



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Colossians 3: 1-4

Lesson 10 of 15

2018

"Things Above"

TRANSCRIPT

Thank you, Mark, and good morning. We are continuing our studies in Colossians, and we are beginning chapter three with verses one through four. Colossians chapter three, beginning with verse one:

¹Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ²Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. ³For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.

Colossians 3: 1-4

May the Lord bless this reading of His Word and bless our time of study in it together. Let's bow in a word of prayer.

Heavenly Father, we give You thanks and praise for this time together this morning—this Lord's Day. It's a blessing and a privilege for us to be here together as the redeemed; as Your people; as saints – every one of us. What a thought that is: we are saints; we are 'set-apart' ones; we are sanctified ones. You are in the process of changing us, and that is what Paul's text is largely about today—how You do that and what we are to do in our part in that. But You're doing it; it's Your work from beginning

to end, and You promised not to forsake us in it. And the work You began You will complete until the day of Christ Jesus.

And this is a very important part of Your work, our being together on a Sunday morning, the Lord's Day, and coming here to worship; coming here to join with one another in the reading of Scripture and thinking upon these great thoughts—this revelation that has been given to us. And that is Paul's great exhortation that we do that.

And so, Lord, I pray that You will teach us, that You will work within our hearts to give us a desire to do the very things Paul says, "Set our mind on the things above." That's the exhortation; and may the Spirit of God bring that desire about in our hearts that will change our lives. And we give You praise and thanks for giving us the means to become increasingly like Your Son and increasingly successful in this life as You count success: holiness, righteousness, obedience. Bless us to that end, Father, as we study these things together.

So, as I say, it's a blessing and a privilege, and we give You thanks for giving us a desire to be here. That's an evidence of a changed heart of the new life that Paul has been speaking of; we want to be here; we know it's important to be here. And so, may the Spirit of God guide us in our thinking and build us up in the faith—and we commit that to You. We pray for Your spiritual blessings upon us in this hour.

And we pray for Your material blessings as well. The fact that we're here is pretty clear evidence that we're pretty healthy today, and You've given us the means to get from our homes to this place. You've given us the material ability to do that and the health to enjoy the day and to be here and to think. You've given us a bright mind, a sound mind. All of these are Your blessings, and they come from You. We take them for granted. Who gives much of a thought of being able to get into his or her car and go someplace? Who gives a lot of thought to the fact that we have lungs that can take in air and oxygen, and that we're able to eat and drink and enjoy life? It is so abundant we take it for granted, and yet it's a blessing from You, and we thank You for it.

Yet, You remove that from some people, and they enter into difficulties, and some go through the 'valley of the shadow of death', and sometimes we do go through dark valleys. In fact, all of us will, at some point—but You're in that as well. And so, we have the privilege of praying for those who are and we have the privilege of praying for ourselves and giving You thanks for the good things You give us, and asking You to make us grateful and aware of all of the blessings that come from You because every blessing does come from You; every good thing in life comes from You. But we pray for those that are in difficulty, and we pray You bless them.

Bless us now, Lord, as we look to Your Word. We pray that You bless us as we sing our next hymn; and may all of this be good preparation for us to study and grow. We pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.

The 19th century evangelist, Dwight L. Moody, would warn people about people 'being so heavenly minded that they were no earthly good'. There's some value in that, I suppose, but I must say I've never met a Christian who was 'too' heavenly minded. I don't think that's our problem today. I don't think Paul thought it was a problem in his day. In fact, his instruction to us is to be heavenly minded; for that is the only way to be any earthly good. He tells the Colossians, "...keep seeking the things above, where Christ is...". "Where Christ is..." —in heaven. He is alive from the dead, ascended to the Father's right hand, and we are to be thinking of Him—where He is and all of the things pertaining to Him. That is how we're to live. This is Paul's instruction in Colossians chapter three, verses one through four.

