

Set Your Affection on Things Above

Colossians 3:2 instructs, "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth." I would like to deal with who can do this; what are the things above in contrast to things on the earth; what are the affections that we set; how do we set our affections there; once we have set them how do we maintain our affections, and if our affections get out of line how do we recover them?

This is an important thing, - becoming heavenly minded and eternally focused. Most people live one day at a time. They have no long-range view and no long-range plan for what they want to accomplish. They just survive, making it through life rather than really living. I am talking about really living, - having a long-range effect in terms of the next thousand or million years and getting prepared for eternity instead of mere preparation for the next hour or so.

Who Can Set their Affection?

A text that is taken out of context or removed from the verses around it can often be a pretext for error. Beginning in verse 1 we read, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above,

not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory." We need to understand who is able to set their affection on things above. Certainly people who are not headed for Heaven won't put their affection on things above. They are headed in another direction but don't want to think about that. They have no affection for Hell, but neither have they affection for God or the things of God. It is only saved people who are capable of setting their affection on things above.

This passage opens with, "If ye then be risen with Christ". This is the qualification. If you are risen with Christ then you are the ones who are to set your affection on things above. What does it mean to be risen with Christ? If you are going to seek things that are above and set your affections there, you must experience what it means to be risen with Christ.

In the Scriptures there are two types of truth. People tend to separate them rather than to realize that they are connected. There is positional truth and there is practical truth. Some people so rejoice in positional truth that they have no practical reality in their life. That is foolishness. Anybody can learn positional truth. Even the devils believe, and they tremble because they don't have any practical truth. They only know the positional

truths of the Word of God. The reason that God gives us positional truth, telling us what our position and potential is in Christ, is so that we can understand what we are to live up to and put into practice. Positional truth, Biblically, must become practical if we are to claim it as ours.

Let me illustrate. A number of years ago there was a deacon in a church who was prone to lying whenever he thought it might assist him, - even in church business meetings. When he was finally caught and exposed he denied that he lied. He said, "I can't lie. I am in Christ and Christ is truth. Since I am in Christ therefore I did not lie." He was confusing position and practice. His problem was that he wanted to claim a position, but his life showed that there was no practice. There are many people who claim the positional truth, "Christ died and paid for my sin, therefore I know that I am going to Heaven." But they are living like the devil. They are not living like God has saved them from their sins. They have never entered into the practical truth so the positional truth really does not apply to them. Positional truth only applies to those who show a practical sign.

To be able to set your affection on things above is not based upon positional truth. It did not say, "If positionally ye are risen with Christ." It said, "If ye then be risen with Christ." In some of

the modern perversions they have confused this on positional and practical truth and have made a subtle, but terrible change. They changed this to, "Since ye then be risen with Christ." Positionally we have been, but the verse is not talking about positional, since ye then be risen with Christ, - it is talking about practical, "If ye then be risen with Christ." In other words, there must be something that has occurred that allows you to be able to set your affection where you want it. You can't just start out by changing your affection. You must experience something and that something is that you will have to be risen with Christ.

Now to be risen with Christ requires that, first of all, you have died. You can't be raised until you have died. God doesn't raise live people. He raises dead people. If that seems awkward, just back up to Colossians 2:20 which says, "Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ..." and then to Colossians 3:1, "If ye then be risen with Christ...". You must die with Him so that you can be risen with Him. Have you ever known what it is to die with Christ so that you could be raised with Christ? Is this some strange idea to you?

We need to know something about dying with the Lord Jesus Christ. Colossians 2:20-22, tells us, "Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, (Touch

not; taste not; handle not; which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men?" If you are dead with Christ you are not bound by the world and living in the world. You have been delivered from that. You are not tied up with man's doctrines and man's commandments. Verse 23 continues, "Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honor to the satisfying of the flesh." Many people have will worship on Sundays. They do not worship God, it is just a worship of the will. There is not real honor, they just satisfy the flesh. But if you are dead with Christ then you are qualified to be risen with Christ. This is so essential to understand.

Colossians 3:3 says, "For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." Your life is totally wrapped up in Jesus. It is hidden in Him. It is not out there in the world. If you are dead with Christ then it will show up in your life. Verse 4 continues, "When Christ, who is our life," (He is the one we live for, the one who makes living worthwhile.) "shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory." Many people think they are going to go with Christ when He comes, but they have not been living in Christ or for Christ. He never was their life. He is coming for those for whom He was their life. Those are the

ones who are dead in Him and will be risen in Him. Those are the ones who know what it is to be dead to the world so that they can be risen again in newness of power and be able to rejoice in Heaven.

