

How To Live The Abundant Life

Colossians 3:1-4

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I'm going to read all four verses beginning in Colossians 3:1. Paul says, "If,"—or since—"ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. 2 Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth." Why? Verse 3, "For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. 4 When Christ, who is our life,"—I love that—"shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory."

In John 10:10, Jesus made this amazing statement. He said, " . . . I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." If you're a Christian, you have eternal life. That's what makes you a believer in Jesus or a Christian—you have the life of God in your soul. It's called being born again. The theological term is "regenerated," given new life. A lot of times Christians aren't experiencing the abundant life that Jesus wants them to have. They have eternal life, but they're not experiencing the joys and the blessings of the abundant life that Christ wants us to experience.

The believers in Colossae were also being threatened that they were going to be robbed from the blessing of the abundant life that Christ had promised because false teachers had come into the church in Colossae and were telling the believers that Jesus is not enough, that Jesus is not sufficient, and so they were going to spoil their Christianity, their walk and relationship with Christ.

Peek back real quick with me to Colossians 2:8 where Paul said, "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." The same warning is for us tonight—don't have your walk and relationship with Christ spoiled by philosophy and vain deceit and the things that are after this world. The legalism, the mysticism, and the asceticism he warned us of which some believe is necessary to have the abundant life but actually will rob you of the blessing of Christ in you the hope of glory.

Let me just quickly review since we're in a new chapter. In Colossians 1, Christ's preeminence and sufficiency was declared. In Colossians 2, Christ's preeminence and sufficiency was defended. Now, the third section is Colossians 3 and 4, and we see that Paul says that we must demonstrate Christ's sufficiency in our daily lives. That's the way that the book of Colossians breaks down: Colossians 1, Christ's sufficiency declared; Colossians 2, Christ's sufficiency defended; Colossians 3 and 4, Christ's sufficiency is demonstrated in our daily lives and the way we should live. In Christ all fullness dwells. We saw that in Colossians 1:19. In Christ, we are complete, Colossians 2:10. Now, Paul tells us that we should live out the fullness and completeness we have in Christ, and he's telling us how to live the abundant life.

From this text we're going to unpack three things we must do to live abundantly. I say this so often they're not hard to see, not hard to understand. They're simple, but they're not simplistic.

They're clearly taught in the passage, and they're simple, but they are deep and very, very important. Write them down. First, if I'm going to live the abundant life that Jesus wants me to have, I must seek heavenly things. Now that I'm saved, now that I'm born again, now that I have eternal life, now that I'm a Christian, I must have a life that is pursuing habitually things which are above.

Look at it with me in verse 1. He says, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God." So, verse 1 is our first step, we are to seek heavenly things or seek the heavenly. Remember, the basis of victorious Christian living is our position and our identification in Christ. Paul's favorite term for the believer is that they are in Christ, in Christ Jesus, or in Christ Jesus the Lord. As believers, your position in Christ and identification with Christ, understanding and recognizing that, is the basis or foundation for victorious Christian living. He goes back to verse 1 there. I want you to see it, "If ye then be risen with Christ."

Now, back in Colossians 2:20, you were dead with Christ, and now we're also, Colossians 3:1, risen with Christ. Remember that? We died with Christ, we were buried with Christ, but Jesus didn't stay in the grave, right? What happened on Sunday morning? Up from the grave He arose, With a mighty triumph o'er His foes. That's not a verse of Scripture, that's a hymn; and it's hard for me to stop and not keep saying the song. He arose a Victor from the dark domain, And He lives forever with His saints to reign. Hallelujah! Christ arose! Amen? And you rose with Christ. You were crucified with Christ, you were buried with Christ, and now we have risen with Christ. We're going to see this is so important for you to believe, to accept. This is how God views you in your position and identification with Christ.

This statement, "If ye then be risen with Christ," is what's called a first class conditional clause. It conveys the idea that, "If ye then be risen with Christ," and you have been. Paul is not questioning whether or not you have been risen with Christ, "If you have and maybe you haven't." No, he's affirming. He's saying, "Since you have." We would say it like this, "Since you have risen with Christ, this is what you should do. Seek things which are above." It's understanding, "I'm risen with Christ," so I set my affections on things above. That's what I should do, verse 1, " . . . seek those things which are above." Don't seek empty philosophies, Colossians 2:8; don't seek religious legalism, Colossians 2:16-17; and don't seek manmade disciplines. We've already been down those passages. You're not to be looking to philosophy, to legalism or manmade disciplines, you are to be seeking the things which are above.