This part of the book is about application. So, we now enter into the second phase of the book, a new part of the book. Paul developed doctrine in the previous two chapters and now he shows its implications for our life. At the end of chapter two, he told the Colossians that every believer in Jesus Christ died with Christ. His death was our death. He died as our substitute. He took our place in judgment. He died as our representative, and He paid for all of our sins at the cross. As a result, when we

appropriate all of that, (all of those blessings), through faith, we are no longer the people we once were. The old person is dead; we are new creatures; we have new life. But how are we to live that new life?

That was one of the issues the Colossians were struggling with and it's one that Christians deal with in every generation. —How do we overcome sin and live well? Well in Colossae, there were false teachers instructing them how to do just that and suggesting how to do that by submitting to a system of rules – ‘do not handle, do not taste, do not touch’. They were trying to put them under the Law, trying to put them under a legalistic system. They were teaching the Colossians a method for rising above earthly temptations by means of following ‘a code of conduct’. It was made up of ceremonies and rules.

Now, that is typical of human religion. It's the idea that we need to protect ourselves from the world and its temptations by building a fence of man-made rules around our lives. And so, men develop a list of taboos; they develop a list of things to be avoided, things not to taste and things not to touch so that the spiritual life becomes a method of rule keeping. It's reduced to a mechanical kind of system of following the rules.

But that's not the Christian life. There are principles of conduct, of course, but it is fundamentally a relationship. The Christian has been joined to the living Christ. As Paul says in verse three, ‘We have been hidden with Christ in God.’ We are in Christ and Christ is in us—and we are in God. We are joined to Him so that His life is lived in us. We have His power in us which enables us to obey and overcome temptation. And we have access to that life through faith. That's how we live: by faith.

But there are things that we must do to strengthen our faith and motivate to obedience. —We must think on the right things. That is what Paul instructs us to do. But first He lays the ground for that instruction by reminding us of who we are. That's the significance of the word ‘Therefore’, that begins the chapter. It looks to something before; it connects us to the previous passage where the believer is described as having

died with Christ. So "Therefore" is drawing an implication or a conclusion from what he has just said.

So, "Therefore," he says in light of what he has previously said, (and what he has previously said is that 'your old life is gone; you have died'), "if you have been raised up with Christ" –(or better) – "since you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above." Since a believer is dead to the old life and has been raised up to the new life... 'Therefore, Live it!', is what he's saying. 'and seek those things above'. And we can do that, and we should do that! —because we are new creatures. —we are members of God's family. And we don't have to struggle in order to obtain that position. We don't have to struggle each day to become a child of God, or a son or a daughter of God; for that is already ours, through faith, at the moment of faith. We have that through Christ, who obtained all of that for us. We received it the moment we believed in Him.

So now, because of who we are as children of God, our interests are to be different. We are different people. Our pursuits, our affections, our desires are to be different. They're to be consistent with our new standing and position and our new life. We are to seek that life; our thoughts are to be oriented around 'the things above', and our wills, our efforts, are to be applied to obtaining them, obtaining 'the things above'. We are to pursue them—and it's to be a constant effort. That's the idea here. 'Keep seeking continually' is the sense of the command.

To that, Paul adds in verse two, "Set our mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth." The first command – 'to seek' – addresses our will, our resolve. The second command addresses our minds—the things that fill our minds affect the way we live our lives. We have an expression, 'You are what you eat.' If a person eats unhealthy food, it's most likely that he or she is going to be an unhealthy person. And it's the same in matters of the mind. If we focus on worldly things, we will be worldly. But if we put our minds and our thoughts on heavenly things, our lives will be influenced by the heavenly.

The way to overcome the lure of the world and temptations of the flesh is not by concentrating on all the things that we shouldn't do. Now really, what that often does is

stir up the desire for those very things because we are focusing our mind on those things. The best way to overcome evil is with good. That's what Paul says in Romans chapter 12, verse 21b, we "...overcome evil with good." And we do that by filling our minds with good things, with good thoughts; 'The things that are above', as Paul says. Well, what are these things above that are so important for us to fix our minds on, fill our thoughts with? Paul doesn't say, but the context gives a good indication—they are where Christ is; "seated at the right hand of God."