In Colossians 2:10-13 we read, "Ye are complete in Him," (Jesus is where we find our completeness.) "which is the head of all principality and power: in whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ." (In other words, there has been a cutting and a parting of the way as far as the sins of the flesh. This is part of belonging to Jesus.) "Buried with Him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised Him from the dead." (The same God that raised Jesus raises you from dying to the world so that you can live for Jesus. It is the operation of God through faith that you are able to see this result.) "And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath He quickened together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses." There is a forgiveness of all your sins. That is not just positionally, that is practically, because He cuts away the body of sin, and the flesh, and the world. You still struggle some with the flesh but there has been a trimming back and a

release. You died with Christ and you are risen with Christ. You will find this truth taught in a number of places throughout the New Testament.

Let us look at Romans 6:1-4 which deals with the same thought, "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid." God forbids that kind of thinking, -positional truth and sinful living. God is against it and He forbids anybody to claim that has anything to do with grace. "How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" The position leads to practice and if you are dead to sin you are not going to live in it. "Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death?" This is not talking, primarily, of water baptism. It did not say baptized into water; it said baptized into Jesus Christ. That is how we got into His death. "Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death" (We died with Christ.) "that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." We are raised to live and have a risen, new life like that of the resurrection. You can read on through the chapter where verse 7 says, "For he that is dead is freed from sin." You don't have to sin any longer. You have been freed from sin. There is a sin nature but you are not bound to that, you died to that and have been risen with Christ.

In I Corinthians 15 we are told what the Gospel is. It has to do with this death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ and our identification with it. Verse 1 says, "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel." (This is the gospel, not what many people call the gospel, but what God calls the gospel.) "Which I preached unto you" (This was Paul's gospel and what he preached.) "which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain." (In other words, you continue to stand in this, you live in this, you identify with this. This is more than a positional truth.) "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the scriptures." That is how we are saved, - by what Christ did. But He is not finished. When He has done that for us, He begins to deal with us, having us die and be raised, -- dead to the world and alive to God.

Paul gives his testimony in Galatians 2:20, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." If we lay hold of this, - that our life is hid with

Christ because we died with Christ and we have been crucified with Christ, then we have an entirely different life.

Ephesians 2:4-7 tells us, "But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved:)." (It is His grace that He ever puts life in us.) "And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." (We are already there positionally and practically in our life.) "That in the ages to come He might shew the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus." This matter of our being dead in Christ and then being risen with Christ is a great event that God has performed in the lives of those He has saved. One day He is going to put us on display and show throughout the ages the riches of His grace because He saved us. He didn't just put us in the family. He saved us from our sins and we are now living in Christ. Christ is our life. We are dead and our life is hid with Christ in God.

So, who is it that can set their affections on things above? Those who meet the qualification, "If ye then be risen with Christ." I am not asking you if you have become religious or if you have assumed some particular doctrinal pattern. I am not asking if you have made a decision or prayed a

prayer. I am asking, "Have you ever died with Christ and been delivered from the power of sin in your life?". Have you ever been risen with Christ to newness of life so that your life is hid with Christ in God? Have you ever really experienced that or are these just teachings that you have heard along the way? It is only those who have been risen with Christ who are capable of this. That may explain why your affections are all scrambled and tied to the world.

What are the Things Above?

We need to consider what these things are. Let us notice the direction of our affection, - toward things that are above. According to our text, this is in direct contrast to things that are on the earth. In other words, we are to look heavenly rather than earthly. We are to look toward God and His kingdom rather than toward things of the world. We need to realize there is a great contrast. Some people are concerned only about things of this earth; this world and things here below. Others are more concerned about things above that God has for us. They are the ones who are in obedience to this text.

You might examine, what are the things that control your thoughts? What are the things that you spend most of your time and energy

considering? Are they the things above or the things here on the earth. This will tell you to what degree you might be obeying this text. You question, "What are those things above?"