There are so many silly things that people get into to try to be spiritual—the right haircut, which I happen to have tonight. I'm teasing. Wear the right clothes, carry the right Bible, drink the right drinks, eat the right food, do all the things you're supposed to do thinking, That's going to make me more spiritual, and that's just not the case. Diet, days, all those things that people get into—worshiping on special days—you have Christ. You've risen with Him. You have everything that you need. Do, " . . . seek those things which are above." Don't seek empty manmade traditions or creeds or codes of conduct.

What does it mean to, “. . . seek those things which are above?” The answer: It means literally to keep on seeking. That phrase is in the present tense. By the way, it’s what’s called an imperative, again, which means a command, and it’s in the present tense. So, keep on seeking. It’s the constant daily desire. It’s a matter of the will in active pursuit. What are we to seek? We’re to seek Christ who, verse 1, “. . . sitteth on the right hand of God.” Spiritual maturity is the goal which demands diligent pursuit.

In Matthew 6:33, what did Jesus say? “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.” Don’t worry about what we’re going to eat, what we’re going to drink, what we’re going to wear, what we’re going to put on. You seek Christ, which I believe is what it means. The essence of what it means is to seek the things which are above. To be heavenly-minded means to set your mind on Jesus Christ and to seek after Him and to pursue after Him with all that you have. Someone said, “As Christians, our whole disposition should be oriented toward heaven and Christ.” As Christians, our whole disposition should be oriented toward heaven and Christ. Like the needle on a compass oriented self toward the north, so our thoughts should be always pointing toward and pursuing after Jesus Christ.

I know with television and computers and smart phones and radios, and all that we have to distract us today, it’s very difficult. It’s a challenge to really seek the Lord today because we have so many distractions. Can you imagine what it was like living in Paul the apostle’s day? No billboards. No LED screens as he’s on his way into Damascus, you know. No phone, “Oh, I’m just getting a text from Titus real quick. Let me see what he’s got going,” you know. I mean we have so many things to distract us. Try to take a little fast from your phone, or from tv, and from the internet—especially social media. Lord, have mercy.

I don’t do Facebook, by the way. I don’t know why I’m even mentioning it, but I have a Facebook page and haven’t used it in thirty years. Just this week I started getting all these phone calls, “Did you try to reach me on Facebook?” “No.” Somebody stole my identity and was asking people for money. If you get a Facebook from John Miller and it says, “I’m in need. Can you loan me some money? I’ll pay it back.” It’s not John Miller, I promise you that, so it’s been shut down. But the distractions, right? The things that will distract us from seeking in our minds and setting them on things which are above. It’s so very, very important.

Spiritual maturity is the goal which demands diligent pursuit. Write down Philippians 3:10. Paul said, “That I may know him,”—Christ—“and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death,” and then listen to what Paul said in Philippians 3:13-14. He said, “Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching,”—or strain—“forth unto those things which are before, 14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” That’s what it means to live the abundant life—set your mind, your affection, on Christ, He is above, and have a life that is pursuing after Him.

Now, the practical way to do that is obviously prayer. If you spend time praying, you’re seeking

the Lord, and also, study of Scripture. Why is it preachers are always telling you to pray and read your Bible? Because that's what it means to seek Christ. How do you seek Christ if you don't pray and meditate on His Word, " . . . where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God." Notice that in verse 1. It conveys the idea of rest and intercession and sovereignty. Christ sitting in heaven should be our earthly pursuit.

You hear sometimes people say, "Well, they're so heavenly-minded, they're no earthly good." Have you ever heard that? If you're no earthly good, you're not really heavenly-minded. Those who have done the most for God in this world are those who think most about the next world. True heavenly-mindedness is practical. The most spiritual people I know are the ones who roll up their sleeves and serve other people. They don't just sit around starry-eyed thinking about, I want to go to heaven when I die. They get busy for Christ here on earth. What should motivate us on earth is eternal things. Truly being heavenly-minded should have you earthly good and active in other things.

Here's the second thing you need to do, and there's three of them. Secondly, we need to think heavenly things or think heavenly things in our minds. Notice verse 2, "Set your affection." So verse 1, key word "seek;" verse 2, key word "set." "Set your affection," and I'll tell you right now that word "affection" my King James translation means your mind. It's talking about your mind. " . . . on things above,"—here's the negative—"not on things on the earth." As I said, it's simple but simply profound. Seek heavenly things, and set your mind on things which are above. Think involves the mind. Your mind matters. "Set your affection,"—your mind—"on things above."

