

# *The Christian Walk*

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## THE CHRISTIAN'S MINDSET (Col. 3:1-4)

Colossians 3:1-4 contains the key for victorious Christian living. How desperately we need this key in a day of compromise and spiritual darkness.

The assumption behind the key: that you have been raised up with Christ (v. 1a). The resurrection of the Son of God demonstrates three truths:

1. That Jesus is God's own Son (cf. John 2:19; Rom. 1:4)
2. That someday God's people who trust Jesus will also rise from the dead (cf. 1 Cor. 15:20-23)
3. That right now every Christian has been identified, in the sight of God, with the resurrection of Jesus

## II. The statement of the key (vv. 1b-2)

1. The positive statement: the key is to keep seeking the things above where Christ is, to set your mind on the things above, to believe what God says about Jesus Christ and your relationship to Him
2. The negative statement: the key is not a list of do's and don'ts (cf. Col. 2:20-23)

## III. The foundation for the key (Col. 2)—three reasons why setting your mind on Christ is the key for victorious Christian living

1. All the answers to all the questions we will ever need to ask are found in Him (Col. 2:3)
  - a. Where did we come from? (cf. Gen. 1; John 5:46-47)
  - b. Where are we going? (cf. Rev. 1:1, 8)
  - c. Who is God? Who are we? How do we get together with God? etc.
2. All the fullness of deity dwells in Him (Col. 2:9-10)
  - a. Judicially, we are complete in Him
  - b. Experientially, we are incomplete and in need of His fullness
    - (1) We need power (cf. Matt 28:18; Phil. 4:13; Mail. 14:22-33) (Side B)
    - (2) We need purity (cf. 1 John 1:8, 10; 2:1; Isa. 6:5)
    - (3) We need consistency (cf. Heb. 13:8; Rev. 12:10; Mal. 3:6)
    - (4) We need love
3. All spiritual growth is the result of holding fast to Him (Col. 2:19; cf. Heb. 5:12-14; John 15:5)

## IV. The objections to the key (vv. 3-4)

1. “I can’t do it; I don’t want to do it” (v. 3)
  - a. But God broke the power structure that prevents us from having victory in Christ (v. 3a)
  - b. And we are now in a whole new realm of reality (v. 3b)
2. “How can I prove that I am in a whole new realm of reality?”--at the second coming you will be revealed with Christ in glory (v. 4)

## THE CHRISTIAN'S CONFIDENCE

It is our purpose to see how evangelism and God's sovereignty fit together Preliminary matters

1. A warning: the doctrine of divine sovereignty has hidden dangers because the natural response is to say, "If God is sovereign, then I have no personal responsibility for how things work out"
2. Two definitions
  - a. An "antinomy" is something that seems to be completely contrary to reason
  - b. A "paradox" is something involving two things which seem to be contradictory, but which are not really contradictory at all
3. The basic problem: if God is king of the universe, how can He judge us for not doing what He did not plan for us to do?

### II. Scripture passages which emphasize divine sovereignty

1. Genesis 45:8; 50:20--God used Joseph's brothers to get him where he wanted to be
2. Proverbs 16:9--God plans our lives
3. Proverbs 21:1--God directs kings
4. Job 1:12; 2:6--God "pulls the strings" of Satan
5. Matthew 10:29--God controls the world of nature
6. Acts 4:27-28--God determined the events of the crucifixion of His Son
7. Romans 9:20--God made things the way they are
8. Ephesians 1:5, 9, 11--God accomplishes exactly His plan and purpose
9. Proverbs 25:2--God knows everything; He is never taken by surprise

### III. Scripture passages which emphasize human responsibility

1. Matthew 25:1-13--the five foolish virgins were responsible for neglecting to put oil in their lamps
2. Matthew 25:14-30--the servant who had one talent was responsible for burying it
3. Matthew 25:31-46--the unbelievers of the sheep and goat nation judgment were responsible for rejecting God's servants and His word
4. Romans 2:5--wicked men are responsible for every sin they've ever committed
5. 1 Corinthians 3:10-15--Christians are responsible for what they've done

### IV. Scripture passages which emphasize both divine sovereignty and human responsibility

1. Luke 22:22--Judas was responsible for betraying Christ, but His betrayal was predetermined by God
2. John 6:37--We are responsible for coming to Christ, but our coming is predetermined by God
3. Acts 2:23--The Jews were responsible for crucifying Christ, but His crucifixion was predetermined by God
4. Acts 27:21-44--The sailors shipwrecked with Paul were responsible for saving their lives, but their deliverance was predetermined by God

V. The effects of the antinomy of divine sovereignty and human responsibility

1. It humbles us

- a. The thoughts of God are higher than our thoughts (Isa. 55:9)
- b. The mind of God cannot be challenged (Rom. 9:19-20)

2. It hurts us

- a. We try to slip out of the hurt by concentrating either on human responsibility or on divine sovereignty
- b. But divine sovereignty and human responsibility were planned by God to work in perfect harmony with each other (see Deut. 29:29)
  - (1) It is necessary to send out missionaries (Rom. 10:14-15)
  - (2) Yet if it weren't for God's sovereignty all our efforts would be for nothing.
    - (a) People are totally depraved (Rom. 8:7; 1 Cor. 2:14; cf. Matt. 28:18-20; John 15:5)
    - (b) People are satanically blinded (Eph. 6:12; 2 Cor. 4:4)

My responsibility to God includes constant joy and rejoicing that He is absolutely sovereign in His affairs with men and His control of the future as we walk with Him.

