

# The Way to Spiritual Ascendancy 1

by Dana Congdon

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*Dana Congdon explores the concept of spiritual ascendancy through the teachings of Colossians and Ephesians, emphasizing the importance of the Word of God and a renewed mind in Christ.*

**Duration:** 1:05:39

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, Colossians 1:28-29, Colossians 3:1-3

**Topics:** "Spiritual Growth"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of setting our minds on heavenly things rather than earthly things. He compares the New Testament to a series of photos of Jesus, starting with the gospel of Mark and expanding to include God's promise to the Jews in Matthew. The speaker also discusses the attacks of the enemy and advises believers to submit to God, resist the devil, and draw near to God. Finally, the speaker encourages humility in the presence of the Lord, promising that God will exalt those who humble themselves. The sermon references James 4:7-10 and Peter's description of the enemy as a roaring lion.

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## Transcript

Good afternoon, brothers and sisters. Well, it's so wonderful we can worship our God and stand on his word. We want to read some verses from Colossians chapter three.

So if you'd open your Bibles, please. Colossians chapter three. We'll read the first eleven verses.

Colossians chapter three, beginning with verse one. Therefore, if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.

For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who was our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory. Therefore, consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire and greed, which amounts to idolatry.

For it is because of these very things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience. And in them, you also once walked when you were living in them. But now you also put them all aside.

Anger, wrath, malice, slander and abusive speech from your mouth. Do not lie to one another since you laid aside the old man with its evil practices and have put on the new man who is being renewed to a true

knowledge, according to the image of the one who created him. A renewal in which there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free man.

But Christ is all and in all. And then some just some verses in Ephesians, chapter two, as our brother read this morning, Ephesians, chapter two, verse four. But God being rich in mercy because of his great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ by grace.

You have been saved and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come, he might show the surpassing riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace, you have been saved through faith and that not of yourselves. It is the gift of God, not as a result of works so that no one may boast.

For we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them. Our father, we come to you with this gospel presented before us. We thank you so much for the word of God upon which we can stand as our brother has testified.

And now we pray that by the Holy Spirit, your word could become living to us and enable us to stand more fully into that spiritual ascendancy with which we have all been called. Help us, Lord, in this time and with our tired bodies, quicken them and our minds, quicken them, especially our hearts do quicken to respond to you in worship and commitment. We thank you, Lord, for this time together in Jesus name.

Amen. Well, we certainly had a wonderful introduction this morning with our brother Stephen sharing regarding this matter of spiritual ascendancy, and I think I think most of you were here. Perhaps some were still on the way, but basically, he said that spiritual ascendancy is when we obtain by grace through faith that which was attained by our Lord Jesus Christ as the son of man when he died, rose again, was raised up and seated at the right hand of God, the father.

It is the Lord Jesus that did all that. But we, by grace through faith, enter into the good. And so there's a frequent expression used that could be applied to spiritual ascendancy, which is when somebody truly is living in the good of the guy.

We read this verse here in Ephesians to regarding our death and are being quickened and raised up and seated with Christ. And then, by grace, you've been saved through faith. But, you know, Paul's understanding of what it means to be saved is much more than just, you know, coming to Jesus and having our sins forgiven when he includes being saved.

He means being raised up and seated with Christ in the heavenly places and attaining to spiritual ascendancy. This is all involved. And so when he says in verse 10, we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which he has prepared for beforehand for us to work in.

Of course, he's talking again about this spiritual ascendancy that all of us have come through Jesus Christ, our Lord. I want to share. I thought afternoons would be a better time to share on practical things.

I want to share some practical things in the two times and together with you today. I want to look in Colossians because in Colossians we see, as it were, the objective basis of our spiritual ascendancy. And specifically, we see emphasized there the necessity of us standing on the word of God.

Now you see, Alan's song was no mistake at all, nor his testimony, because this is exactly what we want to share this afternoon for us to truly go the way of spiritual ascendancy. I suppose that would be how you could entitle my two messages the way to spiritual ascendancy. The first way, which will talk about more or less today, we find in the book of Colossians, which is telling us the priority of the word of God being truly understood, embraced and stood upon by faith.

If we ever want to come to this place in our life and experience. So let me give you in Colossians, just three little points there in chapter three, which we read, because I know that this is also a fiesta friendly time of the day. And just in case you fall off and you have a big line going down on your note page.

If you can get these three things down, then you will have basically understood everything I wanted to say. In chapter three, these three things verse two, set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on the earth. There is some objective ground, something we can do.

Set your mind on the things above. And then I want us to notice in the first hand. Renewed our mind, renewed by the Holy Spirit through the word of God to a true knowledge, according to the image of the one who created him very much to do with our spiritual ascendancy is a true knowledge of who we are made in the image of this one who created us.