Again, it's what's called an imperative. In the Greek it's a command, and it's in the present tense. I know I'm kind of harping on that all the time, but that's significant. Our minds are to be constantly turning toward heaven, " . . . where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God." It's an imperative and a command. It's in the present tense which means keep on thinking. You cannot live the abundant, Spirit-filled, Christian life if you let your mind go wherever it wants to go. It will go some bizarre places, right? at the most bizarre times. You can be in church singing praise songs, and the next thing you know you're chasing a polar bear in Alaska. "Boy, how did I get there? Come back, come back!" Or, some sinful, perverted thought comes into your brain and our flesh is so wicked and the devil is so sly, so we need to mind our minds. We need to discipline our minds.

What are we to think about? How do we control our minds and get our mind set on Him? Remember Romans 12 says, "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind." Let me tell you how to do that. First, in the text, " . . . those things which are above," so think about Christ again in context, on heavenly things. We need to be more heavenly-minded. Jesus said, "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." If all you think about is your car all the time, and you're waxing and shining it and buffing it and fixing it, and when you park it in a parking lot at a grocery store you kind of walk backwards and look at how awesome your car is and you get back and think, Wow, that's a sweet ride, and I hope nobody lets a grocery cart bump into it. You take up two spots and park kind of crooked

so no one will ding the doors. It becomes your idol. Whatever you think about becomes what you are setting your mind upon and becomes an earthly idol, "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

Philippians 4:8 tells us what we should think about, "... things are true ... things are honest ... things are just ... things are pure,"—that's a good one—"... things are lovely, things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." Think about that. Let's think about what we should think about. The Bible tells us what we should be thinking about in Philippians 4:8, pure things, honest things, lovely things, good things, praiseworthy things, "... think on these things." We're to mind our minds.

Now, the third step to living the abundant life, verses 3-4, believe heavenly things. Seek heavenly things, verse 1; think heavenly things, verse 2; and believe heavenly things, verses 3-4. Go back with me to verses 3-4. He says, "For ye are dead." Now, whenever you have a verse that starts with the word "for," it means this is the rationale, this is the reason, this is the motive behind it. "For ye are dead,"—that's a fact. It's a past salvation. "... and your life is hid with Christ in God. 4 When Christ, who is our life,"—I love that statement—"shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." These are marvelous verses, so marvelous.

There's a reason or motive for seeking and thinking of heavenly things, five reasons. Again, if you're taking notes. Let me give you five reasons you should seek things in heaven from this text. First of all, verse 3, "For ye are dead." If you're dead to this world and its affections and lusts, why do you think about it? When you become a Christian, you not only died to sin, you died to the world. There's another hymn that speaks about, Content to let the world go by, To know no gain nor loss, My sinful self my only shame, My glory all the cross. I love that. If you are a Christian, this world is not your home. Do I get an, "Amen?" You're just a stranger. You're just a pilgrim. You're just passing through. I'm full of hymns tonight, I don't know why.

We used to sing a song, A tent or a cottage, why should I care? He's building a palace for me over there. Of rubies and diamonds and emeralds or gold, His coffers are full, He has riches untold. I'm a child of the King, A child of the King: With Jesus my Savior, I'm a child of the King!

I didn't grow up in a very well-to-do family, but I used to sit in church and watch my dad lead worship, that's why I have all these hymns in my brain. He was the worship leader at our church. He was a congregational worship leader. I know that we didn't have a lot of money, we didn't have a lot of substance or a lot of things, but when my dad would lead that song, My Father Is Rich, I was watching my earthly father sing about his heavenly Father, and he would just light up with the presence of the Holy Spirit in his life, My Father is rich in houses and lands, I just saw him thrill to that. He was such a humble, godly man. He impacted me so powerfully, and I remind myself today, this is not my home.

Don't get attached to this world. Don't get attached to the things of this world. Don't live for this world. It doesn't mean you have to put on a white robe and sit on Bell Mountain and just wait for the rapture, but it does mean that it doesn't have your heart. Charles Wesley used to say,

"When I get possessions, I give them away as quickly as I can lest they get ahold of my heart." Keep your contact with the world as light as possible. It's so important.

