.* This deals with the mindset of the believer, including the will, affections, and conscience. Paul knew many whose hearts were set toward things that could never satisfy. They sought to please the lusts of the flesh. Their focus was upon the here and now, with little or no thought for eternity. Much of this left them empty and vain.

Worldly desires led to a life void of peace and contentment. Paul also knew the believer did not have to live in such poverty. There was much to be gained in Christ. He is to be the desire and passion of the believer. The world offers nothing of lasting value, with much that it does resulting in heartache and pain. With Jesus, and those things which are above and eternal, as our desire, we can enjoy the fullness of God and His abundance rather than settling for the meager supply offered by the world!

**B. Our Distractions (2b)** – [Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.](#) Paul understood the weakness of the flesh and the attraction of the world. The flesh naturally desires the things that appeal to it, the things of the earth. The believer must be aware of the lure of the world and the dangers associated with indulging in its attractions.

▪ I have no doubt that I have been saved. I am secure in Christ, headed for heaven, but this body of flesh is not redeemed. I still deal with the desires and tendencies of the flesh continually. You do as well. Those desires may change as we age or with various circumstances, but we continue to battle the flesh. We must be mindful of the distractions we encounter and seek to avoid the temptations of the flesh! [Rom.7:18-19, 24 – For I know that in me \(that is, in my flesh,\) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.](#) <sup>[19]</sup> [For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.](#) <sup>[24]</sup> [O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?](#)

**C. Our Deliverance (3)** – [For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.](#) What comfort and encouragement offered in this verse. The believer faced a constant battle with the flesh. There was a continual tendency to feed the flesh and focus upon the world rather than the Lord. Paul reveals that although these struggles exist, we do not have to be defeated by them. Yes we continue to dwell in a body of flesh, prone to sin, but the old man of sin is dead and we have been hidden in Christ. We may live in a body of flesh, forced to deal with the temptations associated with it, but we do not have to be defeated. We have a source of strength that provides the ability to overcome and be victorious in Christ!

**D. Our Discipline (2)** – [Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.](#) We must understand the discipline required in maintaining an eternal perspective. We must take the initiative to set our affection on things above rather than things on the earth. Each day we live we encounter choices. Will I seek the Lord and His help and guidance today or will I go it alone and try to overcome in myself? We will never obtain a proper perspective and be productive for the Lord if we don't make a conscious effort to seek Him daily. You will never live a prosperous Christian life apart from close fellowship with the Lord.

**III. An Eternal Presence (4)** – *When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.* We conclude our study with an eternal truth regarding an eternal presence for the believer. Paul knew if we kept this truth in mind, our perspective for now and the future would be in order. He speaks of:

**A. Our Anticipation** – *When Christ...shall appear.* Paul doesn't speak of an event that he hoped would one day transpire. He doesn't speak of something he is somewhat sure of. He speaks of an eternal truth that will come to pass. At an appointed time on God's calendar, our Lord will appear in the clouds of glory to rapture the church out of this world into heaven. It isn't a question of if it will happen; we know the Lord is coming again.

- Paul spoke to those who were surrounded by difficulty and adversity. There were countless doctrines that led down various theological paths. There was no need for confusion or doubt for the believer. Christ left this world with a promise to return. His return is more certain than anything we know. *John 14:1-3 – Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.* <sup>[2]</sup> *In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.* <sup>[3]</sup> *And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.* *Acts 1:11 – Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.*

**B. Our Transformation** – *When Christ, who is our life...*The world may have offered little hope or assurance, but the believer was not dependent upon the world in this life or the life to come. All those who are born again have been resurrected a new creature in Christ. We do not live in and of ourselves. We are not expected to make our own way or forge our own path. Christ is our life. He is the essence of our being. We are complete in Him. I stand in need of nothing my Lord is unable to provide. I face no trial or adversity that is beyond His sovereign control. Death may one day claim this mortal body, but then I will live as never before. My existence is not dictated by or tied to this world in which we currently dwell. *Gal.2:20 – I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*

**C. Our Glorification (4b)** – *When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.* Much of what the believers in Paul's day encountered left little to be desired. They were persecuted and mocked for their faith in Christ. They were considered ignorant to believe in someone they had never seen while rejecting the latest philosophies of their time.

- Paul encouraged them to look beyond their present suffering. This life would endure for a season and then it would end. One day Christ will come and call for all who belong to Him. At that moment they would enter the presence of Christ, receiving a new, glorified body, to dwell with Him throughout eternity.
- I will admit that I cannot begin to comprehend all that will transpire at that moment, but I know it will be glorious. I know at that moment we will experience a glory unlike we've experienced before. We will be changed, in a moment, in a twinkling of an eye. This mortal will put on immortality and I will dwell with Christ throughout the endless age! [1 Cor.15:51-54 – Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, <sup>\[52\]</sup> In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. <sup>\[53\]</sup> For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal \*must\* put on immortality. <sup>\[54\]</sup> So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. 1 John 3:2 – Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.](#)

**Conclusion:** I rejoice we can obtain and possess an eternal hope in a temporal world. <sup>[1]</sup> *My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus' name. On Christ the solid Rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand.* <sup>[2]</sup> *When darkness veils His lovely face, I rest on His unchanging grace; In every high and stormy gale My anchor holds within the veil. On Christ the solid Rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand.* <sup>[4]</sup> *When He shall come with trumpet sound, O may I then in Him be found, Dressed in His righteousness alone, Faultless to stand before the throne. On Christ the solid Rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand.* <sup>ii</sup> Do you possess an eternal hope in this ever changing temporal world? It is found in Jesus alone. If there is a need in your life, seek Him!

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<sup>i</sup> Thought adapted from The John Phillips Commentary Series: *Exploring Colossians and Philemon*, Kregel Publications, Michigan, 2002.

<sup>ii</sup> *The Solid Rock*, Words: Edward Mote, Music: William B. Bradbury