And then down in verse 16, which we didn't read, but nevertheless, the objective position again, let the word of Christ richly dwell within you with all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thanksgiving in your hearts to God. And there we are. Those are the three points all having to do, as it were, with the word of God.

Tomorrow, I want to go the way of spiritual ascendancy by looking in the book of Ephesians. You see, we're all going to be dealing with these two books this weekend. And in Ephesians, I find the subjective basis of our attaining spiritual ascendancy through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Just again, let's go back and look for a moment at these verses in chapter two of Ephesians. Now, when it's called talks about us being quickened together in verse five and raised up with him in verse six and then again in verse six, seated with him in the heavenly places in Christ. I just want to make the connection in case anybody has not made the connection.

All of this is possible because of what Paul talks about in chapter one. If we go back to chapter one, we see basically the same statement where it says. He now he's talking about the great exceeding greatness of the power toward us who believe how great is this power? It's the power that was experienced and brought about in Christ.

Verse twenty, chapter one of verse twenty, when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly place. So do you see the connection? Because he was raised now we are raised because he has been seated by the right hand of the father. Now we are seated with him in the heavenly place is a gospel connection there.

I just want everybody to see that this has very much to do one with the other. And the point in the context of what Paul is sharing in chapter one is this that we might see by spiritual revelation, this tremendous spiritual power that is moving us, pushing us into this reality. It's that same power that raised up Jesus from the dead that is fully able to raise us and bring us on the resurrection ground, so on and so forth.

So tomorrow, Lord willing, we'll look at Ephesians and some of the exercise of spirits that bring us in this process of spiritual ascendancy. OK, now let's go back to class before we actually launched to a deeply in the collation. I think one thing that's worth noting is that both the letter of the Ephesians and Colossians as well as Philippians and Philemon are four letters that are commonly called the prison epistles of Paul.

That is, he wrote them from prison. Most people believe all four of these letters are written approximately the same time when he was in jail in Rome. The interesting thing about these four epistles is that they represent the highest thought of Paul, and as they stand as a body of literature together, they are a testimony to Paul's spiritual ascendancy.

Now you know, in the Bible, in the New Testament, there's no man as unique as Paul. I mean, of course, Christ accepted Paul had such a deep experience. He was such a faithful brother.

He went through such suffering. He did such masterful building in every way. He was the most unusual man.

But let's give him credit for being a sinner saved by grace. He progressed spiritually even as he served the Lord. And when you compare his earlier letters to his later letters, there is a noted spiritual ascendancy, which is testified to when you read these most amazing letters in his earlier letters.

Of course, Paul wrote his earlier letters when he was still serving. We know Paul would labor much and he would preach the gospel. He experienced a lot of persecution.

There were times when he was in all kinds of difficult situations. But anyway, he was a faithful servant. And when he was preaching the gospel and building the church, he often had to fight defending the gospel against Judaizers, defending the gospel against all kinds of false doctrines.

So in Galatians, you find him speaking about this Judaizers, you know, getting into the gospel and distorting the gospel. And in the books of the Thessalonians, some of his earlier letters, you find him contending with those who are preaching false things about the second coming and the day of the Lord and him having to straighten some of these outward things out. Now we see him in these letters, Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians, Salomon.

He's in jail. His could I put it this way for simplicity, his outward ministry is over, and yet he's come to the place where he's ministering more effectively than previously. We see him in these letters and we realize that this man may be in jail, but he is unhindered because he's come to a perspective into a place seated with Christ in the heavenly places that he is aware and able to minister in a way he's never perhaps seen so clearly before.

You know, when we're busy doing things, we don't always see so clearly how much God can do. Sometimes the Lord, you know, there's many testimonies when you read biographies of missionaries, of pastors who were laid on their back with an illness just to discover God can still work while they're laid down. It's a lesson for all of us.

When we look in Colossians, we'll just look at a few verses. You'll see what I mean now. Remember now Paul's in prison.

He has some brothers and sisters who come and minister to him. He talks to them perhaps in some limited way, and yet when we listen to him in verse twenty eight of chapter one, you just don't get the

feeling that he is held back in any way. In chapter one and verse twenty eight, we proclaim Christ admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom so that we may present every man perfect in Christ for this purpose.

Also, I labor agonize, agonizing according to his power, which mightily works within me, for I want you to know how great a struggle I have on your behalf and for those who are at Laodicea and for all those who have not personally seen my face, that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love and attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God's mystery. That is Christ in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Now here he is, Paul, and here's Paul in jail, and yet here's Paul wrestling and struggling, struggling and wrestling.

But now in intercession, he's an unshackled intercessor. He's not able to go. As a matter of fact, there has now in Asia Minor become many Christians.

He's never even seen them face to face. It no longer makes any difference. Before he saw everybody he dealt with and worked with face to face.