So, we can break that down and understand 'the things above' and the things we are 'to think of' by looking at that instruction. First of all, let's think of God. We're to make Him the object of our thoughts and affections. We are to consider the greatness of our God. There is nothing more sanctifying; there is nothing more life-changing and purifying than doing that. A few weeks ago, I quoted Charles Spurgeon on thinking about God. I'm going to quote Him again; it's an excellent quote. He said, "*There is something exceeding improving to the mind in contemplation of the Divinity. No subject will tend to more humble the mind than thoughts of God. But while the whole subject humbles the mind, it also expands it. He who often thinks of God will have a larger mind than the man who simply plods around this narrow globe. I know nothing which can so comfort the soul, so calm the swelling billows of sorrow and grief, so speak peace to the winds of trial as a devout musing upon the subject of the Godhead.*"

Now, Spurgeon introduced his sermon that Sunday morning, in 1855, with those words. —It was his first sermon of his great London ministry, and he preached it at the age of 20. Well, that's a profound thought, a profound way of looking at things from a person at such a young age. But that can explain the life of Charles Haddon Spurgeon and why from such an early age he had such an influence. And not just in London or England, for he had a worldwide influence. He had a life of wisdom and stability because, from a young age, he did this very thing that Paul is speaking of here. —He set his mind on the things above, on the things of God. He meditated deeply, thought deeply about the Godhead. And it does expand the mind and sanctify.

Listen, it is appropriate, and it is necessary at times to give a sermon on things like finances. Or to spend time during a lesson exposing error that maybe is taught by a prominent preacher or that is circulating in a popular heresy. Those things need to be discussed; those things need to be exposed. But that's not to be a steady spiritual diet. We want to grow, and nothing will improve our mind more and make us better people than thinking upon God and His greatness. He is infinite and eternal and there is no end to that subject. We will spend all eternity on this subject and never come to the end of it. World without end, subject without end—And that's what we're to think about. And what a great subject. He is holy; and just; and loving. His love is sovereign and electing; He chose every believer for salvation from all eternity. That is a great thought.

Now, I know that is a thought that troubles some—however, why it would confound a Christian I find puzzling, for it is taught throughout the Bible. Moses taught it in Deuteronomy 7; the electing grace of God. Jesus taught it in John chapter 6. Paul taught it in Ephesians chapter 1:3, 'You are chosen from the foundation of the world.' And here in chapter 3 and verse 12, he will teach it again. Then, Peter taught election in 2 Peter chapter 1, verse 10. And that is just a few of the passages where the doctrine of unconditional election is taught; it is God's work.

What could be more mentally healthy and encouraging than to know that the holy God chose us out of His Sovereign Grace. Not because we are holy; not because we are deserving; and not because we are lovely...For we are not! He chose dead sinners for Himself and for His blessing, chose us to be His children, made us alive and whole, and He will never let us go. After all, if He loved us when we were His enemies, if He loved us when we were completely unlovely, He will love us now that we are His children and love us regardless and He will never stop loving us and never forsake us and never stop changing us, transforming us. That is, in part, what Paul wants us to think about: God the Father, His greatness and wisdom, His sovereignty, and His love.

But at God's right hand is Christ His Son. So, we should set our minds on Him as well. He's described as seated, and that tells us a lot about what we are to think about. The fact that He is seated in heaven tells us about His deity; His providence; and His

origin is heaven. He's the eternal Son of God. He is from heaven. He's seated there; this speaks of His deity. The fact that He's seated at God's right hand tells us about His power, the Almighty power that He wields. And the fact that He is seated tells us about His work— "It is finished." This is the stuff of endless sermons. You could spend 50 years preaching on all of this, looking at it from all different angles and preaching it. If you preach through the Word of God, you are going to preach those things. This is what we are to think about.

But when we think of Him, we should remember that He is not only God—He is also man. That He's very God of very God; He is our Creator, (that's John chapter 1, verse 3, "All things came into being through Him..."). But He is also our Savior. He became a man, (that's John chapter 1, verse 14, "And the Word became flesh,... and we beheld His glory..."). And after becoming a man, He died in our place. All our sins were laid upon Him, and they were punished in Him, and in Him they were removed when He was crucified—removed "As far as the east is from the west..." (Ps 103:12). —And that work is finished. Furthermore, there's nothing that we can do, nothing that we can add to what He has done that could complete it—because it is already complete. That is the significance of Him being seated. —Having finished the work of atonement; having finished the work of salvation on the cross; having satisfied God's justice— He sat down.

