

Series: *Christ Preeminent In You*

Title: "Man of Dust, Man From Glory" (Colossian 3:1-4, 1 Corinthians 15:45-58)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 12/8/2013

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Let me call your attention once again to the words of our theme passage for this series, which are found in Colossians chapter 3, beginning at verse one. Here we have a statement that is not merely a suggestion or an exhortation. It is an imperative. What we are about to read is a vital command of God to His people. Colossians chapter 3, beginning at verse one:

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, you also will appear with Him in glory.

Here we have the contrast between those who are earthbound in their thinking and in their living, and those who are Heaven-bound. In our last message, we saw that the adjective "bound," which I used to describe what we find in these verses, has two senses – and both of them are supported by these verses.

The Earth-Bound Person

Let me first apply this to those who are earthbound in their thinking and living. The earthbound person is bound by the things of this world. Practically all of his attention is focused on the things of this earth, of this world, of this life. In fact, he is in bondage to the things of this world.

And of course, many people today have adopted the philosophy of humanism.

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Humanism says that this world is all there is, this life is all there is, and so we must simply make the best of the here and now. The spiritual hardly enters into the life and thinking of the earthbound person. All of his values are focused on the here and now, and on the material realm.

And the earthbound person is also bound, is also in bondage, in the sense of destination. He thinks in terms of goals that have only to do with this world. The things of this life, the things of the realm that he can see and feel and touch, are the be-all and the end-all for the earthbound person.

The Heaven-Bound Person

But in contrast to this, the person whose focus is on things above – the person whose focus is on those things which are "where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God" – that person, the Heaven-bound person, has an entirely different mind and heart.

The focus of the truly Heaven-bound person is the Lord Jesus Christ, and His inspired, infallible, inerrant written Word. The Heaven-bound person understands that this life is not all there is. The Heaven-bound person understands that the message of Scripture is just that – that this world is not all there is. This universe, as vast as it is, is not all there is. This universe is miniscule in comparison to the unseen world, the unseen realm in which Christ dwells.

The Heaven-bound person recognizes that the message of Scripture is that God

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who exists eternally in a realm and a dimension that is beyond our senses, created this world, created this universe. The Heaven-bound person believes the message of Scripture that this world and this universe have fallen into a condition of curse and corruption because of the failure of our first parents to obey the most simple and straightforward commandment of God.

The Heaven-bound person recognizes the message of Scripture that man is truly earthbound, and is truly condemned to eternal death in the Lake of Fire, unless God intervenes to save him from that damnation. And the Heaven-bound person recognizes and believes the message of Scripture that fallen man, earthbound man, cannot save himself. Fallen man cannot make peace with God. God must initiate peace with man – and He has, through the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so the man or woman or child who believes in Jesus Christ for eternal life – the person who recognizes that Christ has lived the perfect life that we cannot live, and that Christ has died the death that we deserve to die, and that Christ has risen from the dead in declaration of the fact that sinners have been justified, declared not guilty, before the judgment seat of God – the believer in Christ, recognizing these things, has an entirely different focus, and entirely different view of life – or he should have.

Addressing Our Constant Problem

The Apostle Paul, here in Colossians chapter 3, is addressing a problem that afflicts many people in the church of Jesus Christ. And that problem is that those

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who have every right, because the powerful working of God, to be rejoicing in and focusing upon the fact that they are bound for Heaven, and that their focus is not to be on the things of earth but on things above – so many Christians who should be Heaven-bound in their thinking and living remain earthbound in their thinking, or they frequently slip back into a pattern of earthbound thinking. Satan is constantly trying to take our eyes off of Christ and Heaven.

And so the Apostle Paul addresses this. He declares the command of God the Holy Spirit, that those who were raised with Christ, those who are born from above, those who are washed and cleansed from their sins by the precious blood of Christ, are to "seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God," and we are to "set our minds on things above, and not on things on the earth."

