

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

COLOSSIANS LESSON 4 (Chapter 3)

Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST. Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, Kevin Pendergrass.

"If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God" (Col. 3:1). Welcome to our final study in the Book of Colossians. In this lesson we are going to be talking about the importance of seeking "those things which are above." Today so many people who call themselves Christians are content with this world. In fact, not only are they content, but they are enjoying this world more than they really should. I've even heard some people say, "I wish that the Lord would wait to come back because I love this life. I love partying during this life. I love the things of this world." What we have done is we have forsaken the idea of seeking those things which are above. The Bible teaches us that this world is not our home. The world in which we live as faithful Christians is not our home. In Philippians 3:20 the Bible says, "Our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ." If someone asked you, "Where is your citizenship?," you might say, "I'm an American." That might be true, but where is your true citizenship? Can you say, "I am a faithful member of the body of Christ—the Lord's church," or "I am a faithful follower of Christ, and I know that my true citizenship and home are in Heaven"? Or would you say, "I want to stay here on this Earth a couple hundred more years. I wish the Lord would wait. I wish I wouldn't die. I wish I could live to be 400 or 500 so I could enjoy the pleasures of this world"? How said it is that that is the mindset of most people. Our minds no longer are seeking those things which are above.

But in Colossians 3:1 the Bible speaks of how we must be truly raised with Christ. Before we can seek those things which are above, we first must be raised with Christ. When does this happen? It happens when a person becomes a Christian. How does one become a Christian? A person does not become a Christian by saying "the sinner's prayer." The Bible never speaks of a person outside of Christ praying, and that prayer putting him in the body. In fact, the Bible condemns that idea (Jn. 9:31; Isa. 59:1-2). When are we raised with Christ? Only after we have been raised with Christ can we truly seek those things which are above. So when are we raised with Christ? Romans 6:3-6 tells us exactly when that happens.

"Do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin."

According to the Bible in Romans 6:3-6, when are we raised with Christ? It is after we have been baptized for the sins and after we have been immersed in water to have our

sins forgiven (Acts 22:16; 1 Pet. 3:20-21) that we have been raised with Christ so that we can truly seek those things which are above. This is what we must do if we want to go to Heaven.

But how do we seek those things which are above? It would be a lie to say that it is easy to seek those things which are above, or that there are no temptations in this world. It would be a lie to say that. There are many things in this world that are great temptations. If sin was not something that was enjoyable, then we would not want to take part in it, and we would not be tempted. But because sin **is** enjoyable from a worldly standpoint, it is difficult to seek those things which are above. Living faithfully is very difficult. Going to Heaven is something that is challenging and difficult. Only true Christians will find the true way. How do we seek those things which are above?

The Bible teaches that the first way we seek those things which are above is that we must change our minds. Colossians 3:2 says, "Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth." Where are our minds to be? Are they to be in the gutter, so to speak, as we think of sin, sexual immorality, or ways that can make us happy? Or, is our mindset to be on things that are above? The Bible is clear that we must have a mind that is set on those things that are above. We have to change our minds. Sometimes when a person becomes a Christian, he never really changes his mind. I've talked to a person who said, "Once I became a Christian by being baptized into Christ (Gal. 3:27), I really didn't change my life much. My life was still the same, and not much was changed." I told that person, "You **should** have changed. And you **must** change. You have to change your mindset first of all." Our minds must be changed. In Romans 12:1-2 Paul said,

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."

Our minds must be continually changed. Every day we should grow closer to God. Every day we should learn more. Every day we should learn how to be stronger. We may be strong and faithful today, but tomorrow we should be more faithful and stronger than we are today. Our minds must be changed. We must have the mindset that says, "I will do what God has said, no matter what. My mind no longer belongs to me, but instead belongs to the Lord." In Jeremiah 10:23 Jeremiah said, "Oh Lord, I know the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps." When we have a worldly mindset—a mind that wants to please us—we will not be seeking those things which are above. We will be seeking our own desires—the things that make us happy, the things we want to do, the things of this world. But we must let the Word of God be our guide. In 1 Corinthians 1:10 we are told to all have the same mind. Did you know that all faithful Christians ought to have the one, same mind? How is that possible? The only way it is possible is if we change our minds. If we all change our minds according to the Word of God, then we can all have the same mind. If we want to be unified, we must have the same mind. We can even have the same thoughts. It is so encouraging to travel to other places in the world in order to see and talk to faithful Christians. We might never have talked to them before, yet we both agree on what the Scriptures say. We both know what truth is—not because of our opinions or because someone tells us what to say. We know it because we have the same mind. We both have gone to the same Bible (the Word of God) and have studied it. The Bible says that we are all to be unified and to have the same mind. In Isaiah 55:8-9 we are told, "'My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,' says the Lord. 'For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.'" If we have the mind of this world, then we will not have the same thoughts as God. We will not have the Word of God in our hearts and