Now there's people becoming Christians. He only knows of them by name. As he hears reports, it makes no difference.

Now we find him up in the heavenlies praying and interceding. Oh, I wrestled for the Colossians today. You think, what are you talking about? And yet his wrestling was effectual.

He was living in this spiritual ascendancy where even as Jesus came down and died, rose again for our sake to attain to this place. Paul has now come to this place of intercession and a priesthood unceasing, even though he's in jail. Do you sense he's bound up? Of course, I'm sure at times he wants to paste around and say, I wish it'd stop raining.

I wish I could jump out of the window and hang glide. But this, this wasn't his situation. But while he was in jail, he was wrestling.

Isn't that wonderful? When you see Paul, when you read these epistles, you don't get the feeling of somebody who's been trapped and somehow now limited and unable to go on. What do you sense here in Colossians? Here's, here's this apostle and he is traversing the heights and the depths of Christ. He's up in the mountains.

He says, wow, look how big Christ is. He presented, you know, many of you have heard me speak before. I always speak in Colossians on the macrocosmic Christ and the microcosmic Christ.

He speaks of this macrocosmic Christ who was over all who created all, you know, Paul had time and God revealed to him such wonderful revelation of who Christ was. There's nothing higher and more wonderful than this. You know, I always liken the New Testament to some poor little cameraman who's trying to take a picture of Jesus.

And after all, all of the gospels, as well as the epistles are little photos of Jesus. And we start out with the gospel of Mark and he has one of those little code acting to just go out comes a little picture. And Mark does the gospel of Jesus, the savior, the servant, the son of God comes a little picture.

By the time Matthew comes along, the spirit of Matthew moved the camera back. This thing of Jesus doesn't start at the Jordan river. This thing of Jesus starts back with Abraham and God's promise to the Jews moved the camera back.

Now Matthew's got a wider angle lens. He's taking pictures. By the time Luke gets around to writing his gospel, the spirit of move the camera back.

Luke, it starts with Adam. As you know, their genealogy starts there and Luke has to push back there and find a wide angle lens to take in Jesus since Adam. Then John came along.

Now John go to the end of the universe and captured it in the beginning was Jesus. And he created all things. Whoa, what a picture.

There's a long hole on that one. So now Paul is in prison. The spirit has moved the camera back.

He not only created everything, everything was created for him. Get ahold of that. Oh, you got to really take it back.

So then it's Paul in jail, but he's he is measuring the height and the depth and the length and the breadth of Christ. And this is his remedy to the Colossians for anything small. Yeah, he's not on his understanding is unshackled.

This is spiritual ascendancy. Or you see Paul in Ephesians. Poor boys in jail.

No, he's not. He's become a worshiper. His letter to Ephesians.

Is he praying? I don't know. Is he worshipping? I don't know. He's praying.

He's worshipping. He says, I bow my knees and I believe Paul got down on his knees and he says, and I worship. I praise, give thanks to the God and father.

I believe he's raising his hands and he's raising his hands and he's on his knees. Well, which one is he doing? He's praising. He's exhorting.

He's praying. Here's an unshackled prayer. Here's an unshackled preacher.

Here's an unshackled writer. He's writing and praying and writing and praying. And you know, that poor Emanuels is writing all of this down.

He never could figure out. Are you praying now, Paul? Are you supposed to be writing? Because Paul realized the importance of the revelation of the spirit to the truth. And so he's pressing these things on.

And then you take the letter to the Philippians. I just want you to see that this man's in jail, but he's in spiritual ascendancy. Oh, he's in Philippians in the jail and he's full of sour grapes, isn't he? No, all he's full of is joy.

Unshackled joy. He says, you know something? This thing of me being put in prison, it's worked the reverse of the way the devil fought. Why more people are getting saved than ever before.

Since I got thrown in jail. First of all, everybody in Caesar's household now knows the gospel. Plus the fact that some of the brothers finding out I'm in prison had redoubled their efforts and faithfulness to preach the

gospel.

And so much is happening. Praise God for my being jailed. You can't hold them down.

And even those people who are preaching to try to get at me, who cares if they're preaching Jesus, that's fine. You find a man full of joy and listen to this. Here he is in jail.

Any sour grapes? No, listen to this. While I'm in jail, here's the one thing I do. Forgetting everything that lies behind, reaching forward to everything that's in front of me.

I press on toward the high calling in Christ Jesus. This man is in unshackled pursuit of Jesus. Forget the bars, forget the jail.

This man's free. And even in Philemon, we just see this little picture of him saying, you know, this anesthetist running away, this terrible circumstance, Philemon. It worked out together for good.

The Lord had his hand in this whole thing. You see, here's a man. When we read these letters, we say, wow, look at this place.

