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Colossians 3:1-11.

Society seems to be more and more checked out, not paying attention, more self-consumed. We are spending more and more time with our faces in a phone or some other type of screen. I am guilty of this also, walking through a store and looking at my phone. (Video of Andrew falling)

This is a good picture of how many people live in our society today. They're searching for something because they know there's got to be more to life. But they'll never find it if they don't know what it is that they're missing.

As we come to **Colossians 3**, we move from doctrine to conduct. This is very similar to the outline of the Book of Romans, where the first eleven chapters contain rich truths, and the final chapters focus on how to live them out. The same is true of the Book of Ephesians. What we believe determines in large part how we behave.

Specifically, in Colossians, we've learned that if we get Christ right, we get everything else right. Jesus is supreme over His creation, His church, and now we'll see in chapters 3 and 4 that He is supreme over the Christian. There are practical implications that should be evident if one surrenders to the supremacy of Jesus. As such, we move from principle to practice, from the "is" to the "ought." It does little good if we can declare and defend the truth but fail to demonstrate it in our lives. Let's pray that we're not like those described in **Titus 1:16**:

They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work. ESV

Paul has been arguing that we are set free from the powers around us, now he tells us that we have been set free for living a life above moral reproach. God's plan is to first make us new; then He challenges us to live as new people. In short, we don't have to be like we've always been. We can break free from the past if we know where to look.

We're going to discover this morning from **Colossians 3:1-11** that if you want to break free from your past, then where you put your eyes is very important. Instead of looking down, and being distracted Paul challenges us to:

I. Look Up!

- **Read verses 1-4.**
- **Colossians 3:1** establishes the truth that since we've been raised with Christ, we have a new status and therefore a new way of life. We now have a power source for living.
- **"Seek those things which are above"** The word **"seek"** means to seek something out with a desire to possess it. The word is in the present tense, which implies that we're to continue to seek the things above. It's not just a one-time decision but is to be a daily activity.

Matthew 6:21, For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. ESV

- What is it you seek after? The newest, and best what? What weather? Location Vacations? Diligently seek out every day?

- **“Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.”** This literally translates, “Keep on thinking, as a matter of habit, on things above, not on things on the earth.”
- Our feet must be on earth, but our minds must be in heaven. Thoughts can influence actions, so if we place our thoughts above and not on the earth, our behavior will reflect those things that matter to God.
- If we fix our gaze on things above, God will change our desires. If we change our mind, God will change our heart. By seeking what Christ desires, we have the power to break our obsession with pleasure and the accumulation of things.
- Why? What is your why? Scripture gives us what should be our why, **verses 3-4**. Christians are dead in Christ, hidden in Him and one day will appear again with Him.

1 John 3:2, Dear friends, now we are children of God. We have not yet been shown what we will be in the future. But we know that when Christ comes again, we will be like him. We will see him just as he is. ERV

II. Watch Out!

- **Read verses 5.**
- Because we have died and been raised with Christ, we have the spiritual power to slay those desires that want to control us. We have died to sin, but we must render sinful desires as powerless. While we can't totally eradicate the sinful nature, we can conquer it, through the power of the Holy Spirit. The new life calls for more than avoiding a few vices and beefing up our spiritual life by going to church occasionally. Positionally, we've died with Christ. Now we need to live it out practically.
- Grace trumps legalism but Paul makes it very clear in **Romans 6:1-2** that we are no longer to let sin rule over us: **“What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?”**
- Paul wants us to look out, so he lists some sensual sins in **verse 5**. We must slay these with the passion of a Phinehas (**Numbers 25:1-11**). Anytime we see these desires begin to awaken in our lives we need to grab our spear and thrust it right through them.
- We need to be zealous for God's honor by putting them to death. Notice that we're not just to put them aside. We're not to wound them or even ask them to leave. We're not to experiment or play around with them, rationalize them, or even explain them away. Instead, we're to kill, mortify them. We're to thrust our spears right through them.
- God loves you too much to allow you to mess up your life with sins. He's not a killjoy. He made you and knew what is best for you.
- **ERV translation of verse 5, “So put everything evil out of your life: sexual sin, doing anything immoral, letting sinful thoughts control you, and wanting things that are wrong. And don't keep wanting more and more for yourself, which is the same as worshiping a false god.”**
- **Read verses 6-7.** Reminds us that this kind of behavior belongs to our old life and should not be part of our present pattern of living: “You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived.” We need to put the past behind us and refuse to resort to a lifestyle that no longer reflects our identity.
- **Verses 8-9a**, we're told to rid ourselves of social sins. By the way, we often dismiss these sins as the “little ones” that we can overlook. Paul doesn't. If you thought you cruised safely through the first list, you better fasten your seat belts.

- **Verse 9b-10.** The image here is that of taking off old smelly clothes. Before new garments of righteousness can be put on, the old rags of sin must be discarded.
- Anger is a continuous attitude of hatred that remains bottled up within.
- Wrath (rage) is what comes bursting out, often uncontrollably.
- Malice is an attitude of ill will towards a person. It's often a hidden hatred of the heart that takes revenge in secret.
- Blasphemy (slander) is when we destroy another person's good reputation by lies gossip and the spreading of rumors.
- Filthy language is crude talk or abrasive words and is often filled with cursing and sexual innuendo.
- Lying to one another disrupts unity by destroying trust. It tears down relationships and can lead to serious conflicts.
- These behaviors have no place in any Christian or in any church. They are part of the old life. We must rid ourselves of the repulsive sins of sex and speech so that we can "put on" the attitudes and actions of Christ.

III. Look Around!

- **Read verse 11.**
- This verse indicates that in Christ there should be no barriers of nationality, race, education, social standing, wealth, gender, religion, or power. The gospel breaks down walls of ancient prejudice.

Paul lists four groupings that need to dissolve in the church.

- **Racial distinctions.** The spread of the Greek culture could make a Greek person feel proud and privileged and therefore look down on Jews. A Jewish person would regard Gentiles as heathen and immoral, dogs, and outside of God's grace.
- **Religious distinctions.** The false teachers taught that circumcision was important to the spiritual life, but Paul made it clear that this act of surgery gave one no advantages in Christ.
- **Cultural distinctions.** The Greeks considered any non-Greek to be a barbarian and the Scythians were the lowest barbarians of all and were considered little better than beasts.
- **Economic distinctions.** There was a huge cultural and economic chasm between slaves and those who were free.
- All these human barriers belong to the "old man" and not the new one. Since Christ dwells in all believers, regardless of background or social status, we must make sure we are not allowing any division or prejudice to take root in our lives. The stigma of being different must be loved away as we strive for unity within diversity. Christ is all and is in all.

Conclusion

Stop looking down. And stop searching for something that will never satisfy. Instead, seek Christ by looking up...and live Christ by looking out, looking in, and looking around.