

Set Your Sights on Heaven

Colossians 3:1-11

Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, set your sights on the realities of heaven, where Christ sits in the place of honor at God's right hand. Think about the things of heaven, not the things of earth. For you died to this life, and your real life is hidden with Christ in God. And when Christ, who is your life, is revealed to the whole world, you will share in all his glory. So put to death the sinful, earthly things lurking within you. Have nothing to do with sexual immorality, impurity, lust, and evil desires. Don't be greedy, for a greedy person is an idolater, worshiping the things of this world. Because of these sins, the anger of God is coming. You used to do these things when your life was still part of this world. But now is the time to get rid of anger, rage, malicious behavior, slander, and dirty language. Don't lie to each other, for you have stripped off your old sinful nature and all its wicked deeds. Put on your new nature, and be renewed as you learn to know your Creator and become like him. In this new life, it doesn't matter if you are a Jew or a Gentile, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbaric, uncivilized, slave, or free. Christ is all that matters, and he lives in all of us.

Sometimes when I talk with people about the Bible, I have heard people say things like, "The Bible can be pretty vague. It's hard to understand. There are lots of ways to interpret what it means." Colossians 3:5-6 is pretty clear. It's not at all vague or hard to understand. There is no other way to interpret what Paul says. He makes it abundantly clear. Paul tells the Colossians (and us), **"So put to death the sinful, earthly things lurking within you. Have nothing to do with sexual immorality, impurity, lust, and evil desires. Don't be greedy, for a greedy person is an idolater, worshiping the things of this world. Because of these sins, the anger of God is coming."** That's not hard to understand. Some might not like it. For some, it might be hard to put into practice. But the issue is not understanding, the issue is application.

For the non-believer, these things (sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed) are common, every day occurrences. But Paul is not talking to unbelievers. He is speaking to the believers in Colossae. To be clear, he is not telling them to have nothing to do with unbelievers who do these things. He is telling the believers (and us today) to have nothing to do with these behaviors. We, today, as followers of Jesus, are to have nothing to do with sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed. We are to put them to death. That doesn't just happen. We have to first recognize these things in ourselves. And then we have to deliberately decide to put them to death. Today. Paul says, **"Now is the time to get rid of anger, rage, malicious behavior, slander, and dirty language. Don't lie to each other, for you have stripped off your old sinful nature and all its wicked deeds."** (Colossians 3:8-9) Paul says, **"You used to do these things when your life was still part of this world. But now...put on your new nature, and be renewed as you learn to know your Creator and become like him."** Because of Jesus, we have been raised to new life. Don't let your old life drag you back to the grave.

Do you think the Bible is hard to understand or interpret? Why or why not? Can you give examples? If you find parts of the Bible that you don't understand, what do you do about that? Do you just skip over it, or do you try to find out what it means? In your life, do you experience the sinful, earthly things that Paul talks about? What do you do when they pop up? Do you indulge them? Why? Do you seek to move away from them? What does that look like?