He has come to look where he's standing. Look how he's administering the word. Look how he's praying.

Look at him wrestling in intercession. Here is a brother who has come to the reality of these things we talk about the way of spiritual ascendancy. Now, this matter of the spiritual ascendancy, which Paul is in as we address the book of the letter to the Colossians, enables Paul to see beyond the circumstances of the Colossians to the spiritual issues behind them.

This is one of the marks of spiritual ascendancy. Somebody can see the spiritual realities and issues behind the outward conflicts. And so Paul was very clear as he's writing to them.

The mark of somebody who is growing in this way spiritually is that they realize that 99% of the circumstances in their life have some spiritual reason to them. Maybe 1% just circumstance. In our early days, we think 99% of the stuff in my life is based on a bad and bad employer, a rotten circumstance, a nasty wife, disobedient children.

It's never my fault. You see, there's never spiritual issues involved in my tough circumstances. There's always just the luck of the draw.

But with spiritual maturity, we see that the events of our life, they all have a working. They all have a goal. And so Paul sees behind the things that are going on.

And the problem with the Colossians as young Christians has to do with what I'll just call insecurity. They're insecure. They're young Christians.

And Paul sees that their insecurity has become grounds for the enemy to capture them and to oppress them and to put them in some kind of bondage. You see, he looks beyond the insecurity and he sees what's lying underneath. He sees the lion roaring and taking hold of some of these Christians.

What do I mean by insecurity? The Colossians were embracing philosophies, religions, even asceticism, because they felt they weren't good enough Christians. That's what I mean by insecurity. They would be those Christians who think that they're very spiritual by saying, oh, I'm not holy enough.

I just don't know enough. I'd like to serve God. I just don't know enough.

I don't have enough power. I don't have enough faith. I don't believe enough.

I don't serve enough. That is the grounds for the enemy coming along and gaining an advantage over you. Now, the key word there is enough.

Because it's when we say I don't believe enough that it gives some ground for myself to do something about it. I don't know enough gives me license to go and learn the Greek and then having learned the Greek New Testament. I still don't know enough.

This matter of enough is where our flesh gets involved and where our flesh gets involved. Religion can come in. It speaks to our flesh.

And so these people in this way were falling prey because you see the insecure natural mind in order to know more will eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and get themselves in even more trouble. So such religious men came along and told these people, oh, you see, the whole Christian faith is involved in a lot of mysterious, very complex mystery. They said, Oh, that sounds exciting.

I can get my mind all work up and discover all kinds of interesting things. And it's just a trap for the Christian or prevalent in the time of this letter was the Greek view of man being soul and body. And what transpired through this philosophy that started with Plato and Socrates, this matter of body and soul being what man is made out of is this.

Basically they came to this duality that the soul is good, but the body is bad. Therefore, you have to beat up on the body. You always have to kind of hit the body, you know, because the body is bad.

All of your temptations, the reason you lose your temper is because your body is bad, bad body, bad body. Meanwhile, your soul is good. Oh, I'm such a good person.

It's just that I have a bad body. Religion loves that. Oh, it plays into statusism and all kinds of things.

What you see, what's really needed is an understanding that man is body, soul and spirit. Because when you understand the dynamics of the spirit of a man, you understand just what the soul's relationship is. It's not that the body and the soul is evil.

It's just who's running the show. That's the key. But religion would say, take your good soul and do something about your ugly body.

And so Paul says, as an example, you know these things, but let's just look at a couple of verses. Verse 23 is Paul's addressing religion in chapter two of Colossians. Verse 23.

These are matters which have to be sure the appearance of wisdom and self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body. But they're of no value against fleshly indulgence. Oh, but how the Christian gets sucked in.

Now, listen, let me just make a point before I run on here. I don't want you to misunderstand. Now, what Christian here is willing to raise your hand that I'm holy enough? Nobody.

Listen, do we want to be holy? Then we run into Christ. Who's been made sanctification for us. Do we want more knowledge? Then we come to Christ in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

You see our desire to be more holy or to have more knowledge or to serve more faithfully means we run to Christ and take his yoke upon us. It's always running to Christ that enabled us to grow. But religion wouldn't have us run to Christ.

It have us do something about it in ourselves and form a very complicated religious system. Christian. Is one of the most complicated Christian men I know.

I say that because this summer at the end of the summer, I went on a trip with our brother and 150 other people to Turkey, Greece and Italy in the steps, the footsteps of Paul. Now, along the way, I got ahold of a little book on Greek mythology, only because we were visiting the temple to Apollo and then over here, the temple of Zeus. And so I wanted to sort of bone up on this.

Christian Chen is divinely simple compared to the complexity of Greek mythology. When you touch human religion, it is so complicated. There's so many gods.