Colossians 1:5 says, "For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel." There is a hope, not a hope for things of the world or hope for the things that one can obtain down here, but rather a hope that is laid up for us in heaven. It is already set there and we are looking forward with anticipation and expectation for that hope to be fulfilled. That becomes a concern of ours. Some people manage to live their week, with the possible exception of an hour, and give no thought to having any hope in Heaven. During that one hour they might attend a church service where they may sing or hear a bit about Heaven, but even then they may not have much hope in Heaven. This is something that ought to be more than just restricted to inside the walls of a church building. This ought to be something that we live with constantly, - we have a hope there in Heaven. We have a Savior who died for us to provide for our salvation and told us that where He is, there we shall also be. He has mansions there waiting for us, and we have that hope established. You can look at the scripture in Hebrews about having an anchor established there within the veil that we can

count on.

Let me just picture the nature of this hope. It is not a wishful, "Maybe this will happen or maybe it won't." It is a definite hope that we can count on and hold with assurance. Years ago, when ships traveled by air power, -- wind blowing against sails, -- sailing vessels were limited so that when the wind did not blow they could not make much progress. They could not travel much unless there was some current in the ocean. When the wind was blowing against them, they were limited in terms of how close to the harbor they could get. When they came close to the harbor, but weren't able to get into the harbor because of the wind blowing against them, they would get as close as they could and then drop all sails so as not to be blown back out to sea. Then they put the anchor into a long boat, like a large row boat, with a number of sailors to row. They would take that anchor into the harbor and drop it so that it would fasten on the bottom. The ship was still out in the sea but the anchor was in the harbor. That gave them a hope that they wouldn't be blown out to sea and would make the harbor. Then they would go back to the ship and begin to run the crank to pull on the anchor. If the anchor was fastened well to the bottom, then the ship would gradually be pulled into the harbor where it would be safe.

We have an anchor in Heaven, the Lord

Jesus Christ. He is our hope. He is called the Blessed Hope and will be gloriously appearing as our great God and Savior the Lord Jesus Christ. We have a hope already reserved for us in Heaven. It is just a question of time until the rope is pulled tight and we are gradually drawn to where the hope is and we one day pull into the harbor. This is something to set your affection on. This is not wishful thinking. This is certain thinking. We do have a hope.

In Colossians 1:9 we read, "For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding." This is God's will for our life. Down here we may have some family member's will for our life, we may have a friend's will for our life, or we may even have our own will for our life; but if we will look on the things above we will see that God has a will for our life. We need to pray for God's will and the performing of that particular will. It is something there in Heaven and something above, for us to set our affection on.

We are also told in the verse that there is wisdom and understanding. When we get the knowledge of His will we will have wisdom and spiritual understanding. The world has much foolishness and confusion, but in Heaven we can

look forward to wisdom and spiritual understanding that will be a blessing to us.

We go on to verse 12 and read, "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." We have an inheritance. One day there may be an inheritance that you will receive on earth. When that happens, you get the benefit of it as long as you live or until you have used it up. However, on the other side, above, there is an inheritance that never runs out. You don't use it up and it doesn't have any stopping point. It goes on forever and ever and ever. What an inheritance to set your affection on and to look forward to! This is an inheritance with the rest of the saints of God, an inheritance with a positive side to it.

Verse 13 continues, "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son." Here is another thing to set your affection on, the Kingdom of Jesus that exists and operates from Heaven. It is not an earthly kingdom. It is not voted in on an election day or determined by war. It is a Kingdom that is run from Heaven itself where Jesus is seated at the right hand of the Father. This is a kingdom worth living for, worth giving for, worth suffering for, worth dying for, -- a kingdom we enjoy, a kingdom seen by those who have been born again. This is one of the things that we ought

to be seeking and setting our affection on according to Colossians 3:2.

In verse 14 we read, "In whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins." That looks like it is all down here, but I remind you that our redemption and our forgiveness are based on the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. That blood is not in a bottle held in some cathedral. That blood is not soaked down into the soil on Mt. Calvary. Rather, it was supernaturally gathered up and taken up into Heaven. According to Hebrews it is an ongoing evidence of Christ's sacrifice, and this is available for cleansing. We are told in the Old Testament that there is a fountain that is open for the cleansing from iniquity. There is that "fountain filled with blood drawn from Emmanuel's veins and sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains." That is the old hymn we sing. What a blessed truth, that the blood of Jesus is safe and preserved in Heaven! What a thing to set your affection on! Verse 18 continues, "And He is the head of the body, the church." There is Jesus, the One who is there in Heaven. What a One to seek and to know! He is the Head of the Body, the beginning, the first-born from the dead that in all things He might have the pre-eminence.

