

Jesus, Our All in All – Spiritual Maturity: Part III, 3:1-4

I want to invite you to turn in your Bible to Colossians chapter 3. Today, we are going to look at a third component of Paul's advice for how every Christian should pursue Spiritual Maturity. When we consider the things Paul shared with us in chapter 2, we should know that all wisdom comes through walking in Christ. We should also understand that every believer who desires to grow in knowledge and wisdom must be willing to place Jesus first, above all other things, and trust the continuous work of the Holy Spirit in their life. It must also be known that since every believer is identified with Christ, attempting to live under the rule and authority of man-made systems that have a bend toward legalism, traditionalism, ceremonialism, and mysticism, will only rob a person of the rewards and blessings promised by the Father. We must know and embrace the truths behind our relationship with Jesus. Every repentant believer died on the cross. The old, sinful, hell-bent person died with Jesus in that moment. The old nature is dead and was buried in the tomb with Jesus. In chapter 2, Paul wanted to expose the dangers associated with the self-righteous demands of following prescribed lists of religious rules and regulations. The greatest danger comes in the form of appearing more morally acceptable than we really are and as a result, restricting the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. In chapter 3, Paul explains that true Christian behavior is not regulated by rules and unattainable expectations, but by accepting Jesus and embracing this new nature that comes through Him and can only be found in a relationship with Him. It is Christ who molds and shapes us. It is Christ, who lives within us that changes our moral and ethical nature, and nothing else!

Let's get started. Look with me at the first 4 verses of chapter 3. **Read Colossians 3:1-4.** Paul says that every believer has not only died with Jesus on the cross but has also been raised to life with Him. Here in verse 1, he repeats this idea from **Colossians 2:12-13**, which says: *"having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, **God made alive together with him**, having forgiven us all our trespasses."* Paul wanted the people at Colossae to understand that their new relationship with Jesus was also an entirely "new life." He teaches this as well in **Romans 6:6-11**.

We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. So, you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Let me ask a question: Have you ever wanted a do-over in life, a mulligan, a reset? Perhaps, a fresh start in life? Well, here's your chance. Jesus is your chance. If you haven't already, will today be the day you receive Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord? With Him, and only with Him, will things be made new. With Him and only with Him will you get a true reset, a true fresh start.

For those having been raised to life with Christ, Paul offers some advice on what to do with that position and how to address it in a practical manner. He says first to, *"seek the things*

that are above.” Because of Jesus, every believer has been raised into life. This means, we get access at some point, to where He is. Because of the Holy Spirit we get spiritual access now but will gain eternal access later. To seek something means you go after it with fervency, earnestly, and decisively. In this case, we are to pursue everything that is centered on Jesus Christ, the ascended King of Kings. Paul goes on to suggest that our minds should also be focused on the heavenly things and not earthly things. This is God’s way of inviting us to join our hearts and minds with His, into complete alignment. When our heart is drawn to His, we choose to align with Him and join in His methods for sanctifying our soul. Any other practice or method or program that doesn’t fit this criterion can be dangerous, and I, like Paul, want you to avoid those things.

We know that God wants us to do these things. He wants us to seek and set; **how do we go about this while still living below in this sin-filled world?** Begin by asking the Holy spirit to reveal in you the things which distract you from Jesus. Once you identify those things, begin a process of seeking and setting. Seek out whether it helps you remain close to Jesus. If not, then set it aside, and replace it with something that does. Especially, set aside immoral things. Think of this as a new discipline. Something that requires practice and a concentrated effort can be difficult at first, but the more you rely on His power, the easier it becomes. First, Jesus is one of the “above” things. He must become the object of your heart. Do you really love Him, or is that just something you say because it seems appropriate? Remember, we prioritize most things on earth by our happiness or by our “right” to be happy. To focus mind and heart on the things above, a spiritually mature follower will concentrate on reading the Bible and meditating on its truths. They will surround themselves with fellow believers who care about who they are and who genuinely want to be a part of their life. They will read, listen to, and watch things that point to God as opposed to things that detract and distract from Him. Again, not driven by some check list of rules, but driven from the results of living a life bent on, as Paul says, *“walking in Christ.”*

The standard of every man-made religion focuses on the participant adhering to the “dos” and “don’ts.” Christianity, because of Christ, encourages us to avoid these man-made things because they can only give the appearance of holiness. Instead, God allows us to enter a holy relationship with His Son through His Spirit, and it’s in that “new life” where God’s holiness helps us avoid immoral things, impure things, evil things, sinful things, and lustful things. God never intended for Christians to live a life filled with things to be avoided. Instead, the goal should be to live a holy life motivated from a desire to please God. Along the way, a seeking heart and a set mind instills a desire to avoid unholy things. So, what does it mean to “seek the things that are above” and to “set your minds on things that are above”? The answer is found in the heart of one who hungers and thirsts for God and who desires to know and be like our holy God. Is this where you are today? Are your thoughts consumed with knowing God and heaven – our future home? Do you want to see Him face to face? Do you desire to have an eternal relationship with Him? It’s up to you at this point. Jesus has done His part. Now, He’s waiting on you.