

Where to set your heart and mind — Colossians 3:1-4
James Muldoon - Carey Baptist Church - 14 September 2008

Paul is not a mere theorist, filling people's heads with knowledge. Nor is he a mere moralist, telling people what to do but not telling them why. In this morning's passage he is going to tell you what you need to know; and then he is going to tell you how it must affect your life.

i Doctrine

v3-4 present to us the doctrine of union with Christ.

God relates to us through Adam or through Christ. If you are connected to Adam, all God's dealings with you will be through Adam. If you are connected to Christ, all God's dealings with you will be through Christ. Adam and Christ are thus the heads or representatives of two different realms. Adam is the head of what Paul calls "**the present evil age**" in **Galatians 1:4**; Christ is the head of the age to come. Adam is the head of this world; Christ is the head of the world to come. Adam is the head of all creation which is in rebellion against God; Christ is the head of all creation which is in submission to God. Adam and Christ are the representative heads of two different realms. Everyone in the world belongs to one or the other.

By nature, we are all united to Adam. However, when people repent of their sin and start to trust in the Lord Jesus, they switch realms and are now united to Christ. The Bible then teaches that if you are united to Christ, you are united to him in all he has done on your behalf. Therefore it says that you died with him, you rose with him, you ascended with him, you sat down in heaven with him, and you will return with him. See verses such as **Romans 6:8**, **Colossians 2:20** and **Colossians 2:12** if you want to explore this. The moment people believe in the Lord Jesus, God regards them as having died with Christ to the present evil age, to this world, to creation in rebellion against God. And he regards them as having been raised to life with Christ into the age to come, into the world to come, into creation in submission to God.

v3 has something to say about this doctrine. It says that "**your life is now hidden with Christ in God.**" Your true position as a Christian is in heaven. You are with Christ in God. **Ephesians 2:6** teaches the same. As God sees his Son, he sees you bound up with him. He sees you there with him.

But... In terms of how that looks on earth, it's hidden. It's true, but it's hidden. It's hidden from people in general. Sometimes it might even be hidden from you if you lack assurance. You belong in the age to come, in the world to come, in creation in submission to God. Your life really is wrapped up with Christ in heaven. But it's all hidden at present. You still have to live in the present evil age, in this world, in creation in rebellion against God. You've already entered a new era, but the old era has not yet ceased to exist. Therefore a constant battle rages within you and around you. Old fights new. The puzzles and perplexities and dilemmas of living as a Christian still remain. You still struggle with sin and Satan. Nevertheless, the result is not in doubt! You are secure and so you will be for all eternity.

v4 adds something too. When Jesus Christ returns, you will be right there with him. Everyone will see you as you really are. No matter, then, if you are mocked for being a Christian now. No matter if you feel so unsuccessful in your Christian service. On

that day you will be seen for what you are: a faithful, persevering, God-honouring servant in union with Christ.

Christian, do you understand the wonder of union with Christ? Isn't it stunning that he is our representative head; that he has translated us into the age to come, into the world to come, into creation in submission to God; that we live with him? Stop and think about that. Know where you stand. You stand with Christ! We so often live crushed and half-hearted Christian lives because we expect defeat to be around the corner. But it's not! Our lives are hidden with Christ in God and one day everyone will see that. So go forward with the confidence which comes from knowing your true position in Christ.

And if you don't have union with Christ, why not turn to him? Confess the things you've done wrong to God and turn away from them. Trust in Christ to save you. He will!

ii Practice

v1-2 tell us to set our hearts and minds on things above. When Paul talks about things above, he's thinking about things which relate to the realm of Christ (Note that he says, **"...things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God"**). Paul wants us, with everything there is within us, heart and mind, to make our priority the things of Christ.

That doesn't mean withdrawing from life. **v2** is telling us not to set our minds on sinful things; it's not commanding us not to think about the necessary duties of everyday life (as a comparison with the Greek in **v5** shows). Paul is urging you to make your priority, in all you do, the glory of Christ. Your priority in your work, in your studies, in your housework, in your parenting, in your hobbies, in your service at church, should be the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. In all you do, you should aim for his glory. Jesus Christ should be the centre, the source, the dynamic, the focus, the meaning, the glory, the goal of your life.

Where are your heart and mind, then? Do you set your heart on things above? Do you set your mind on things above? Is every atom within you given over to him? That's a high standard. But it's the standard at which you're to aim as one of God's people. You'll need the Holy Spirit's help if you're to manage!

In fact, Paul hints at that. He uses a Greek present imperative which means, "Set your hearts and minds on things above! And go on doing it! Don't give up! Keep your hearts and minds where they should be!" That, of course, shows that setting our hearts and minds on things above does not come easy to us. And we've seen the reason already. We belong to the new era; we live in the old era. The old era will always tend to drag us down, like wearing boots with lead soles.

What must you do, then? Constantly focus on your true position. Constantly go forward, concerning yourself with the things of Christ. Let your union with Christ give you confidence. Let it direct the course of your life. Keep on setting your heart and your mind on things above, where Christ is, and where you are!