These are things we are told in chapter one. Let us look also at Colossians 2 to see more of

what is there in Heaven. Colossians 2:3 tells us, "In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." You can read the Proverbs that speak of wisdom and knowledge, knowing that is what is found in the Lord Jesus Christ. Solomon was gifted in wisdom and knowledge. According to II Chronicles this was a gift given to him, but really, it was found in Jesus. Oh, if we would go to the One who is in the Heavens, what treasures of wisdom we would have to live with here on earth! It would go far beyond anything that is known or experienced by most people.

You can read Colossians slowly and carefully itemize all the things above that we are to set our affection upon, but we will skip around a bit. Colossians 4:17 says, "And say to Archippus, take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it." Archippus had a ministry. I don't know what kind of ministry it was but he had received it in the Lord. It was not a ministry created here on earth, though it was performed here on earth. Rather, it was something that was in the Lord, of the Lord, from the Lord, to be performed.

We need to look at the matter of ministry in terms of its being heavenly. It is a chance for us to operate in an earth-bound scene with a heavenly influence. I don't know if he was a preacher, a teacher, a leader of prayer meetings, or if he

ministered in the realm of helps or some other aspect, but he did have a ministry. When God saves someone He gives them a ministry that He wants them to perform. I ask you, what ministry has He given you to perform? Is it a ministry ordained and sent from Heaven, or is it something that has been worked up from here on earth? We are to set our affection on things above, not on things on the earth. So much today is earth oriented and earth originated rather than coming from Heaven to be a blessing here on earth.

There are a number of other things that we should set our affection on. For example, the joy of the Lord comes from Heaven. We ought to desire that rather than the froth of the world.

Let us next consider the holiness that proceeds from the throne of God. Holiness is not what you don't do, but rather, what you are. I remember that years ago people talked about holiness being that you don't do this or you don't do that, continuing down a list. I started thinking that I had a potato that must have been holy. It didn't dance, or smoke, or drink, or curse. That is foolish! Holiness is a positive attribute that shows up in the lives of people, not only in what they do not do, but also in what they do do. Holiness proceeds from God and we are to set our affection on things above.

Then there are crowns to be won. There is a

great cloud of witnesses which we will one day join. What a wonderful and joyful time there will be in Heaven; -- a reunion and joining with others in the worship of Jesus Christ. Set your affection on things above rather than the crowds and their earth-bound desires here on earth.

Then there are treasures we can move to Heaven. You can't take it with you but you can send it on ahead. We are not to lay up treasures here on earth but rather, lay them up in Heaven. We ought to be putting those things there and delighting in how much of what God has entrusted us with here, that we can move to Heaven to be waiting for us there. When your affections are set on things above, you are glad to get your money there, rather than to leave it behind for others to fight over when you are gone.

There is a Savior in Heaven. Oh, wonderful Jesus! Set your affection on things above. There is the worship around the throne. There is righteousness to be had and we can live righteously. There is the counsel of God as He speaks to us and stirs in our heart and soul. There is the justice, mercy, grace, will, work, glory, calling, and sending of God. He tells us here in Colossians 3:12, "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;" You don't get these things from

earth, - you get them from Heaven.

You can read the rest of the chapter and find many things that you can get from Heaven that will help you live a useful life here on earth.

What is this Affection?

Now I would like to discuss the matter of the affection itself. What is it that we are to set on those things? What is it we are to direct toward these heavenly matters? Often in the past I have thought of this verse but not correctly. I thought of it as, "Set your affections on things above." But the verse says, "Set your affection on things above." This is a singular affection that is to be set on things above.

You may say, "I thought it would be a bit wider than that." God uses the word in the singular form so there must be a reason. I would suggest that the first reason He puts it in the singular form is that our affection is to be undivided. We are not to have some affection on things above and some affection on things here on the earth. We are to tie all of our affections together into a single bundle and have it undivided. Therefore, this affection becomes a composite or combination of all of the various affections of our heart and life.

This may seem like a strange idea, but it is a

Biblical concept. I remind you that in the book of Galatians it talks about the fruit, singular, of the Spirit and then names nine graces. The first one is love and the others all become evidences of what is genuine spiritual love. I would suggest that love is the affection referred to here.