## THE CHRISTIAN IN AFFLICTION

“Affliction” refers to the sufferings that God plans for His people by which He accomplishes goals and purposes that otherwise could not be accomplished. The basic principle is this: all who will live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution (2 Tim. 3:12).

### I. The part that Satan has in our affliction--he has no ultimate power

1. Satan was given power over Job’s property and family and health (Job 1:12; 2:6)
  - a. Job never knew that Satan was the one who was afflicting him
  - b. Satan’s part was infinitesimal compared to God’s part in telling Satan what he could and could not do to Job
2. Satan was permitted to sift Peter like one who sifts wheat (Luke 22:31-32)
3. Satan was allowed to buffet Paul with a thorn in his flesh (2 Cor. 12:7)

### II. The part that God has in our affliction--He is the ultimate source of all afflictions that we experience

1. He brought affliction to Joseph to preserve His people (Gen. 50:20; cf. Ps. 105:18)
2. He brought affliction to David to teach him obedience (Ps. 119:71, 67, 75)
3. He brought affliction to the theocracy of Israel to chasten and purify His people (Lam. 3:32-36)—note that God does not arbitrarily, irrationally, vindictively afflict people
4. He brings affliction to every one of his sons in order that they all might be partakers of His holiness (Heb. 12:3-14; cf. Jas. 1:2)

### III. Basic principles concerning affliction

1. All Christians experience affliction--no born-again Christian will ever enter the immediate presence of God in glorification without having suffered for his faith (Acts 14:22; Phil. 1:28-29; 3:10)
2. Christ is in affliction with us--every affliction of every saint brings pain to Jesus (Col. 1:24; Acts 9:4; 1 Cor. 12:26)
3. Preparation to comfort others comes from affliction--the more we suffer in ministry, the more qualified we are to comfort others when they suffer in ministry (2 Cor. 1:3-7)
4. Getting the gospel to the elect involves affliction (2 Tim. 2:8-13; cf. 2 Cor. 11:23-33)
5. Our afflictions are nothing compared to being glorified with Jesus Christ—they are ultimately to be seen as good (Rom. 8:18, 28; cf. 2 Cor. 1:3-7)

Thank you, Lord. I can see through my tears something of Your face and Your affliction with me. And I trust You because I know that You know best

## THE CHRISTIAN AND MATERIALISM

What does God expect American Christians to do about material possessions? We seem to be one of the wealthiest, most affluent societies the world has ever known. Sooner than we believe possible, all of us will be giving an account to the Lord Jesus Christ at the Judgment Seat of what we have done with that which He has entrusted to us.

### The teaching of Scripture concerning the use of money

1. The teaching of the Old Testament
  - a. Warnings against trust in material prosperity
    - (1) A summary of the poetical books: wealth leads to complacency, poverty leads to covetousness, and therefore, a balance is desirable (Prov. 30:8-9; cf. Exod. 20:15, 17)
    - (2) A summary of the prophetic books: let him who boasts not boast of his riches but of the fact that He understands and knows God (Jer. 9:23-24; cf. 1 Cor. 1:26-29)
  - b. Promises of material prosperity conditioned on obedience
    - (1) At the time when Israel was born (Deut. 28:1-14)
    - (2) At the time when Israel was about to die (Mal. 3:10)
2. The teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ--when He arrived to offer the kingdom, many Jews were putting their trust in their wealth, viewing it as an exact measuring stick of their spiritual condition
  - a. It is hard for one who depends upon his wealth to enter into heaven (Matt. 19:23-26; cf. v. 29; Mark 10:29-30; Matt. 19:21-22)
  - b. Nothing of all that is accumulated in this world can be taken into the afterlife (Luke 12:16-20; cf. Matt. 16:26; 1 Tim. 6:7)
  - c. Into eternal torment will go people who are fantastically wealthy as well as people who are fantastically poor (Luke 16:19-31).
  - d. God's people will be persecuted and hated if they obey Him—they will not be automatically wealthy at all (John 15:18-20; Luke 9:23)
3. The teaching of the apostles
  - a. 1 Timothy 6:5-10
    - (1) Anyone who thinks that an ecclesiastical position can be a means of winning affluence is in deadly danger.
    - (2) The love of money--greed, covetousness after that which God has not guaranteed to the servants of our Lord Jesus Christ in Satan's world is a root of all sorts of evil (cf. 2 Tim. 4:10; 1 Tim. 6:17)
  - b. James 1:10--let the rich man glory not in his riches but in the fact that he has come to know the Lord (cf. Jer. 9:23-24)
  - c. Revelation 3:17--churches which say they are rich and in need of nothing may well be naked and impoverished

