

**“Keep Seeking the Things Above”**  
(Colossians 3:1-4)

**I. Introduction.**

**A. Orientation.**

1. This morning:
  - a. We considered how saving faith is:
    - (i) Not only trusting in Jesus alone for salvation.
    - (ii) Not only a faith that works through love.
    - (iii) Not only something that gives us love for God and those things that share His image.
  - b. Faith is also something that makes invisible things concrete:
    - (i) It is the assurance of things hoped for.
    - (ii) It is the evidence of things not seen.
    - (iii) It makes the invisible things of the Lord more real than what we see.
2. But the strength of that conviction depends on the strength of our faith.
  - a. When our faith is weak, our conviction is weak, and our efforts are weak.
  - b. But when our faith is strong, our convictions are strengthened, and we put ourselves out more for the Lord.
  - c. This is why we need to nurture faith through the means of grace:
    - (i) We need to read, study and meditate on the Word more.
    - (ii) Pray more: take the opportunities for private and public prayer.
    - (iii) Attend worship as often as we can.
    - (iv) Attend classes where His Word is taught.
    - (v) The more we use the means, and cut off the influences of sin, the stronger we'll be.

**B. Preview.**

1. Now, recognizing that what the Bible says is true, we need to live more in the light of this reality.
  - a. In the reality of heaven:
    - (i) It is a real place.
    - (ii) It is a place of eternal peace and love.
    - (iii) The door is opened to us in Christ.
    - (iv) Our rewards there depend on what we do here.
    - (v) We need to pursue these things earnestly.
  - b. In the reality of judgment:
    - (i) Before we arrive in the eternal state, there is a judgment to pass.
      - (a) Granted, if we die before He comes, we will go to heaven.
      - (b) Once there, we know we will pass the judgment.
      - (c) Of course, we want to know that before we die.

- (ii) But what we do here below will be examined on that day.
  - (a) Thankfully, in Christ, our sins will be forever removed.
  - (b) But this is not an excuse to allow sin.
  - (c) It is a reason to pursue doing Christ's work.
  - (d) Time wasted in sin is lost forever.
  - (e) Our lives are very short anyway, let's not loose any time.
- c. And in the reality of hell:
  - (i) Let's make sure we're delivered from it in Christ.
    - (a) Make sure we have a sound assurance.
    - (b) That the evidences of His grace are in our lives.
  - (ii) Let's do what we can to bring in Christ's lost sheep.
    - (a) Part of our pursuing the kingdom is being witness bearers.
    - (b) Our witness is the means to communicate the Gospel to the lost.
    - (c) And so in light of hell's reality, we must seek to love our neighbors enough to tell them about Christ (caroling is only one way).
- 2. This evening, I want us to consider these things further in the framework of Paul's words. What he exhorts us to do is:
  - a. First, to count ourselves dead to ourselves and the world.
  - b. Second, to keep seeking the things above.
  - c. Finally, if we do, then when Christ is revealed, we will be with Him in glory.

## II. Sermon.

- A. First, he says, we must count ourselves dead to ourselves and the world: "For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God" (v. 3).
  - 1. Remember, dying to self is a qualification of discipleship.
    - a. "Jesus said to His disciples, 'If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it'" (Matt. 16:24-25).
    - b. "If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple. Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. . . . So then, none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions" (Luke 14:26-27, 33).
    - c. Unless we're willing to do this, we haven't begun seeking the things above.
  - 2. This is something accomplished by the Spirit in the baptism of the Spirit.
    - a. Remember, "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:13).
      - (i) This is not a second experience for a Christian.
      - (ii) It defines or creates the Christian.
      - (iii) A Christian is one who has been baptized by the Holy Spirit into Christ.

- b. When He plugged us into Christ:
    - (i) His life began to flow through us.
    - (ii) We died, and Christ began to live in us.
    - (iii) The Spirit accomplishes what Christ requires.
  - c. But since the old nature is still alive, we still want to live for self.
    - (i) We still want to do what we want to do.
    - (ii) We still struggle with obedience.
  - d. Paul reminds us we must consider or reckon ourselves to be dead.
    - (i) When Christ died, we died with Him on the cross.
    - (ii) “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me” (Gal. 2:20).
    - (iii) “For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God” (v. 3).
- B. Second, we must keep seeking the things above: “Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth” (vv. 1-2).
1. If we have died with Christ, we were also raised with Him.
    - a. “What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life” (Rom. 6:1-4).
    - b. “For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus” (vv. 10-11).
    - c. We are to consider ourselves as those who have actually died and have been raised again; as those alive from the dead now only to serve Him.
  2. Now our life is to be a life of seeking the things above.
    - a. Remember, God is real.
      - (i) He made us, sent His Son to redeem us, we belong to Him.
      - (ii) We must worship and serve Him for His excellence and for His mercy.
    - b. Christ is real.
      - (i) There is a real person named Jesus, who is God in human flesh.
      - (ii) He really laid down His life for us, because He loves us.
      - (iii) He’s praying for us now in heaven, watching over us, protecting us.
      - (iv) And He calls us to obey His Word, and will be faithful enough to us to hold us accountable.

- c. Heaven is a real place.
  - (i) There are saints now in heaven.
  - (ii) With the angels, they are worshiping God.
  - (iii) We know some of the people who are there.
  - (iv) It is a place of perfect love and peace.
  - (v) It is the only place where this is true.
  - (vi) We need to seek to be there like strong men taking a city (Matt. 11:12).
- d. Hell is also real.
  - (i) There are damned souls in hell.
  - (ii) There are many more on their way there.
  - (iii) Every day souls are dying and entering there.
  - (iv) We need to avoid it at all cost, and help others avoid it as well.
- e. We need to be seeking the things above.
  - (i) We will only arrive there if we set our sights on it.
  - (ii) We will only be able to help others arrive there if that's where we're headed.
  - (iii) When you get in your car to go somewhere, it doesn't end up where you want it unless you steer it in that direction.
  - (iv) If you want to hit the bull's-eye, you must aim for it.
  - (v) We must set our sights on heaven, and get them off the things of the earth.
  - (vi) "Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb. 12:1-2).
    - (a) We must put off our sins; repent of them.
    - (b) We must not be ensnared even by the things that are good.
    - (c) Sinful things take away from our desire for God.
    - (d) Let's cut those things off, and use the things that strengthen our love and zeal for God.
- C. Finally, if we do, then we will be with Christ in glory: "When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory" (v. 4).
  1. The Lord Jesus Christ, who is now seated in heaven, is coming again.
    - a. One day, He will descend again to gather His church (1 Thes. 4:16).
    - b. He will raise the dead and gather all to judgment (John 5:28-29).
    - c. Then will come the final separation (Matt. 25:46).
  2. If we want to be taken by Him into glory when He comes, we must be in Him when He comes.
    - a. We must be found believing and faithfully doing what He calls us to.
    - b. We must be seeking the things above.
    - c. We'll only do this to the degree we believe these things to be true.
    - c. See them then through the eyes of a strong faith, and live accordingly. Amen.