The Scripture just says, "Set your affection." It is almost as if by the time we get to chapter 3 and verse 2 we ought to know what that affection is. Let us look at some verses in the book of Colossians where there is a singular affection talked about from a number of different directions.

In chapter 1 verse 4 we read, "Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints." There is no question about what the affection of that verse is, - it is "the love". It is a love that Christians should have towards all others who are saved. This is not a human love. A friend of mine says, "I love all Christians but some of them I don't like." He is trying to express that, humanly, some people are what we would consider almost unlovable. But because of Calvary and because of the Lord Jesus and because of the Heavenly matters, we do love them. There is a love toward all the saints that springs up in the bosom of a real Christian. That is a natural, normal, proper affection that God's people should have.

Verse 8 says, "Who also declared unto us

your love in the Spirit.” Again, there is no question that the affection found in this verse is love. In this case it is love in the Spirit. The Holy Spirit works and operates to produce, guide, empower and make useful this love. Chapter 2 verse 2 tells us, “That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ.” Again, the affection is love. This is the love that is there because our hearts are knit together. We are comforted because our hearts are knit together. This love is not just love for each other. It is not just love empowered by the Holy Spirit, but it is a love that binds us together and helps us stand together and help one another.

In verse 5 we don't find the actual word but we do find a description of it, “Though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.” He says, “My love has me rejoicing.” Can you imagine someone in love being sour-mouthed? No, there is a joy and a delight that goes with it. There is the matter of looking and beholding. In this case Paul was not actually with them, he was just there in spirit. But because of this affection of love, he was rejoicing just as if he were in the presence of those he dearly

loved. Brethren, this will describe a severe case of love. When we start beholding those we love without being in their presence and when we have that joy filling our hearts without being in their presence, this is something that lasts beyond just the time of the association. It is an affection that runs deep and thoroughly through the soul.

In Colossians 3:19 we read, "Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them." The opposite of bitterness is love and that is the affection. Husbands are to be affectionate and loving towards their wives. They are to be willing to sacrifice for their wives and the details of this are spelled out in Ephesians chapter 5. In Colossians 4:9 there is a similar word. It says, "With Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother." In other words, he was one that they dearly loved and would call beloved.

So we find in the book of Colossians that there is one affection that stands out. This is the key affection of the book, - the affection of love. In the light of that, when it says in chapter 3:2, "Set your affection." it has only been talking about one affection throughout the book. Take that affection and set that affection on things that are above.

Let us realize this love is like a composite of many affections. Let me name a dozen or so things that would fit together under this matter of

love. Where there is love there is a delight in the heart. Where there is love there is the matter of being pleased with the one that you love. Of course, we are going to be delighted with the things that are above and pleased with the things that are above. Where there is love there is an anticipation. We ought to be anticipating those things that are above. Where there is love there is a longing. We sometimes sing the song, "There is a longing in my heart for Jesus." There is a longing to be in His presence. Where there is love there will be some desires. There will be a pursuing. A person in love is not passive nor retreating, but they are pursuing. Where there is love there is a loyalty. If you find someone who is in love and you say something negative about the one they love, sparks may fly. We are to set our affection on things above and we will have a loyalty to those things instead of the things here on the earth. What a person is loyal to will tell you where his affection really rests. There is a thrill in love. "All that thrills my soul is Jesus," - how we love to sing that which tells of our love for Him! Where there is love there is an enjoyment and a zeal.

The world talks about being fans or even fanatics for sports. We ought to be zealous for the things above so that there would almost be a fanaticism for them. Set your fanaticism, your

zeal, your love, your affection on things above. Where there is love there is both a seeking and a looking forward to things. Do the things above stir up some precious and holy memories of how you have been able to taste and enjoy of those things in the past? Are they in your mind to think and meditate on so that you almost live in a separate world? That is what will happen when you begin to set your affection on things above and not on things on the earth.

Most people know well how to have their affections on the things of this world. They have some of their affection on a house, or some on a form of recreation, some on things they want to buy, or money they have saved or retirement. It may be on this person, or that person, or family. It might be on status, or popularity, or reputation. They know how to have their affection on the things here on this earth, but the verse tells us that, instead of tying our affection to these things that one day we will leave behind, we ought to set our affection on things that are above.