First, you have died with Christ, "For ye are dead," that's to the world, your identification. Secondly, here's the five reasons, " . . . and your life is hid with Christ in God," verse 3. That's an interesting statement. The words "hid with Christ in God" conveys secrecy, hidden. The world can't see. They don't know who you are. We sing about, My Father is rich, and my home is in heaven, they think, "You've done lost your marbles, man! You're crazy." They want here, they want now, they want things, they want possessions, they want power, they want popularity, they want pleasures, and all we want is to go to heaven. We're longing to die and be with Christ. We're rejoicing in the idea, " . . . to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." They're, "You've lost your marbles!"

For a Christian the greatest thing that could ever happen to you is to die and go to heaven to be with the Lord. For a non-Christian that's the worst thing because this is the closest to heaven you'll ever get. How marvelous it is to have a hope that gets brighter and brighter and brighter; and the world gets dimmer, and dimmer, and dimmer until one day we're going to see Him face to face. What a marvelous truth! And, faith will be turned to sight, and we'll be able to reach out and touch Him, and He'll reach out and embrace us. So, we live for things which are hidden above.

It speaks also, " . . . hid with Christ," of safety. We are secure in Christ. Jesus said it like this in John 14:20, "At that day,"—which I believe is the day the Holy Spirit came in Acts 2 on the day of Pentecost—"ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you." What a blessing that was! They were justified and sanctified in Christ.

Let me give you the third reason, because Christ, " . . . is our life." Why should I seek the things which are above? I've died in Christ, my life is hid with Christ, and Christ is my life. What a marvelous statement. Not His teachings, but Himself. Jesus said in John 14:6, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." So, we live with Christ, we live for Christ, and we live in Christ. It's all hidden and misunderstood by the world, no big deal.

Here's the fourth reason why I should seek the things which are above, because Christ will appear. He's coming back. This verse speaks of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. "When Christ . . . shall appear." There are three words used for this Second Coming of Christ in the Bible. Jesus will come, the Greek word is *parousía*, which means His presence, so Christ is coming back personally; Jesus will appear, second word, which is the word *epipháneia*, which means come with majesty and splendor; and Jesus will be unveiled, which is *apokalýptō*—which means unveiled, and that's what we see Christ unveiled when He comes back. So, I believe this, Christ will appear is a reference to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, not the rapture.

Don't get the two confused. The rapture is the catching up of Christians to heaven, and I believe there's at least a seven-year gap between the rapture and the Second Coming. Don't get those confused. There's so much confusion about that today. We get caught up to meet

Christ in the air, we come back with Christ from the air. Christ returns in the Second Coming. He will be unveiled, He will be in splendor, and He will be with us in His presence. When we come, Christ we'll see, the world will see Him, that which is hidden will be revealed. Revelation 19, Matthew 24, every eye will see Him like the lightening from the east to the west, Christ's glorious appearing. So, why wouldn't we want to be looking to heaven? Jesus is coming from there.

Here's the fifth, we will appear with Him in glory. Isn't that great? We will appear with Him in glory. You know, there's something special about when the reality of you one day being with Christ in heaven for eternity really hits your heart, really grabs ahold of your life, really changes the way you live your life. Do you ever stop and think about it? Which is what the text is telling us to do. You, as a believer, are going to spend eternity in heaven in the presence of the Lord. Isn't that glorious? That's your perspective. That's your hope. That's your anticipation. We will see Him, we will know Him, we will be with Him.

John 14, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me." Jesus said, "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 . . . I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also," that's the rapture. He's taking us to heaven to be with Him in His Father's house, many abiding places. We will share in His glory.

Seek the heavenly, think the heavenly, because your eternal home is in heaven. " . . . seek those things which are above," verse 1; think things which are above, verse 2; and believe the world is not your home. Heaven is your home. Jesus will appear. You will share in His glory.

Paul says this, and I'll close. In Philippians 3:20-21, "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: 21 who will transform our lowly body,"—or humble bodies—"that it may be conformed to His glorious body." Amen? All it takes is getting old for you to long for heaven. It's like, "Lord, when I can't bend down and tie my own shoes, just take me to heaven, okay? Please." In this body, " . . . earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven."

Now, one of the things I'm always blessed about Communion is, Jesus said this when we take Communion. He said, "I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." It reminds me that He's coming back. It reminds me that He died on the cross. The bread symbolizes His body, the cup symbolizes His blood, but I'm looking forward to the day when I shall look upon Him who died for me and will drink together in heaven. What a glorious day. Amen?