There's so many idols. There's so many people doing and then counter doing. There's every God who does something has another God who didn't like what they did.

They counter it. It is such a complicated mess that, you know, it makes me realize how complicated religion is. How simple is it to be hid in Christ and to take him as our provision? You see, that's spiritual ascendancy.

Well, now the Colossians didn't understand that completely. And so Paul's remedy for their insecurity is this. Oh, Colossians, look at Christ.

Look how big he is. Be swallowed up in this Christ. He is the fullness of the Godhead in bodily form, and you are complete in him.

Now, don't say you're incomplete. Or as we read there in Colossians, chapter three, verse 11, at the end of this wonderful passage, he just says, and Christ is all and in all. Now there's your religion.

Christ is all and in all. Christ is enough for my holiness. Christ is enough for my knowledge.

Christ is enough for my faith. Christ is enough for my serving. You see, now you're in a good place.

And so Paul emphasizes this thing in a number of ways in Colossians, especially emphasizing this fact. You need to lay hold of the word of God and gain real spiritual understanding into the will of God, the word of God, the will of God. These objective things are absolutely essential for spiritual ascendancy.

If we are light on the word of God, the enemy has ground to fool around with us. So one of Paul's prayers we find in Colossians, chapter one, we see in verse nine. Let's just read this prayer because you'll see how much is important, how much understanding and true knowledge is necessary in spiritual ascendancy.

For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding so that you will walk in a

manner worthy of the Lord to praise and please him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. Let's just stop right there because you see where he's going. We need knowledge, but with true spiritual understanding.

It comes from the word of God. It's so essential, brothers and sisters. So if we're going to talk about spiritual ascendancy before we sort of wobble off up into the heavenly, start sitting on clouds, the whole thing has to do with a real understanding of the word of God.

Now, positionally, every Christian is already quickened, right? Already raised, right? Already seated, right? Anybody still flying, but you're not seated yet because Christ was quickened, raised and seated already. You embrace him. You're in Christ.

It's already happened to you. It's done. That's it.

That's objectively true. That's your position. But there is the subjective side.

You see, Paul says notice at the beginning of that chapter three in verse one, he says, therefore, if you have been raised up with Christ, now wait a minute. Now, we've just been fighting to say you've been raised up with Christ. Now, how can he turn around that if you've been raised up with Christ? Well, he's using a rhetorical if because he's trying to call our attention to the fact that we always need to ask these things of ourselves in spiritual reality.

Not just are we in the position, but are we in the life? Are we truly living in the good of this gospel? So let me ask us the questions. At least these three questions presented to us in Ephesians two and actually Colossians three and in a little different form. Number one, you have been quickened together with Christ by grace.

You haven't saved question. Are you really alive to God? Are you? Sometimes I fear we talk as if everybody's already sitting up on the cloud and we need to ask these basic questions. There are some people who would say, I have confessed Jesus as my Lord and Savior, but you don't sense the spark of life.

Where is that living that quickened experience? Are you quickened to the reality of the presence of God, or do you not feel him? You know what I'm saying now? I don't want to scare you. Many people are true Christians, but somehow their flesh has brought them into such a state where they don't sense the presence of God. So I'm not trying to question your basic Christian confession, but all I know, brothers and sisters, there are many, many Christians who say they believe in Jesus Christ as their Savior, but there seems to be no living spark of the Holy Spirit in their life.

Are you full of the Holy Spirit? Is the word of God alive to you? Are you alive in the body of Christ? Do you see you're part of something? Do you join into the worship? In other words, not just well, have your sins been forgiven? Are you going to heaven? Are you alive now? Let's ask ourselves that question. Are you alive or are you just talking the talk? It's important question. The second question.

We have been raised up together with him. I get in Colossians. We say, now, if you have been raised up with Christ, why would he have the power of the cross brought us to resurrection ground? You know, if we really are raised up with him, we have put aside the old man and we have put on the new man.

We understand what that means. We're living on resurrection ground, brothers and sisters. I must tell you, there's no old man that's going to sit up with Christ in the heavenly places.

He'll be tossed right out. Just as Satan was thrown down to the earth, your old man would be thrown down. He'd never make it up there in the first place, but just assuming there's no room for the old man in the heavenly places.

There's no room for the old man in spiritual ascendancy, but the power of the cross is what brings us from the old man to the new man and a living on resurrection ground. And we sense this life within us. Do you live by that life within you? I've been crucified with Christ.

Nevertheless, I live yet. Not I, but Christ lives in me. It's life within us.

It's so important. So Paul's saying, now, look, I know that you're Christians, Colossians, but if you've been raised up, there should be this response of seeking the things above. This is this is this is sort of a product of a life that's living on resurrection ground.

You're seeking the things that are above. And then this third question, which in one sense is the issue of this weekend. Well, we've been seated with Christ in the heavenly place.