Why? Because when we were made alive in Christ. Because we died to the things of this world. Because our life is hidden with Christ in God, the ultimate place of safety. Because when Christ who is our life appears, when He comes again, with His mighty angels, and with the saints who have gone before us into the heavenly realm, then we too shall appear with Him in glory.

The Apostle Paul, in his epistles to the various churches, emphasizes these things over and over again. And I would like to set before you three particular things that he points out to us as believers in Christ. Three things that have to do with the fact that we are bound for Heaven, and that we are to be bound by the things of Heaven

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and the Christ of Heaven, as we walk through this world.

And so I want to put before you three very distinct and important points of emphasis in this regard that we find throughout the epistles of the Apostle Paul. And let me give them to you as propositional statements from the Word of God.

First of all, believers in the Lord Jesus Christ presently possess a Heaven-bound status that is in Christ.

Secondly, believers in the Lord Jesus Christ possess a future Heaven-bound glory that is also in Christ.

And thirdly, our Heaven-bound position in Christ, our position of being hidden with Christ in God, is a matter of inheritance. We have an inheritance, that is incorruptible and undefiled, awaiting us in Heaven, because of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so, in the remaining minutes today, and the Lord willing, in messages to come, I want to set forth these things before you. I want to show you from the Word of God that these things are true, that these things are real. These things are more real, and more certain, and far more substantial than anything that you can presently see with your eyes and feel with your hands.

The spiritual realm that we cannot yet see, but will see when Christ comes again, is that which will last for eternity. The realm in which we presently exist is under a curse and is passing away. But the day is coming when we who are in Christ will be

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free not only from the power of sin but we will also be free forever from the presence of sin.

And there can be nothing of higher value for us to focus our attention upon than to focus it upon these things. And it is only as we focus upon and understand these things that we are truly equipped, by the Word of God and by the power of the Holy Spirit, to live our short existence in this present world in the way that pleases and honors Christ.

The Man of Dust, the Man From Heaven

And so, let me call your attention to the first thing that we find in the epistles of Paul to the churches, regarding this imperative of a Heaven-bound focus in the life and thinking of the believer. Paul by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit first of all tells us that believers presently possess a Heaven-bound status in Jesus Christ. What does that mean?

First of all, let me call your attention to First Corinthians chapter 15. This chapter in the Word of God speaks about the Second Coming of Christ, that great day when in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, the dead in Christ shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall all be changed.

Beginning in First Corinthians chapter 15 verse 45, the Apostle Paul speaks of the fact that there is a vast difference in nature between the first Adam, our forefather according to the flesh, and the Last Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ.

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Beginning in verse 45, the Apostle Paul writes this:

And so it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being." [But, Paul says] The Last Adam became a life-giving spirit.

However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. The first man [Adam] was of earth, made of dust; the second man is the Lord from Heaven.

As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; and as is the heavenly Man, so also are those who are heavenly.

But then the Apostle Paul declares to us the great promise of God, verse 49:

And as we have borne the image of the man of dust [the fallen image of Adam], we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man [Jesus Christ].

And then verse 50:

Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood [that which is strictly of this earth] cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption [that which is of this sin-cursed earth] inherit incorruption.

What does the Apostle Paul mean by this? He is declaring to us that our present position as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, the fact that we are now saved for all eternity, the fact that no one can take us out of the Father's hand, is because of the fact that the very Son of God, God the Son, the Second Person of the Trinity, came

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into this world, took on human flesh – but was born of a virgin, not taking on the sinful seed of Adam, but the seed of the woman as we are told in Genesis chapter 3 verse 15. It is because of this heavenly Man of whom Paul speaks, the Lord Jesus Christ, that we now possess a Heaven-bound status.

The Corruptible Must Put On Incorruption

And so, the Apostle Paul continues in First Corinthians chapter 15, verse 51 to tell us that believers in Christ are truly bound for Heaven. Here we have one of the great prophecies of the New Testament, the great prophecy of the resurrection of the dead. First Corinthians chapter 15, verse 51:

Behold, I tell you a mystery: we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed – in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

For this corruptible [our present bodies, which are of this earth] must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."