You know this, the priests in the Old Testament, the priests of Aaron, never sat down during their priestly work. There was no chair for them in the Tabernacle or the temple. There's lots of furniture in those places: There was the altar, and the candelabra, and various articles of furniture—but there was no chair. And there was no chair because priests in the Old Testament never sat down because their work was never finished; it was never done. The final sacrifice was never given; they always had to do another one - morning and evening, morning and evening; and then the great Day of Atonement; and the Passover. But this Great High Priest completed everything necessary for our salvation. He declared, from the cross, "It is finished." And that was the greatest statement of triumph ever given. "It is finished." —He declared the victory in those words. And when He ascended into heaven, He sat down.

Now, this great thought will occupy our minds forever as well, "...that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.", as Paul wrote in Romans 5:8. We can understand Him dying for a good person. In fact, this is what Paul says. We can understand that maybe someone will die in the place of another if that person is a loved one, is a good person and deserving. We can understand dying for deserving people, but we are not deserving. We were hostile toward God. We were His enemies when He died for us. That's how Paul describes us in Romans 8:10, – at enmity with Him. I like the way P. T. Forsyth put it. (I quote this periodically, for it is a great statement), "We are rebels, taken with weapons in our hands." In the midst of our rebellion is when He died for us and saved us. Why did He do that? Why did He love us? Well, as I said, that's a mystery that we will meditate on for all eternity. It will never cease to amaze us. The amazement will only increase.

But it ought to amaze us now, and it ought to be the object of our thoughts now. He is still ministering to us. His work is finished regarding the atonement, regarding propitiation – satisfying God in regard to our sin and judgment—we can't add anything to His sacrifice; we simply receive it by faith. But His priestly work of praying for us hasn't ended. He is still ministering to us from the throne of heaven, where He is seated and He is guiding us, and He is protecting us—And He is seated there in power. So, all of the power of the Godhead is working in our favor, working in your favor as His child, individually working for you.

You can have an illustration of this from the Aaronic priesthood. Aaron and the priests that followed him had certain clothing they wore, certain articles that they wore. One was a breastplate with the names of the tribes of Israel, the 12 tribes. And then on his shoulder he wore these stones that had engraved on them the tribes of Israel, six on one, six on the other. He would bring them before God. That was part of his priestly service. And that's what the Lord Jesus Christ is doing for us now, bringing us before Him – not in some great sort of collection—but individually He's dealing with us. He's praying for you at every moment – right now, today, tomorrow, forever – interceding for you personally according to your needs and your particular issues.

And His power is working for us. It is an almighty power: But it is power tempered by love and guided by wisdom. If it was simply power, the power of God, the omnipotence of God, that would be a frightening thing; power can annihilate. But this is that kind of power that could vaporize the universe in a moment, governed by His love and directed by His infinite wisdom so that it always does what is right— 'Fix your mind on that. Know it to be true.' He may lead us through some difficult experiences. He may lead us through the 'valley of the shadow of death', and He will do that; you can count on that. We're all going to go through dark valleys, but He's always beside us, and He's always before us, leading us and protecting us.

John Bunyan gives a good example of that. (You have noticed, I'm sure, that I like to refer to *Pilgrim's Progress* because Bunyan had amazing insight into the Christian life, and he covers all of it in that book, both the first one and the second one.) Early in the first book, when Christian comes to the Wicket Gate and sees the cross and the burden falls off his shoulders, he begins his journey to the celestial city. But it is not long before he begins to have difficulties along the way, (which is true to the Christian life), where he finds himself crossing a valley. And he's walking across this valley on a very, very narrow path; on one side is a deep ditch and on the other side is a bottomless pit of quicksand. And it's dark. —It's so dark he can't see in front of him to know where to put the next foot in front of the other as he walks across this very narrow path, with smoke and fire coming up from the pit of hell. And he heard voices softly suggesting wicked, faithless thoughts. But after walking in this condition for a while, he finally heard a voice saying, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for Thou art with me." And he was glad. He realized that God was with him. So, he went on. And Bunyan writes, "By and by, the day broke and turned the shadow of death into morning."