Have you been seated with Christ in the heavenly places? What does that mean? I'm going to talk about it when I call this a moment, the ascended life. What is this? Is it an occasional, infrequent spiritual awareness of something beyond this? At a funeral, we get the idea there's something more to life. The occasional brush with spiritual reality beyond this.

Is this what this whole matter is about? No. Spiritual ascendancy or the ascended life at least has these three characteristics that I, you know, I'm a one, two, three type guy. Anyway, write down one, two, three, and then take your siesta because you may not follow this.

But here we go. Number one, the mark of somebody in this ascended life is they see earthly things from the heavenly point of view. Now, of course, when a earthly thing first happens to you, you see it with earthly things.

You know what I'm saying? A difficult circumstance happens to you and your flesh immediately starts going. Your mind starts working. How can I escape the situation? How can I beat that person up? How can I gain the advantage where they're getting the advantage of me? This is unfair.

This is unjust. Oh, this is this is our initial response. OK, that's our humanity.

Now, are we going to get into the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, hidden in him to the place where we see the thing from the heavenly point of view? One time recently we were praying in Huntington and in the prayer meeting that we were praying about the matter of Israel and this conflict with the Palestinians. And it's almost as if I saw because I'd recently read something in Daniel about the fact that Michael was the archangel of Israel, always standing, always fighting for Israel. You know, and that whole report for Gabriel that I was waylaid in Persia, you know, and you prayed and I had to wrestle before I could come.

And Michael is there fighting. He's the only one fighting there now for Israel's behalf. And I suddenly saw, you know what? All this stuff going on down on the ground between the Palestinians and the Israelis.

It's just the puppets of things that are happening up in the heavens. And in that prayer, I laid hold of the Lord. You are the Lord.

You sit on the throne in the heavenlies, and I prayed you buying those Palestinian principalities in Jesus name, you know, and the next day we had some relief in the newspaper from the aggression is taking place. Oh, this isn't to talk about my great prayer prowess, but to say this. If we could come to prayer meeting and see the matters before us from the heavenly point of view, I wonder how different they would look.

But this is one of the earmarks of somebody who lives this kind of life. We all start with the earthly point of view. But then what do you do with that? The second and the most important aspect of somebody living in ascendancy, if we could say this is that they see Christ's throne reigning over all.

They see Christ's throne reigning over all. They don't just say, I believe it. I believe it.

I believe it. I believe it. I believe it.

They see Christ's throne reigning over all. We come to a situation that seems so dark, a situation in our fellowship, a situation in our family. It seems so hopeless.

Our dear brother Alan shared this wonderful testimony today, such a hopeless situation. And then by the word of God, he saw Christ reigning on the throne and he believed and he ate. And you see, brothers and sisters, if our view of the heavenly places is only of demons and angels chasing each other, we missed the point of the heaven.

The point which we'll talk about much more tomorrow in Ephesians is that Christ is seated on his throne in the heavenly places, far above all of those angels and imps. And to see that is to be in a place of ascendancy. You know, this ascendancy is presented to us by John in his first letter as little children, young men and fathers.

And what is the characteristic of fathers? They've known him who is from the beginning. Take a situation here. The sparks are flying.

The enemy is the sailing and everything. But the fathers are able to get up there and see him who is from the beginning. Him who is above time and fighting in circumstances, you see, and somebody in ascendancy in the end sees Christ is reigning on the throne in this situation and they take hold of it in Jesus name.

And then the third characteristic of spiritual ascendancy, the first seeing earthly things from heavenly point of view, the second being seeing Christ on the throne and reigning. The third is actually the offshoot or the fruit of the first two. And it's this.

A person is to a large measure freed from their own self-care and self-centeredness. Our lives are too absorbed in self-interest, self-anxiety, what we're eating, am I taking enough of vitamins that I miss my B12, but with the stock market to this and that. But you know what? A person who has entered into a spiritual ascendancy has less care for themselves and more careful.

The Lord Paul says in second Corinthians, I consider that one man died. Therefore, we all died. And as those who now live, live for him, no longer for yourself.

It's over. Put it this way. You and I are dead.

We died when we embrace Christ. That's it. You know, the Lord should be concerned with making money.

We're worried about the family. You're like living in the ascended life now. You're praying for others.

You're concerned for others. You want to know what pleases Christ. I think now.

Now, listen, I'm not talking about, you know, forgetting to iron your clothes and having to be reminded to eat. You know, no, I listen. He there is a legitimate area of self-respect that's necessary in anybody's life.

But the preoccupation with ourselves is somehow transformed into being more concerned about the other people than myself. Isn't this Paul's implication in Philippians chapter two? If there is any consolation of love, if any fellowship in the spirit, don't think about yourself. Think about him.