It is interesting that the Portuguese translation of the Bible is a bit weak here and says, "Think about". If you are setting your affection on things that are above, you want to do more than just think about it. However, where there is love a person does much thinking and maybe even a bit of dreaming. In the Spanish

translation of the Bible it is translated as, "Set your sights on". A person in love is setting their sights and probably making some plans, and has some desires and hopes for what they would like. At least have your sights set and do some thinking, but go farther and get your heart and mind and the very soul of your being tied to the things that are above. Let your body be used and be physically drawn into this matter of setting your affection on things above. Let your spiritual being and all of its affections be turned toward the things above. Let it be a sanctified and holy affection in nature, activity, and goals.

When we come to this matter of love there are a number of passages that come to mind. There is the passage in I Corinthians 13 where the word "charity" is used instead of the word "love". Of course, in the old use of the word, charity meant love put into action. Now it has become big business. There are many charitable organizations that make you feel obligated to care for some particular need. That is not at all the real meaning of the word. Charity meant that your love so affected you that you did something about it.

Titus 2:11-13 says, "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that

blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ." He is the One we love. That is where our affection is. It is a great and blessed hope that we have and when Christ comes it will be a glorious appearing. This will be what we have been looking forward to with our affection. One day we are going to see and meet Him. Verse 14 continues, "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Our great Savior, providing a great salvation, is going to make a great appearance for those that have a great affection for the things that are above.

I John 4:17-20 reads, "Herein is our love made perfect." Here our affection is being brought to perfection. "That we may have boldness in the day of judgment." Because we put our affection on the things above we will be able to have boldness when we appear at the judgment. We won't be fearful and holding back. "Because as He is, so are we in this world." His affection was on things above. So shall ours be. "There is no fear in love." That is, in this affection there is no fear. We don't fear how things will turn out. "But perfect love casteth out fear; because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. We love Him, because He first loved us." How is it that we put our affection on Him and the

things of Him? Because we have enjoyed His affection placed on us. He loved us first and then we love Him in return. "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also." This love of the things above will affect our love of those here on earth. That is what it was saying in Colossians as the book opened up with the matter of the love of all saints. Lay hold of this affection and direct it towards Him and toward the things above instead of the things on the earth.

How to Set Your Affection

Recognizing what the affection is to be and where the affection is to be focused is very necessary. But the difficulty for some Christians is that they know the things they ought to be concerned about and they know the affection they ought to show toward those things. The problem is how do you get your affection focused on those things. We will look at some general steps and then more specifically ponder how to put those steps into practice.

Initially there would be the matter of considering it. Until you consider your affection

you won't be able to get it set where you want it. After you have considered it you must make a choice. Many people have considered it and then chosen to do otherwise. You must choose to set your affection on things above. But the choice still doesn't settle it. Many people chose but they never followed through on their choice. You must spend some time thinking about it. This is not something that happens accidentally or automatically.

You must be able to control your affection lest it run off and get tied up in some other thing. The last part of the verse would indicate this, -- we are to set our affection on things above not on things on the earth. Your affection will run off after things on the earth if you are not careful. If we don't learn to control it, it will end up controlling us.

We must not just excuse ourselves saying, "That is how I happen to be." We are told to let this mind be in us which was also in Christ Jesus. We have to make some definite choices and control our mind, our thoughts, our bodies, and our affection.

I mentioned that the Spanish Bible has translated this as, "Set your sights on". In other words, you set it as a goal and it is something that you direct your attention towards. That is part of setting your affection there. In the Portuguese

translation it says, "Think about." That is not a complete thought and doesn't cover the complete thought here. It is inadequate as a translation but it is some helpful because you are going to have to think about it if you are going to set your affection there. With this idea of thinking we need to consider Philippians 4:8, "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report: if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." In other words, choose your thoughts and see if they operate within the limitations and framework given by God. To set your affection on things above you must control your thinking. If you think only of the things of the earth you will fail.

How do we go about this? The Bible very practically answers this with some terms that will open it up for us. For example, Colossians 1:5 says, "For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel; which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth:". The matter of hearing the Word of God and exposing ourselves to the teaching of the Word of God will help set our

affection in the right place. To listen, hear, absorb, and let the Word saturate our being will give us some real direction.

Colossians 2:7 says, "Rooted and built up in Him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving." We ought to expose ourselves to the finest Bible teaching available. We need teaching, not pleasing to the ears, but rather the opening up of the Word of God so that the Word sinks down into us.