That's how we live the Christian life, really. It's a narrow path with dangers around and is difficult to know what to do next, but if we follow Him, if we're led by the Spirit, if we're in fellowship with Him and walking in obedience, He guides us providentially and guides us wisely. The Lord is always with us. We have a living Savior.

He is actively working for us now, right this moment, and always. As the psalmist said, "He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep." (Ps 121:4). It may be dark, but He's awake, and He's watching and guiding.

Now, these are some of the things that Spurgeon said, 'comfort the soul, calm the swelling billows of sorrow and grief, and speak peace to the winds of trial.' That comes with thinking on the subject of the Godhead. And then, the things above include heaven itself; the beauty of it; the purity of it; the comfort of it; the happiness of it. It's a place of rest and we all think about that. That's our destination; that's where we're going. This brief life is over briefly, and that's where we're going to be. Should we not think about our heavenly home and how great it is and glorious it is?

We are often impressed with great estates, large houses that we see in this world. Perhaps you've traveled and you've been to some place like Europe, and you've seen the great palaces and castles there. Maybe you've been to Versailles outside of Paris, and you've gone through that magnificent palace of Louis XIV and through the hall of mirrors, and then gone out into the vast estate with its gardens and thought, "What a place to live in." And it would be. And there are places around here that would be magnificent to live in, but they're nothing – and there's nothing in this world that can begin to compare with what Christ has prepared for us in heaven and the world to come in His Father's house. What must it be like to live in the house of God the Father?

And heaven is not our ultimate destination. The kingdom to come on this Earth and then the new heavens and the new Earth, world without end. That's our destiny. That's where we're going. It's a glorious destiny – glorious beyond words. Trials all ended and unending joy before us. Joy that will only increase exponentially forever and ever. —What a thought that is! It's not going to be a moment, (I can't explain eternity. Is there time? Is there not time? Those are debates that men have), but there will never be a moment where there's a lull.

You're going to have joy from the moment you are there like you have never had before—every moment of your existence will only increase exponentially forever and ever. Your knowledge will only increase forever and ever. What a thought! We should

set our thoughts on that and remember that the things we do in this world for Christ count for that—count for the future—count forever. There is great reward coming for the faithful. And we're not simply motivated by the reward, (though I think that is motivation). We are motivated to live obediently because of the love that He's given to us and shown us. As we live obediently, in the smallest things to the greatest things, God rewards that faithful life.

And then the things above include the occupants of heaven, the saints who are there and who we will see and know. (Now when I use that word "saints," I'm using it according to the Scriptures; that every believer in Jesus Christ is a saint, a sanctified one, a set-apart one). When we enter into heaven, we are going to be with the saints that are there, and we are going to see them all and know them all, —the innumerable multitude of them. People sometimes ask me, "Are we going to recognize each other when we get to heaven?" And I have to tell you, I'm a little surprised by that. Paul ends 1 Corinthians 13:12 saying, 'Now we see in a glass darkly, then face to face.' In other words, what he's saying is, 'Even I the apostle see things only vaguely right now, but then I am going to see everything clearly.' Yes, you will know everybody there instantly, and they will all be your best friend. That's heaven. You're going to know Paul and Moses and...just go down the list – the great company of fellowship.

But best of all, in the center of it all, will be the Lamb standing as if slain, the resurrected Christ and Savior, and He will occupy our attention and our affection—And we will have close fellowship with Him. John speaks of this at the end of Revelation 7 about the Shepherd leading the sheep from spring to spring; and the idea, (particularly in an agrarian place like Israel and Palestine), of these places of refreshment; and we are with Him, and He's refreshing us, and we're having deep fellowship with Him. He will be the focus of our attention. But, of course, that being the case, He should be the center of our thoughts—**now**. We should focus on Him and all of these things.

