

## 基督徒的属天眼光——歌罗西书 3:1-4

### The Heavenly Perspective of Christians – Colossians 3:1-4

#### *Introduction, Outline*

- Scripture reading: Colossian 3:1-4, Hebrews 11:1-16
- Question: What's the difference in life between a Christian and a non-Christian? We live in the same world, experience the same things, face the same problems, have the same chance of getting COVID, so how are our lives different? We eat, work, raise family, make friends, get sick, and die, just like the rest of mankind. How is the Christians life different from that of a non-Christian?
- Answer: Christians have a heavenly perspective. And that's not just a perspective on some specific things, but one that covers the entire life. It's not a mere addition to your existing mindset, but a fundamental perspective that undergirds your entire life, all your heart's desire and thoughts of mind. With such a heavenly perspective, a person's whole life is different.
- **Context:** This paragraph connects the theological teaching of the first two chapters and the real-life application that follows. From here on, Paul will address various aspects of life, and this paragraph gives the fundamental perspective of a Christian which governs his whole life. I often hear Christians say, "I learned much biblical knowledge but cannot live them out." How can we put into practice all the important theological teaching of the Bible? I believe that **the key which bridges theology and life is the heavenly perspective in these verses.**
- **Outline**
  - Title: The Heavenly Perspective of Christians
  - A. The Prerequisite - Your having been raised up with Christ (v. 1a)
  - B. The Command - Your heart's desire and your thoughts of mind (v. 1b、 2)
  - C. The Focus - Your Christ (v. 1c)
  - D. The Reality - Your life above (v3)
  - E. The Hope - Your glorious revelation (v4)

#### **The Prerequisite - Your having been raised up with Christ (v. 1a)**

- **“having been raised up with Christ”:** This phrase is the prerequisite of all the teaching hereafter. Without the spiritual fact that we've been raised up with the Lord, all the teaching that follows will be empty talk. What does this phrase mean?

From the standpoint of eternity, the lives of Christians were united with Christ ever since they were chosen by God (Eph. 1:4). When Christ was resurrected, all believers were raised up together with Him. This is not something we can experience, but a divinely revealed fact.

From a temporal standpoint, we were “raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.” (2:12) If you just became a Christian and have not had much time to bear spiritual fruit, how do you know you've been raised up with Christ? By the fact that God has given you the faith to believe in Jesus' death and resurrection. The truth that

Christ died and was raised to save sinners is foolishness to the world. The faith is given by God, so, once you have such faith, you know God has raised you up with Christ.

1 Corinthians **1:18** “For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”

- “**IF**”: Conditional clause. Paul was not doubting the readers’ salvation (see 1:3-6), but issuing a challenge for us to examine ourselves to see if we’ve truly realized that “I’ve been raised up with Christ!”

**Challenge:** Have you been raised up with Christ? Have you fully believed that Jesus has been raised from the dead, who died for your sin and overcame the power of sin by resurrection? Do you absolutely believe that the power of His resurrection is of utmost importance to your life? Or, do you think it doesn’t matter if you believe it or not, as long as you can gain some earthly benefits in this world?

### **The Command - Your heart’s desire and your thoughts of mind (v. 1b, 2)**

- “**Keep seeking... Set your mind on...**”: Imperative commands. Not some good advice, but commands given to us by God which require us to respond. We either obey or disobey. To have a heavenly perspective is God’s command to all believers.

Fundamentally speaking, each Christian has a basic heavenly perspective, or he cannot be a Christian. (See Col. 1:5 the hope laid up for you in heaven). But the command here is broader and more thorough-going. Both verbs are in the present tense, indicating this is an ongoing action. God wants us to always think about the things above continuously, and this mindset is to govern all of life. Christians eat and drink for the things above, work hard for the things above, meet friends for the things above, love family for the things above...

Specifically, “seek” emphasizes the heart’s desire while “set mind on” emphasizes the thoughts of mind; “seek” highlights the emotion while “set mind on” the will. Both aspects will be manifested through life.

“*Seek*” in Greek is used in the parable of a merchant seeking fine pearls (Matthew 13:45). It expresses a strong desire and love. It’s where your heart belongs, and will be reflected in your actions.

“Set your mind on” in Greek often is used to describe a person's basic spiritual condition (Romans 8:5-6; Philipians 3:19 where non-believers “set their minds on earthly things”). (Example: in one sermon, the “pastor” spent half an hour preaching that we shouldn’t get angry, quoting no less than 30 verses of Scripture. Throughout the entire message, however, his whole point is that anger will harm our health and cause the loss of our property, and there’s absolutely nothing that reflects one serious thought of God. This is “set[ting the mind] on earthly things”!) But, a Christian can also be tempted by this mindset (Matthew 16:23 uses the same verb to describe Peter under Satan’s temptation!)

**Romans 12:2** “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”

Application: The commands of Christian living means — a life of sanctification requires our active effort! It shouldn't be the kind of passive thinking that says "Let go and let God", as if you need not make any effort. **Philippians 2:12-13** "**12** .....work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work ....." God has already worked in our heart, so we should strive to work it out in our life. All credit goes to God, but we need to work hard to respond to God's work in us, or we'll lose the opportunity to attribute more glory to God.