"Oh death, where is your sting? Oh Hades, where is your victory?" The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the Law. But thanks be to

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God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

That is the Heaven-bound outlook of the believer in Christ walking through this present world. Always abounding in the work of the Lord.

A Labor That Is Not In Vain

Why? Because we know that this is not all there is. Because we know that the New Heavens and the New Earth await us. Because we know that Christ is coming for us. And therefore we know that our labor, and all of the difficulties, and all of the trials, that we experience in this world for Christ, are "not in vain" because they are "in the Lord."

And therefore the Apostle Paul declares, in Galatians chapter 2, verse 20,

I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh [the life that I now live in this present world] I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

"I live by faith in the Son of God." I live by faith in His promise of the world to come in which righteousness dwells, and into which no evil thing and no evil person will enter for all eternity.

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And therefore, the Apostle Paul tells the Ephesian church, in chapter 3, verse 13, that his tribulation on their behalf is their glory. And he says, Ephesians chapter 3 verse 14:

For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
from whom the whole family in Heaven and in earth is named.

For this reason, Paul says, I bow my knee to God the Father because the tribulations of this present time are actually glorious.

A Family In Two Realms

And notice also that the Apostle Paul says something very important and very vital about the true nature of the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. He speaks of it as "the whole family in Heaven and earth." The whole family of those who bear the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We are one body in Christ, along with the vast number from all the thousands of years that have preceded us, who have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ and are now in glory with Him.

This is the true nature of the church of Jesus Christ. At any given time, a small portion of Christ's church is living and fighting the fight of faith on this earth. Engaging in warfare, spiritual warfare, in this world, as soldiers of the Lord Jesus Christ, as we are told in Ephesians 6. But beyond our eyes is the great portion of the church that is already in Heaven with the Lord Jesus Christ, those who have entered

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into rest from the warfare of this present earth.

All are one body in Christ. And when we gather to worship our great God and Savior in various assemblies on this earth, we are in fact gathering with a great company of saints who already dwell in the presence of God and bring praise and honor to the Lord Jesus Christ before His throne.

We must be mindful of these things. We must be mindful that this world is not all there is. These battles and struggles are not all there is. And we must be mindful that as we come before our Lord who we cannot now see, that there are in Heaven a vast number of our fellow believers who are in His presence, who now see Him as He is, who worship Him face to face.

Loyalty To Heaven

Dear friends, we are truly bound for Heaven. That is our destination. The New Heavens and New Earth. And because that is true, because we are bound for Heaven, we must also truly be bound by the things of Heaven. That is where our loyalty must lie.

Ultimately we have no loyalty to the things of this present evil world. In Philippians chapter 3, verse 20, the Apostle Paul reminds us that

our citizenship is in Heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by

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which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.

And then the Apostle Paul continues in the very next verse, chapter 4 verse one, with these words:

Therefore, my beloved and longed for brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved.

And likewise, the Apostle Paul says earlier in the book of Philippians, in chapter one beginning at verse 26,

Only let your conduct to be worthy of the Gospel of Christ... That you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the Gospel, and not in any way terrified by your adversaries [not in any way alarmed, not in any way intimidated, by those whose focus is on the things of this earth only], which is to them a proof of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that from God.

Not being terrified or intimidated by earthly adversaries, setting our minds on things above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God – Paul is saying that this is clear evidence of the coming destruction of your adversaries, but it is also clear evidence of your salvation in Christ.

And this evidence, this proof, is from God. Proof that you presently possess this Heaven-bound position in Christ. And Paul goes on to say, as we shall see, the Lord willing in our next message, that there is beyond the things of this earth a future

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heavenly glory that is the present possession of every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Dear friend, do you think in these terms? Are these truths vital to you? I pray that they are. I pray that they will be, increasingly so. Seek those things which are above, dear Christian. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. You have a present Heaven-bound position in Christ. Never let the enemy of your soul, never let earthbound men, drag you back into a way of thinking and living that is less than that. Amen.

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