Have the mind of Christ Jesus. He was everything. He became nothing for our sake.

Have that same mind. You see, this is the ascended mind attitude, however you want to call it. You see, not so concerned with yourself.

Your life is over. You're dead. Your life is hid with Christ and God.

Now let's get down to important things. You see, I think of Aaron when he became the because you see, spiritual ascendancy is actually a function of priesthood. Aaron one day had a wife, had kids, had a car and, you know, had utensils.

And then God said, you will be my high priest. And he put off his clothes, left his TV behind. His life is over.

Aaron's life was over and he lived the rest of his days as an intercessor on behalf of the children of Israel and God. Even when his sons performed that terrible act with strange fire and they were struck down, God said, don't even weep for them. Your life is over.

Live for me. I want you to be sanctified before God's people. You live for me.

Now there is a person who learned spiritual ascendancy. So we put off our old clothes. So why be worried about clothing anymore? Now we live as a priest for the king and for others, brothers and sisters in the body of Christ.

There is marks of the ascended life. Now, having given you this beautiful picture, well, maybe not to you beautiful, but this picture. Now we can say, because it's so obvious there is an enemy who is going to strike at anybody desiring to really obtain the good of the gospel to live in this spiritual ascendancy.

This enemy comes, as Peter says, like a roaring lion seeking who he may devour. And he's looking for something, something he can take hold of. We're so thankful that our Lord Jesus in all the days he lived on the earth in his flesh, Satan never found anything in him or he could have done in John chapter 14.

Let's just look there so everybody can see what I'm saying in the final analysis, the enemy through his deal and through the scary of betrayal and everything. The enemy got hold of Jesus body, you know, but he says in John chapter 14 and verse 30, Jesus, I will not speak much more with you for the ruler of this world is coming and he has nothing in me. Now he had plenty outside.

He had Jesus body. He took Jesus clothes. He beat upon Jesus body, but these things are external.

May I say it? He couldn't remove the peace. He couldn't remove the union that he had with his father. He has nothing in me.

He's got nothing. He can take hold of. Now you see the enemy when he's prowling about, he's looking for something he can take hold of in us.

Could I just show you a few scriptures where it mentions things he can take hold of in first Timothy and chapter three. Let's look there for just a moment in chapter three of first Timothy and verse six, Paul is talking about the deacons and overseers and specifically in the matter of overseers. He says in verse six, and don't let this man be a new convert.

So he will not come, become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil. Pride is ground. A young man's pride becomes the ground for his sifting.

You remember how Satan desired to sift Peter as wheat pride is ground for sifting. And whenever our pride gets out there, I'm all I'm saying is, you know, the enemy's found something he can use. Very interesting passage.

Secondly, in second Corinthians and chapter two and verses 10 and 11 regarding the brother who's been disciplined severely for his immorality. Second Corinthians in chapter two, verse 10. This is another place the enemy's always looking for, but one, but one whom you forgive anything.

I forgive also for indeed what I have forgiven. If I've forgiven anything, I did it for your sakes in the presence of Christ so that no advantage would be taken of us by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his scheme. How does the enemy get advantage in a situation when discipline becomes judgment and discipline becomes penalty? When we have to discipline somebody, whether in the church or in our family life, the discipliners are also being disciplined.

If we get to the place where we mistakenly say we are right, that person is wrong. And we we say, because we sent some personal vengeance upon the wrong that they have done. We keep on being severe with this brother.

The enemy gains an advantage. It's only up to the Lord to judge. We're to discipline and we're under discipline when we're disciplined.

But when we give Satan advantage like this by treating somebody more harshly than their discipline warrants, the devil gets an advantage. Or I mentioned a third one in Ephesians in chapter four, verse 26 and 27. Very confusing verse to angry people.

Verse 26, Ephesians four, be angry and yet do not sin. Do not let the sun go down on your anger and do not give the devil a place. What gives the devil a place? Anger held onto.

If you go to bed and you're still angry, you've given the devil a place and he will take advantage of any place you give. So we have this lion roaring, seeking a place. Now, what is he doing again? He's looking for something external to try to rob you of the internal.

You have a union with Christ. Your life is hid with Christ. You have a piece with Greg.

He wants to get to the internal by striking it at the external. And so he strikes it up. He strikes it on mine.

Do you know your mind is an external? He strikes at your mind with feelings of depression, feelings of hopelessness, feelings of faithlessness, questions and doubts. He assails us with these things. They're outward things that disturb our inner peace.

Now, will you take hold of that inner peace and resist in such a way that the devil will say how he attacks the mind and he attacks our body? Is this an outward thing? Oh, yes. And isn't it interesting? It's usually about 715 on Wednesday night, 45 minutes before prayer meeting. You're suddenly so tired you can't walk another step and a sudden sickness comes upon you.