### **The Focus - Your Christ (v. 1c)**

- **"Where Christ is":** This explains "the things above" — Christ is the focus of the heavenly perspective! Heaven is heaven because Christ is there. When a Christian thinks of heaven, if his first thought is not Christ, his knowledge of heaven is seriously lacking.

**Challenge:** What's your first thought of heaven? If it's the absence of disease, you may have taken health as an idol; if it's the reunion of family, you may have family relationship as an idol; if it's your sinlessness, you may be seeking your own glory after all. Heaven is heaven because Christ is there!

**Example:** How do you counsel a Christian whose Christian friend or family member just passed away? That you'll reunite in heaven? True, but when Christ is right in front of you, who else would you care to see? You'd better say: I know you love him a lot, but you know who loves him more? Christ. I know you don't want him to leave you, but you know who is with him right now? Christ! Sure, you'll both be in heaven someday, but the gaze of both your eyes will focus singularly on the glorious beauty of Christ, in whom you'll find full satisfaction at last!

- **"Seated at the right hand of God":** Not a specific location since God is spirit and has no physical existence. It's a rich metaphor full of theological significances. First, a king's right hand is a noble place (Matthew 25:33-34) showing the king's favor. God is the King of kings and thus His right hand is the supreme/above all (Eph. 1:20-21); Second, the King's right hand is the place of authority (1 Peter 3:22); Third, God's right hand is the source of all blessings (Psalm 16:11); Fourth, and most importantly, God's right hand is the special unique place He promised to give His Messiah, as the messianic prophecy of Psalm 110 tells us.

**Psalms 110:1** "The Lord says to my Lord: '**Sit at My right hand** Until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.' "

**Hebrews 10:12** " but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God." The work of redemption is finished!

**Application:** Do you seek Christ? Is seeking Christ the undergirding perspective that governs your whole life? Behind your every thought, is there a voice calling from the bottom of your heart: Lord Christ, is what I'm doing well-pleasing to You? Is this the best way for me to glorify You? This, is the most essential difference of life between a Christian and a non-Christian. Even when we do earthly things, our heart and mind are still on the things above, for we're seeking Christ through all that we do on earth!

### **The Reality - Your life above (v3)**

- **“For you have died”**: Paul reminded believers of this spiritual reality so as to encourage us to put this heavenly perspective into practice.

**Galatians 6:14** “The world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.” — Compared to Christ, all that this word can offer is like rubbish. It should not attract us anymore.

- **“Your life is hidden with Christ in God”**: Death brings life, thus believing in Jesus is the process of passing out of death into life. The moment we died to the world, our life departed from the world and was hidden above. (Like teleportation! )

“Hidden” has two levels of meaning: First, the world cannot see us. They cannot understand our real life nor comprehend our union with Christ. (Judging by appearance, the world sometimes thinks we are no different from them, sometimes sees us as an unpleasant stench, and sometimes ridicules us as stupid. They have no idea we are united with Christ.) Second, being hidden means protection. Our heavenly life cannot be touched or harmed by anything. (With God being our shield and refuge, with Christ being our mediator and righteousness, who would ever have the power to threaten our heavenly life? This life has been hidden with Christ in God!)

“*With Christ*” and “*In God*”: amazing union beyond comprehension. As John 17:21-23 says, God the Father is in Christ, Christ is in God the Father, Christ is in the believers, and believers are in God the Father and in Christ. What amazing union of life!

### **The Hope - Your glorious revelation (v4)**

- **“Christ is our life”**: The two nouns in Greek are appositive: Christ — our life! Our life is not just hidden with Christ in God, but Christ *is* our life! The life of a Christian is not his breath or heartbeat or fortune or fame; it is Christ. *He is the creator, the source, the pursuit, the example, the meaning, and the goal of our life*, and when He appears, we shall be like Him. Therefore, we can say in every sense, Christ is our life!
- **“When Christ is revealed”**: Christ will come again! Now, He is hidden from the world, until He comes again, to be revealed in glory, to bring all unrealized prophecies to a perfect fulfillment, and to establish the eternal and righteous kingdom.
- **“You also will be revealed with Him in glory”**: The heavenly life of a Christian will not be hidden forever, but will be revealed together with Christ. We will, in the resurrected body perfectly sanctified, enter His glorious eternal kingdom.

**Romans 8:19** “ For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God.”

Listen to this brilliant summary: *The veil which now shrouds your higher life from others, and even partly from yourselves, will then be withdrawn. The world which persecutes, despises, ignores now, will then be blinded with the dazzling glory of the revelation!*

How does this heavenly hope affect your life now?

**1 John 3:2-3** “2 ... We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. **3** And everyone who has this hope *fixed* on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.” —Model your life after Christ. He is your life!

*Concluding light/application:* **Two perspectives are totally different** — In chapter 2, the false teachers worshiped angels and treated the body severely to pursue some mystical experience. From the outside, it appears that they were also pursuing the things above! What’s the difference? The directions of these two perspectives are opposite. **The perspective of the false teachers is bottom-up while the heavenly perspective is top-down.** False teachers try to earn heavenly experience by their earthly efforts; while Paul starts with the heavenly realities and manages his earthly life on the basis of those realities. False teachers start with their earthly life and try to climb their way up to heaven (Example: Charismatic tongue-speaking); while true faith starts with realizing that the source of the believer’s whole life is the resurrected Christ who has ascended to heaven, and, from this starting point, the believer will naturally live out the heavenly life here on earth. .... **Which perspective are you living by?**