Now, having said all of this, it of course does not mean that our minds are in no way to be occupied with the things of this world—to be engaged in the daily routines of

life. That would be reducing Paul's instruction here to the absurd. He is not telling us to withdraw from the world of business; or medicine; or law; or art; or any profession. He calls His people into those fields and we are to strive in each of those fields, (whatever fields we've been called to), to excel in them. And one of the ways that God has blessed Believers Chapel over the many years that I've been here, is that He has blessed this assembly with godly doctors, lawyers, businessmen, and all kinds of people. And they, in their capacities, have been a blessing to this place; and that is nothing to discount.

We are to strive for excellence in whatever field we are in. But our profession, our job, is not to hold first place in our hearts. All that we do is to be done for the Lord and His people. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians chapter 10, verse 31, "Whether then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." Everything, from the simplest to the most complex, from the mundane to the sublime—all of it is to be done to His glory. So, be a doctor, a housewife, a bricklayer – whatever you are – to the glory of God. But you will only do that as you 'set your mind on Christ and the things above.' That takes effort; that takes discipline; it means regularly putting our thoughts on God's Word. That is how we find out and learn about 'the things above.'

Our situation of earning a living in the world, has been compared to that of the birds of the air that need to fly down to earth to feed. For birds, this always involves danger because there are traps down here; there are guns and hunters waiting for them down here. So, a bird is never safe when it feeds in a field or on a pond. To avoid danger, it has to eat and take flight quickly. And as we mix with the world, as we should, as we must, we have to be cautious not to get in a trap—which means to not allow ourselves to become enamored of the world. The way to do that is to desire other things more. Desire God and the things of God more than the things of this world. But we will only do that by setting our minds on the things above. Psalm 34, verse 8, "O taste and see that the Lord is good..." Try it, believe it, meditate on it; try Him, believe Him, meditate on Him. It is a mental exercise, setting our minds on the things above is an act of the will. But it has great rewards.

What we tend to do, though, is get caught up in our job, or in some worldly concerns. We are very much like Martha and not Mary, Lazarus' two sisters. Martha, you remember, was busying herself with preparing a meal for the Lord and His disciples. She did a good work; she did a necessary work. She was doing what she was supposed to be doing. But she became encumbered by it; she became overwhelmed with it. That wasn't the Lord's desire for her; that wasn't what the Lord was requiring of her. The Lord preferred that she do her work adequately, but then like her sister Mary, sit at His feet and learn from Him. Even in the ministry, it's easy to get caught up in the details and the activity of it and lose sight of the subject—the Lord Himself—as well as focusing on doing the work for Him without really learning from Him and fellowshiping with Him. This is what we really are to do—to be in fellowship with Him. This will prepare us to walk and work in the world in a way that is worthy of our calling, worthy of the new life that He has obtained for us.

Paul reinforces his instruction in verse three, where he says, "For you have died..." – now that is repeating and emphasizing the statement that he made in chapter 2, verse 20: we "died with Christ". But he repeats it here because it needs to be repeated; it needs to be emphasized. The old life is over; you are not the person that you once were. Again, we need to know that the old self was crucified with Christ, and at the moment of faith, when you appropriated that death for yourself, then you became a new creature; the old person died. Therefore, we are to set our minds on the new things: Not the old life; not the things that are on earth.

We have a new self, a new life—and that life, Paul said, "...is hidden with Christ in God." (vs3). And it is safe—we cannot be separated from God in Christ. That is a statement of great security. We are, as it were, in a double fortress, hidden with Christ in God. This is both our security and our source of life. And we are to nourish that life. We are to develop our relationship with the Lord. This is eternal life, (that's John 17, verse 3, 'This is eternal life, to know the only true God and His Son.'). So, we are to think on Him, and we are to desire Him, just as Mary did, by sitting at the Savior's feet.

And like the psalmist's great expression in verse 1 of Psalm 42, "As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for You, O God.", Paul is likewise urging us to do the same. The more we 'taste the Lord', the more we will thirst for Him; the more we will desire the Lord, and the more we will live for the Lord. Charles Spurgeon said, "There is nothing more practical than that. It both humbles the mind and expands the mind." Paul would have agreed with Spurgeon completely. That's the purpose of Paul's inspired counsel here—to expand our minds.