minds because we will still be thinking on **our** level. In Philippians 2:5 the Bible says, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." The only way we can know the mind of God is if He has revealed His mind to us. Has He revealed His mind to us? Yes. How? Through His Word. The Bible (as the Word of God) is what needs to be in our minds. We need to change our minds to say, "What does God want? What does the Bible say? No more will I be concerned about the things of this world or what others think from a worldly standpoint. The only thing that matters is what God wants. That is where my mind will be set. I am going to be thinking about eternity. My mind is going to be thinking, not on things of this world, but on the things that matter most (like where I will spend eternity when I die). Have I been living a life that is pleasing to God?" If we changed our minds, and every time we involved ourselves in a practice or teaching, we had eternity in mind, many people would not make the mistakes they make today. We think of this temporary world instead of changing our minds and setting them on things which are above. The first thing we must do, then, is change our minds. If we are going to seek those things which are above, we must change our minds and be thinking about those things which are above.

The second thing we must do is do something once we have changed our minds. Some people say, "I'm going to change my mind," yet they never do anything about it. They never have the actions to go with their thoughts. Faith without works is dead. You can believe something all day long, but you must put that belief into practice. We must put to death our physical members on this Earth—the physical things of this Earth. In Colossians 3:5-6 we read, "Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience." What does the Bible teach? It says that we must put off these sinful practices. You may have been living a life of sin before you were converted to Christianity. The Bible says that you have to put off those things. You cannot keep doing them. I cannot tell you how many people I know who became Christians, and then continued living anyway they wanted to live. They continued to be involved in immorality. They continued to be involved in unsound doctrine. Why? Because they did not put to death their members on Earth—those sexual things and unsound doctrines of the world. We must put to death those things. Why must we do that? If we want to go to Heaven, we must put to death those things because Romans 6:1-2 says that we cannot continue in sin so that grace may abound and cover us. Not only will we miss out on Heaven, but we also will spend an eternity in Hell. The Bible says that we will have the wrath of God against us. In Hebrews 10:31 the Bible says, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of a living God." People may say, "I don't care; it doesn't bother me." They almost make a mockery of Hell. But Hell is no joke. It is not something about which to laugh. It is not funny. It will not be a party. It is so sad to see people have that kind of mindset and attitude. In Mark 9:42-48 Christ warned people about Hell so that we will not go there, and so that we will change our minds and our actions in order to follow Him. The text of 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10 talks about how those who do not do what Christ says will spend an eternity in Hell. We must put to death these sinful, worldly lifestyles. If you have been drinking alcohol, you must quit drinking. You cannot continue drinking "so that grace may abound." You must put that to death. If you are in an unscriptural marriage and are living in adultery, you cannot continue doing that. You must get out of that sin. In Matthew 19:9 Jesus gave only one scriptural exception for divorce—which is if a person's spouse committed fornication. Then and only then can that person be put away. That is the only scriptural reason to divorce. Yet many people divorce for other reasons and remarry unscripturally. Because of that, they are living in sin. As Ezra 10 says, they must repent and get out of that state. They have to put to death those things. But so many people are not willing to put to death their members on Earth. If we want to be faithful, we must do that.

The third thing we must do is put on spiritual conduct. Just as we must put off sinful conduct, we must put on spiritual conduct. As we have already seen, when a person is baptized in Christ (Gal. 3:27), he puts on Christ. Then that person can continue to grow and put on more and more spirituality and righteousness as he grows and learns more of God's truth in order to become a better Christian every day. Colossians 3:12-14 says,

“Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection.”