## II. Three possible attitudes toward material prosperity

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1. “God wants me to have much more money than I do now as an indication that He loves me”
  - a. But the Lord Jesus did not even have a place to lay His head (Matt. 8:20)
  - b. And there are no verses in Scripture which endorse this attitude
2. “God wants me to have no money since anyone who has money in a starving, dying world is in a state of sin”--but notice these passages:



- a. Luke 16:23--poor Lazarus and rich Abraham were both in heaven
  - b. Matthew 11:19--the Lord Jesus Christ absolutely refused to come across as a self-denying ascetic like John the Baptist
  - c. Luke 8:3--Jesus and His disciples were supported in their public ministry by people who gave to them out of their private means
  - d. Luke 16:9--money should be invested in the furtherance of the gospel
  - e. Luke 10:34-35—the Good Samaritan was a rich man who knew how to use his wealth
  - f. Matthew 25:34-40--those who provide food and clothing for Jews suffering for the name of Jesus are “sheep” who will enter the millennium
  - g. Matthew 27:57-60—Joseph of Arimathea was a rich man who could buy expensive spices to anoint the body of Jesus for appropriate burial (cf. Isa. 53:9; John 19:38-40)
  - h. Philippians 4:12--Paul knew how to use money and wealth and prosperity (cf. 1 Cor. 9:13-18; 2 Cor. 8:1-5; Luke 21:1-4)
3. Perfect balance between these two extreme attitudes
- a. Money can be dangerous--it ~ powerful and should be used for God (Luke 8:3; Matt. 26:6-13; 22:21; Luke 16:9; 10:34-35)
  - b. Poverty can be dangerous (Prov. 30:8-9; 1 Tim. 5:4, 8; cf. 2 Thess. 3:10-12)
  - c. The perfect balance is to give money as a proof of your love in Christ (2 Cor. 8:24)--do everything you can to help people in general, but concentrate especially on God's people (Gal. 6:10; Acts 4:34; 6:1; 11:28-30; Rom. 15:26)

God never forgets your sacrifices of love—every penny you've put into His account will be multiplied fantastically. Is that materialism? No, that's reality.

## THE CHRISTIAN'S FIRST LOVE (Rev. 2:1-7)

John was in exile when the Lord Jesus appeared to him in the midst of seven golden lampstands and with seven stars in His right hand (Rev. 1:9-19). The lampstands represent churches and the stars represent their angels or messengers (Rev. 1:20; cf. Heb. 1:14; 1 Cor. 11:10). Note the first of His letters to these seven churches in Revelation 2:1-7.

### I. The qualifications of the One who is writing the letter (vv. 1-2p)

1. Every church in the world is absolutely under Christ's control--He is omnipotent (cf. Matt. 28:18)
2. He is walking in the midst of the churches--He is omnipresent (cf. John 16:7; 15:26; Matt. 28:20; 18:20)
3. He knows all the works of the churches--He is omniscient (cf. Ps. 139:1-6)

### II. The commendation of the church at Ephesus (vv. 2-3)

1. It is zealous for Christ
2. It has high moral standards
3. It has very strict doctrinal standards (cf. 1 John 4:1-3; 1 Cor. 13:6)

### III. The diagnosis of the problem at Ephesus (v. 4)—the church had left its first love

1. What this means: the believers at Ephesus had left the love that they had been given for Jesus Christ when they first believed the message of the gospel (cf. 1 John 2:20-21; 4:19)
2. How *it* happened
  - a. The church had good leadership and worked at spreading the gospel (Acts 19:1-10; 20:27; cf. 20:36-38; Phil. 2:20; 1 Tim. 4:12)
  - b. But as the years went by the Ephesian believers became so preoccupied with what they were doing that they began to take their eyes off of Jesus Himself (cf. Matt 14:27-31)

### IV. The remedy *for* the problem at Ephesus (v. 5a)

1. Recall that first love
2. Repent--change direction
3. Do the first works--works motivated by love for Christ

### V. The alternative for the church at Ephesus (v. 5b)--total collapse (cf. John 4:23-24; Deut 6:5)

1. This does not mean that Jesus Christ will smash the church building
2. It is far worse: He will leave both the building and the congregation

### VI. The compliment and the encouragement from the loving Lord (vv. 6-7)

1. The compliment: you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans
2. The encouragement: every born-again Christian will one day be glorified (cf. 1 John 5:5; 3:2)

Have you left your first love?