

The Hope of Glory:

An Exposition of Colossians

September 20, 2020

*Sermon 11: Obedience and the hope of glory, sermon 1
Colossians 3:1-4*

Opening Illustration: Obedience...what a huge word! As we begin to talk about obedience and the hope of glory, we need to remember that words like “obedience” communicate so much more that is internal and spiritual than what is simply external. To put it a different way, we are obedient when:

- We do, feel and think what we are commanded to do, feel and think.
 - **Luke 6:46** "Why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?"
- We do, feel and think what we are commanded to do, feel, and think with the right motives and attitudes.
 - **1 John 5:3** For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome.

Our theme for this section: The focus of our lives reveals the nature of our hope of glory.

I. Introduction/Review

A. What will be our focus for today?

1. Your mind matters! Thought life and the hope of glory
2. Our thoughts are easily affected by our circumstances.

Point: Seriously, how important is the first 30 minutes of every day? Imagine waking up and stepping out of bed onto a lego or some other sharp, pointy object. Then you stagger into the bathroom, hop in the shower and realize that you're out of hot water. After that, you look down and notice that you didn't pull the shower curtain in and there is water all over the floor. After cutting yourself shaving, you go to make coffee and you just can't seem to get that little paper filter to break away from the stack. You take your first sip and realize that the cream has turned and you are probably drinking decaf anyway...etc etc etc. Let me ask you, “Are you going to have a good day?”

3. In this section (chapter 3) of Colossians, we will be contemplating the focus of our lives.
 - a. A Heavenly, spiritual perspective
 - b. An eager expectation for the future
 - c. A striving toward the mortification of remaining sin in our lives
 - d. A genuine pursuit of fruitful spiritual growth
 - e. A transformed dynamic of personal relationships
4. We have already come to understand that the way to fight for obedience is not out of cold-hearted, legalistic duty (Chapter 2). So how **do** we fight for holiness in our lives?

II. Set your Sights! Colossians 3:1-3

A. On what? Why?

Point: “Some people are so heavenly minded, that they are of no earthly good.” Is this true?

1. Your identity in Christ
 - a. If you have been raised with Christ
 - i. This is what is called a first-class condition in the Greek. It is assumed to be true.
 - ii. Example: “If you love me, could you pour me a cup of coffee?” Nobody expects the answer: “I don't. Get it yourself.”
2. “The things above” τὰ ἄνω
 - a. What do the words “the things above” mean?
 - i. Does this simply mean, “positive”?

- a) **Example:** Christian radio is often self-described as “positive hits” radio or something similar. Is that what Paul is getting to, here? No.
- ii. Does this simply mean “higher” in the sense of “better” or “more civilized” or “higher class”?
 - a) No, although that would be good advice.
 - b) See **Philippians 4:8** Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.
- iii. What, then, is Paul referring to?
 - a) There is a geographical focus here—above, where CHRIST is.
 - b) There is a spiritual focus here—the things which transcend this world and its system.

ILL: Let’s get back to our example earlier, and the absolutely horrific morning that I described. I asked, “Are you going to have a good day?” One possible way of answering in the affirmative is if you determine something like this in your mind: “This morning was brutal, but I am not going to let it get me down. I believe that God is sovereign and that even these things will work together for my good, so here I come, world!” Now, if you say something like this in your heart, are you going to have a good day? Maybe. At the very least, it will restart your attitude. Sometimes that is really all we need.

3. Why?

- a. Because you were raised with Christ.
 - i. Remember, in 2:20, Paul says that we died with Christ.
 - ii. We were also raised with Christ, which is to say that we are positionally identified with the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- b. Because Jesus is seated at the right hand of God!
 - i. That is to say that His work is done!
 - ii. That is to say that our position is secure!

B. What does this call us to?

- 1. This calls us to focus.
 - a. We are told to “seek,” but not only this. We are told to “keep” seeking. This implies a continuous focus in our thoughts and in our lives.
- 2. This calls us to think.
 - a. This is also a continual thing.
 - b. This describes the habitual motions of our minds.