Here we see that there is certain spiritual conduct that we must put on. There are things we must do. There is a type of behavior by which we must live as faithful Christians if we are seeking those things which are above. One of those things is tender mercy. When I read that, the first thing that comes to my mind is Luke 10:30-37—the story of the Good Samaritan. A man had been robbed and beaten by thieves. The first person to come by was a priest. What did he do? He walked on by. The second person that came along was a Levite. What did he do? He walked on by. The third person was the Samaritan—the person who might be considered the least likely to help. What did he do? He took care of the man who had been beaten. He provided for him. He took him to an inn. That showed tender mercy. The Bible teaches that we must have tender mercy and help people. In James 1:27 we are told, “Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.” Are you taking care of widows? Do you go out and visit those in your congregation who are older and perhaps lonely because their husbands have died? They may be in their seventies or eighties. Are you taking care of them and visiting with them? I've come to find out when I go visit widows, orphans, or others who need to be visited, when I leave, I am the one who really is blessed. I am the one who has received the benefit. Oh, they have, too. But it makes me appreciate my life and the things that I have. We must have tender mercy toward one another.

The Bible also says that we must be kind. Galatians 6:10 says that we are to do good unto all, and especially those who are of the household of faith. Philippians 2:4 tells us “Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.” True kindness is looking out for the best interests of others—meaning their eternal interests. Sometimes when we are studying with a person and showing him the error of his ways, and we show him that what he is doing is wrong, he gets offended (just as people often were offended by what Jesus had to say; John 6:66). That person may say, “The Bible says to be kind. But you are not being very kind because you are showing me something that I am doing wrong. You are trying to tell me I have to change according to the Word of God. That's not very kind.” But it **is** kind. The world has tried to define kindness in a different way. True kindness is looking out for the best interests of others. A true friend will tell those who are in sin because that friend loves the other person and wants to see him go to Heaven. That is kindness. Kindness is not ignoring a person's sin and allowing him to continue in it and go to Hell for eternity. That is not true kindness. True kindness is looking out for the best interests of others.

The Bible also says that we must have humility. In James 4:10 we are told that we must “humble ourselves in the sight of the Lord.” In Romans 12:16 the Bible says, “Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion.” I've heard people say that they believe they are smarter than God. Isn't that something—when people have the mindset that they are smarter than God?! People say, “I know what God says, but I'm going to do it my way

because God's way just doesn't seem right." That is not humility. We must humble ourselves. And notice what the Bible says about the One before Whom we must humble ourselves: "in the sight of **the Lord**." Sometimes when we preach the truth with great boldness, people will accuse us of not being humble. But we must be humble "in the sight of the Lord." That is, we must humble ourselves so we can do the will of God and submit to Him. In 1 Corinthians 1:26-27 the Bible says,

"For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty."

Technology and education are wonderful things. Sometimes people have more degrees than a thermometer. They think that because of that, they can take the Scriptures and twist or ignore them because of their status on Earth. They say, "I do not have to submit to that because everyone says I'm doing the right thing. I've got a lot of people who follow me. I've got a lot of money. I've got a lot of fame." The problem is pride. They have not humbled themselves to do the will of God. Can it be hard at times to humble ourselves? You better believe it can! If we are living in sin, or if we are involved in something that will require a total life change, it can be very difficult. That is why we must be willing to humble ourselves and submit to the will of God.

Another characteristic we must have is meekness, which means "power under control." Meekness does not mean that we allow people to walk all over us. It means that we do not lose control. We must have a mild disposition. Perhaps you are having a Bible study, and the person with whom you are studying is getting angry. It should not turn into a screaming contest where nothing gets accomplished. Meekness is self-control. It means that you have your power under control at all times. Many times when people are discussing the Bible they lose control. They start doing things based on emotion, and do not have their power under control. On such occasions, people often do not think through their arguments or what they are trying to say because it becomes more an emotional matter. We must have meekness.