Teaching will do much to help us because, as the Word of God gets in us, it affects our thinking and this will help us get our affections set. But there is a second line of thought given in Colossians. Verse 23 says, "If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister;" We not only need the teaching of the Word of God but we need the preaching of the Word of God for application to our very souls. You will find this again in verse 28, "Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." Preaching drives this deep. Both teaching and preaching are part of getting our affection set where it belongs.

There is a third way of getting our affection

set and this we find in Colossians 1:9, "For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you,". Something happens when we get into prayer, and we let our hearts be lifted up into Heaven. We enter into the court rooms of glory, come before the throne of Grace, spend time in the throne room, and our affection becomes tied to where we are. Prayer becomes a mighty force in helping us get our affection there. Those that have little affection for things above are usually those who have little prayer effort in their lives.

Colossians 4:2 says, "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving." Not only should you start out praying, but you need to keep on praying. Verse 12 continues, "Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God." In other words, to come to the place where we need to be, in the will of God, requires praying. In this case it is praying that is not easy or light praying, but heavy, powerful prayer. This is called laboring fervently in prayer.

Thus far we have considered teaching, preaching and praying that help us set our affection on things above. Then we find in chapter 3 verse 16 another help in the matter of getting our affection where it belongs. The verse reads, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all

wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." Take the matter of the Word of Christ dwelling in us richly with all wisdom. I would encourage you in the matter of reading the Bible and letting it just soak down in, studying it until you are saturated with it, memorizing until it is part of you. When you have teaching, preaching, Bible reading, Bible study and Bible memorization and prayer you will find that they produce a holy being, - one whose affection is set on things above. Yet we have so much religious activity today that takes away from the teaching time and the preaching time, and the Bible study time. The memorization has all but been forgotten, and the praying has nearly been replaced. Then we wonder why the affection is not placed on the things above. We have missed our basics, --- the helps that God has given us to get our affection where it belongs.

Yet, there are some other things beyond this laid out in Colossians to assist us. In 1:24 we read, "Who now rejoice in my suffering for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His body's sake, which is the church." The church is a great help in this matter. That is, it will if it is a church that functions as the body of Christ with Christ as the head, giving the instructions and the directions to an obedient body.

There is something about fellowship within the church and with other Christians that assists us in getting our attention and direction right toward the things God has for us in Heaven.

Chapter 4 talks more about fellowship, not only within a church, but within churches that are similar in their belief. Verses 15-16 say, "Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church which is in his house. And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea." Not only should we practice the reading of the Scriptures, but practice the sharing of the Scriptures and what has been learned from church to church. This is not fellowship defined by chicken dinners. This is fellowship based on the Word of God and the God of the Word. This helps us to get our focus set where it belongs.

Then we are told of examples we ought to look up to and follow. Colossians 4:7 tells us of Tychicus. Verse 9 lists Onesimus. Verse 10 mentions Aristarchus, Marcus, and Barnabas. In verse 11 there is Justus, in verse 12 Epaphras, and in verse 14 Luke and Demas. These great saints of the past were examples for the people of Colosse to look at and see how they set their affection. We can learn how others have done it to see how we can do it much better.

Colossians 1:12 says, "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." There is the matter of thanks and thanksgiving. We need to know how to praise the Lord. There is something about praising Him and what He has done for us that helps us to focus on the things above.

Another benefit is mentioned in 2:6, "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him." That is a Biblical Christian walk, - not just trying to be religious during services, but living day by day and hour by hour. It is not just talking the talk but also walking the walk. How a person is converted has a great affect on the matter of how they are able to walk. Your Christian experience is built on the foundation of your conversion. A small view of the conversion makes for a miniscule Christian walk. A great conversion makes for a great walk. "As ye therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord." How did you receive Him? Of course you received Him as the Lord, -- that is already understood. You received Him as a person, as your substitute, as your everything. Based on the way you did that, so walk ye in Him. We are to continue on the basis of how we were converted.

Colossians 3:23 raises the same thought again, "And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to

the Lord, and not unto men.” Our focus should be doing things as unto the Lord. Not how people see it, but how the Lord sees it.

Colossians 4:17 tells us of some instruction given to an individual but there is an application to us, “And say to Archippus, ‘Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it.’ ” He didn’t make his own ministry. It had come from above and if we are to focus on the things above then we need to focus on what comes from above. We need to take heed that we perform the ministry that the Lord has for us to do.