C. What difference does this make?

- 1. All the difference in the world!
- 2. There is a reason why Paul begins his chapter on Christian obedience with your mind.
 - a. Your attitude determines the virtue of something, perhaps more than the action itself.
 - i. Example: You can make your kids do the dishes, but you can’t make them joyfully do the dishes!
 - b. Your attitude directly flows from your focus and your perspective on reality.
 - i. If you focus on the frustrating things, you get frustrated.
 - ii. If you focus on the irritating things, you get irritated.
 - iii. If you focus on the Lord, you are humbled and encouraged.

III. Set your Expectations! Colossians 3:4

A. Don’t expect complete fulfillment in this life.

- 1. The key to happiness is lowered expectations.
 - a. That has been the key to my ministry...keeping your expectations nice and low.
 - b. That is a key to relationships...the best way to ruin a marriage is to expect your spouse to be perfect.

- c. Etc.
- 2. We are often disappointed because our expectations of this world are simply too high.

B. Eagerly anticipate a coming glory!

1. We are often discouraged in our walk because our expectations of Heaven are simply too low.
 - a. We often think of Heaven in cartoonish ways.
 - b. We often think of Heaven in quite earthly terms.
 - c. How should we think of Heaven?
 - i. We should expect to have a life of struggling with sin come to an end, being replaced by a blessed sanctification. We will be made to be like Him!
 - ii. In believing this, we will fight our sin to the death (pun intended).
 - iii. **1 John 3:2-3** Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. 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.
2. We are often discouraged in our walk because our expectations of Heaven are simply too weak.
 - a. **Hebrews 9:28** so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who **eagerly** await Him.
 - b. **Philippians 3:20-21** For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we **eagerly** wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ;²¹ who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.
 - c. **Romans 8:22-23** For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now.²³ And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting **eagerly** for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.

IV. Set a Tone! Applications

A. Set a tone for thinking about the right things.

1. This may mean spending time in the word first thing in the morning.
2. This may mean memorizing and meditating upon scripture first thing in the morning.
3. This may mean have a “quiet time” or “doing your devotions” first thing in the morning.
4. This may mean reviewing your memory verses in the shower.
5. Whatever form this takes, make sure:
 - a. That you are intentionally setting your mind on the things of God in the early part of your day.
 - b. That you don’t allow social media set your tone for the day.

Point: Facebook makes for lousy days. It is easy to be frustrated by how people share their thoughts without any real care for the people who might be reading. I even de-activated my Twitter, partly due to everyone fighting with each other via tweet. I had to make a conscious effort to make sure the first words I read in the morning are God’s words.

- c. That you don’t allow your mind to linger on God-belittling things first thing. Set a tone.
 - i. If you wake up feeling discouraged or disillusioned, take that to the Lord and fight it.
 - ii. If you wake up focused on petty disagreements or negativity, take that to the Lord and fight it.
 - iii. If you wake up in any attitude that draws you away from God, take it to him and fight it.

B. Set a tone for having the right attitude.

Closing ILL: Every day of your life, you will have to make a conscious choice. Each day will provide you with ample reasons to complain, belly-ache and wish things were better. If you are not careful, you may become angry, jaded, sarcastic and broken. You will feel justified in being this way, because life gives you reasons to be this way. On the other hand, every day will present you with things by which you may become distracted, worldly, self-

confident, self-righteous, etc. You will feel justified in being this way, because life gives you reasons to be this way. However, every day you are presented with the reality of the Bible, the glory, greatness and grace of this tiune God. You may choose to get so caught up in His greatness that the things of earth will grow strangely dim. You will feel obedient when your focus is there, and you will be obedient. In fact, you cannot be obedient otherwise.

I suggest to you that this battle may well be decided in the first 30 minutes that you are awake. Will you:
Set your sights?
Set your expectations?
Set a Tone?

I hope that you will, to the blessed encouragement of your souls and (even more importantly):
To the Praise of His Glory,
Amen.