But that being so, the opposite would also be true. Not thinking on the things above and thinking instead on earthly things, shrinks the mind and inflates the ego. I have an illustration from one of Charles Spurgeon's contemporaries, one of the most celebrated men of the age, Charles Darwin. His last book, just before he died, was on worms. I found this interesting, because Darwin began his education studying for the ministry, training to be an Anglican priest, setting his thoughts on the things above until he became more interested in botany, in plants, in things on Earth. Over time, his belief in God faded, and his confidence in the natural sciences increased. "Disbelief crept over me at a very slow rate," he confided, "but was at last complete." The man who began studying God ended studying worms. That's a poor exchange.

Now, I'm not saying it's wrong to study science; it's not. It's a good thing to study science. In fact, through the study of science, we see God's wisdom in His creation. We see His wisdom even in things crawling in the dirt. But I find a parable in Darwin's life. It's what happens when a person exchanges the things above for the things below, the things of Earth. Disbelief will creep over him, maybe slowly, but surely, until he worships the creation rather than the Creator and gradually exchanges God for worms.

Spurgeon was right, "There is something exceeding improving to the mind in a contemplation of the Divinity." Nothing will humble the mind and expand it more than studying 'the things above.' "Above" is where Christ is seated – seated at the right hand of God. There is no greater blessing, no more enlightening blessing, mind-expanding blessing than studying and knowing Jesus Christ.

Now this is the blessing of the present, but we have a future blessing, and Paul speaks of it in verse four; "When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory." This is our future. It is not our present, for right now our lives are 'hidden with Christ in God.' The world can't see the glory of what we have. We can't even see that glory very well. It is yet to be revealed; revealed in us. But that day will certainly come when it will be revealed.

Paul spoke of that back in chapter 1, verse 27, when he spoke of 'the hope of glory' that we have. We have a wonderful, unimaginably glorious future. "Weeping may last for the night," the psalmist said, "but a shout of joy comes in the morning." Now that statement from Psalm 30 verse 5, is a present blessing; it is true for us right now. But it looks ultimately to what Paul is speaking of here, to the ultimate return of our Lord. And then there will be a shout of glory, and it will be a new morning, a new dawn. Knowing that and thinking about that is sanctifying. It gives perspective on life now, in this world, this veil of tears, that even now is passing away. And it gives incentive to us to live for what is to come and what is permanent.

These things out here in the world that enamor us, that attract us so much, that get a hold on our affections, are not permanent; for we can't keep them for very long. What is permanent is what is to come. That's what we are to be living for. But we won't do that; we won't understand that if we don't 'set our minds on the things above.' Those who set their minds on the things below lose perspective and think only of this world and live for it. In reality, it is those who are heavenly minded that are earthly good. Because we know the world is passing away and what is done for Christ and others in this life is what lasts—and only thing that lasts.

But you will never have that perspective, that broad view of reality, unless you have the mind of God and develop it by cultivating thoughts of God which direct and motivate obedience to God. That is the best life; that is the full life. A life that requires discipline, requires focus—a willingness to cut out things in our life; to cut out 'good things' for the 'best things'. And it is a life of great reward both now and for all eternity.

We have this only in Jesus Christ and we are joined to Him only through faith – faith in the One who is the Savior. The Savior from sin's power and sin's penalty—Which is the judgment to come.

Jesus has opened up heaven for us sinners. Recognize yourself as a sinner and flee to the cross if you have not done that. There you receive forgiveness—there you receive everlasting life. May God help you to do that if you have not. And if you have not, pray—pray for faith to do that and believe in Christ—and He will give it to you. Let us pray.

Father, we thank You for the instruction that the apostle Paul gives us, for it is the things we need to do in order to cultivate the mind that You have given us; to understand the future we have; and the life that You have given us and to live it in the best way. So, help us to do that, Father. Help us 'to seek the things above'; to set our mind on the things above; to detach our affections from this world and live for You; to live for the Triune God, we pray.

We pray these things in the name of Your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

(End of Audio)