Of course, we will need to know how to worship right. John 4 tells us that we must worship God in spirit and in truth. We need to know how to do right in the matter of giving, - not only tithing, but also giving. Jesus said that where your treasure is there will your heart be also. If you get your giving into the things above, your heart will follow. If you pinch the finances then you will not be putting your heart into the things above.

In Colossians 1:29 we read, “Whereunto I also labor, striving according to His working, which worketh in me mightily.” You don’t set your affection on things above just by accident. It doesn’t happen to someone who is passive, but rather to one who labors and works and throws himself into it. Setting your affection on things

above is a great labor. While it takes great effort, it has great rewards.

Then there is the issue of the matter of missions. Missions helps us focus on things above. When we buy things in a store we focus on things in the store. When we invest money in the souls of people around the world, we are thinking of things above and the heavenly reward that is coming. This subject is raised twice in Colossians. Chapter 1:5-6 say, "For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel; which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth." We need to have a burden for all the world to hear the Gospel and the truth which has done so much for us.

This is a normal, natural part of the Christian life. You will find that when people do not have an intensive burden for evangelism, starting of churches, and evangelism around the world, their affection is tied to the things here on the earth. You will find that they can talk but they do not have the walk. Missions is an integral part of real Christian living.

Verse 23 raises the same issue again, "If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel,

which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister." Jesus said that we are to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He gave that as one of His last commands before He went into Heaven. We are told in verse 6 that it did go into all the world and it reached, according to verse 23, every creature. The Apostle Paul bore this burden in his heart and wanted the believers at Colosse to bear this burden. They could set their affection on things above so that every creature in all the world would hear the glorious Gospel. This ought to be our burden today. Missions is important if we are going to really get our affection tuned in the right direction. Selfishness is one of the great arguments against missions. "It is my money. I don't have to send it away and I will find some religious excuse not to do it."

In chapter 3 verse 8 we are told a bit more about setting our affection. It begins to go into some detail. "But now ye also put off all these:" and it begins to describe things that are of the earth. Paul says these are things that you put off like you put off an old raggedy set of clothes. "Anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds." If you are going to set your

affection on things above you must put off all those things that would hinder you. Once you have put those off then you need to put some things on in their place. This list begins in verse 10, "And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him: where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but Christ is all, and in all. Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;" These are things to put on.

Proud people don't have their affection on things above. Cruel people don't have their affection on things above, nor do those who are mean instead of merciful. Meekness is something we are to put on. "Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another," instead of holding hard feelings. We must deal with these things if we want to set our affection on things above. "If any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and

spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him." There is so much to be put on if we are going to set our affection on things above and not on things on the earth. But there is so much to put off that would keep us tied to things on the earth.

Maintaining your Affection

Once you have set your affection on things above, how do you maintain this? If you should slip and start having your affection shift to things on the earth how do you recover yourself? Some of you may know by experience what I am talking about. You may have had struggles, or perhaps presently are struggling in this area.

We need to run a maintenance program of continually setting our affection on things above. This is not something that is a once-and-for-all, never-need-to-tend-to-it-again, automatic-pilot issue. The world will put a pull on. The devil will cause confusion. The things of the earth will try to draw your affection away. You must continually be setting your affection on things above.

Further, to correct any slippage, you have to discover where you went wrong. There is the matter of keeping your affection undivided, on

things above and then concentrating your affection. You may find that your affection gets divided and you will have to bring it back together and redirect it as a singular affection towards Heaven. There are some Scriptures that may be helpful to you. Galatians 2:20, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." Revelation, chapter 2, deals with the church at Ephesus who had left their first love. They had their affection set properly, but then they left that position. They needed to repent and return to where their first love was, having their affection directed to the things above. They needed to do their first works again. The order is simple; repent of ever wandering, return to where you were, and do what is right.

At the end of Revelation 3 we are told about the church at Laodicea. They were neither hot nor cold, but were lukewarm, -- comfortable. Jesus said He would spew them out of His mouth. What did He require of them? That they repent and reestablish fellowship with Him.

In II Corinthians 10 we are told to cast down vain imaginations. Those will create problems for your affection. You must keep it singular, -- directed toward the Lord Jesus Christ.

We are told in the book of Galatians of the

need, like Paul, to die daily. That is, to constantly know what it is to live dead to the world and alive to the Lord Jesus Christ. These tips should help you in maintaining your affection, or recovering your affection so that you can continue to keep it set right.