The Bible also says that we must have longsuffering so that we can bear with one another. This does not mean that we condone people's sins. False teachers might say, "The Bible says that we are to have longsuffering and bear with one another. So, if someone is living in sin, let them live in sin." That is not at all what the Scriptures teach. In fact, in Acts 8 Peter rebuked Simon (a new convert) on the spot for his sin. There may be times (as Romans 14 and 1 Corinthians 8 explain) when a brother or sister in Christ may not be as knowledgeable as we are. Perhaps you have a freedom (like in the biblical examples—eating meat sacrificed to idols). The Bible says there is nothing wrong with that. It is authorized; a person can do that. But some new converts did not think it was correct to do that. Was it wrong **not** to eat meat sacrificed to idols? No. There is nothing wrong with refusing to eat meat that had been sacrificed to idols. So, in such an instance we need to bear with one another. Even though a person had a freedom to do something like that, he should not do it if it might cause someone to be offended. Romans 14 and 1 Corinthians 8 do not teach that it is acceptable to allow someone to continue in a sinful state. Rather, we are to bear with others who may be weaker than we are in matters of freedom. We may have to give up such freedoms in order to help those who are weaker than we are. We need to be longsuffering and bear with one another.

We also must forgive one another. But repentance must come before forgiveness (Eph. 4:32). We are to forgive in the same way that God forgave us. How did God forgive us? When does God forgive us? Is it an unconditional forgiveness that requires us to do nothing at

all? Absolutely not! From 2 Chronicles 7:14 we learn, "If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land." According to this, we must humble ourselves. We have to seek God and turn from our evil ways. We must repent before forgiveness can come. In Luke 17:3 we are told, "If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him." When someone truly repents, we cannot continue to hold a grudge against that person. There may be some consequences (from a worldly standpoint) that occur because of that person's sin. However, we must forgive a person when he repents. But we cannot forgive before someone has repented.

We also must love. From 1 Corinthians 13:1-3 we learn that if something is not done with the right motivation, it profits an individual nothing. If we do something for the wrong motivation, we will be held accountable for that on the Day of Judgment. This is not a mushy type of love as the world likes look at it. It is a true love—a love that carries with it the right motivation. Why do you do what you do? Is it for selfish reasons? Is it so you can get people on your side? Is it for fame or fortune? If so, that is not love. You must have the right motivation. You must have love for others. I heard someone say that they were having a "friends and family day." Someone then said, "We need to correct that and have a 'friends, family, and **enemies** day.'" You see, there can be no favoritism when it comes to spreading the Gospel who are sinners lost in the world. We need to make sure that we have a true love for them.

We must set our minds so that we seek those things which are above. Maybe you have not been doing that. Maybe you have been seeking those things that are of this Earth, including false doctrine. You need to change, and you need to become a Christian today. Paul said, "Today is the day of salvation." In Acts 22:16 a question was asked, "Why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord." If you have yet to obey the truth, we pray today that you will obey the Gospel of Christ.

Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

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STUDY QUESTIONS FOR COLOSSIANS LESSON 4 (CHAPTER 3)

1. What does Colossians 3:1 admonish Christians to do?
2. According to Colossians 3:1, where is Christ now?
3. What important point is contained in John 9:31?
4. According to Romans 6:3, when a person is baptized, into what is he baptized?
5. What, in Romans 6:6, did Paul say that Christians are **not** to be?
6. According to Acts 22:16, when are a person's sins forgiven?
7. According to 1 Peter 3:21, what does baptism do for a person who has been immersed in water because of his/her faith in Jesus Christ?
8. According to Colossians 3:2, where is a Christian's mind supposed to be?
9. According to Romans 12:1, how are Christians to view their earthly bodies?
10. What negative command did Paul present in Romans 12:2?
11. Summarize in your own words the thoughts found in Colossians 3:5-6.
12. In Colossians 3:12, what are Christians commanded to "put on"?
13. What does James 4:10 admonish us to do?
14. According to Galatians 6:10, Christians are to "do good" to two different groups of people. Who composes those two groups?
15. Romans 12:16 says, "Do not be wise in your own opinion." How does that fit with the statement in 1 Corinthians 1:26-27, which says that "not many wise according to the flesh" will be saved?
16. What command for Christians is found in Philippians 2:4?
17. According to the material presented in this lesson, what is the definition of "meekness"?
18. What does the Bible mean when it says that we must be "longsuffering" toward one another? [HINT: You will find a clue in Colossians 3:13.]
19. How does 2 Chronicles 7:14 ["If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land"] apply to Christians today?
20. According to 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10 where will those who do not obey Christ spend eternity?