There's 26 symptoms, none of which is too strong, but all of them, which together says, honey, I better stay home from the prayer. It's just something to bring you down on the inside. But if you stand your ground and get to that prayer meeting, exhausted by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, you'll go home refreshed.

But you see, in all of these days, he tried to attack the outer thing to try to get the inner thing. So James gives us this very practical advice in James chapter four. Let's turn to chapter four and verse seven.

Submit, therefore, to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and he will draw near to you.

Cleanse your hands, you sinners, purify your hearts, you double minded. And then just verse 10, humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord and he will exalt you. Here is spiritual ascendancy.

Humble yourselves in the presence of God and he will exalt you. Let me ask you a question. What can the enemy do to you when you are humbled in the presence of God? Now, if we take this verse and forget about this, submit yourself to God and remember this.

Resist the devil. You're in for a real fight and he'll probably win because you haven't done the first thing which is necessary, which is hide yourself in him. Find yourself hidden in Christ.

Draw near to him. That's what you do first. Don't you fight the devil? You draw near to him in the presence of God, you humble yourself and then you watch all the enemy's tools suddenly become ineffective.

Resist the enemy and he will flee from you. But, oh, if we're not hiding in Christ, abiding in Christ, dwelling in the secret place, then all the resisting will get us nowhere. But, you know, when you hide there, it's not like you defeat the enemy.

This resisting is not that you have now brandished your sword and chopped them up in bits. It's just he knows you're hiding in the hiding place. He can't get at you.

So he'll go away. He'll just leave you alone. It doesn't do any good.

Every time I try to touch the outward, they run into Christ and then it's useless. Disappoint the enemy. Hide in Christ.

This is your place. This is the place to be. Now, in Colossians, it wasn't just these prowling about that was the problem.

In Colossians, the problem was Satan had come as an angel of light. Perhaps we should look in 2nd Corinthians and Chapter 11, 2nd Corinthians Chapter 11, where Paul talks about this, about those false apostles who are coming and trying to take hold of this betrothed bride. Verses 14 and 15, 2nd Corinthians 11.

No wonder for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore, it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose ends will be according to their deeds. Now, the problem is that some angels of light in the form of some religious men have come among the Colossians and have preached to them religion.

Why is religion such a danger to spiritual ascendancy? Why? Because religion offers soulish ascendancy. If our life is hid with Christ and God and we're living by his life and learn to live by his life, we find ourselves in spiritual ascendancy. But religion comes and says, I offer you soulish ascendancy.

If you come to me, I will teach you things nobody knows. You will have knowledge and your soul gains in knowledge. Or if you will obey me and do this to your body and do this and do that and be ascetic, then your willpower will go stronger and stronger and stronger.

And if you do this, your emotions will go stronger and stronger. And it offers soulish ascendancy. That, in the end, causes more problems in the flesh and does not help you at all in spiritual ascendancy.

Religion is the old man thinking he can be like Jesus. Religion is the old man who believes his soul is actually good and he doesn't understand he's been crucified with Christ. Beware of any doctrine of man that brings Christ so low that we can come up to him.

Religion is very dangerous to the Colossians. It was sidetracking them from Christ, from Christ being everything they were being sidetracked by asceticism, by observances. You know, if a person is religious, how many of you have a religious background before you became a Christian? Ah, there's one person flung their hand up to the ceiling.

You know, let me tell you about the good thing about religion. It temporarily makes you feel good. Oh, I went to church.

Oh, I lit some candles. I went down and up and down and up, down and up. I read this book.

I read it backwards. I read it in Latin. I feel so good.

All such religion offers temporary good feelings, but it just makes your soul stronger and it becomes a danger to true spiritual progress. And that's why Paul comes at these Colossians and just openly exposes these religious things as being not according to the gospel. But of course, it's not enough to expose the false if people don't take hold of that, which is true.

And so let's just finally go back to Colossians chapter three and look at those three points. Once again, we need an objective basis in the word of God. If we would know the reality in our life of spiritual ascendancy chapter three versus one through three.

Therefore, if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. You died.

Your life is hid with Christ and God. When religion comes to offer you something where the devil says, I found a place in you run into Christ. Your life is with him now.

Seek the things that are above, because when you do, there he is sitting on the throne right there, just like it says. He is your all. He is all and in all.

He is your fullness. I tell you, brothers and sisters, you may think we're just fanatically Christo centric, but I believe if we truly abide in Christ, that he brings us to perfection unconsciously for the most part. Abide in Christ.

Kid in Christ. I love this phrase. Kid in Christ.

You are dead. Thank God I'm dead. Oh, I'm such a nasty person.

I'm so glad I'm dead and my life is hid with Christ and God. Such good news. I want to lay hold of that.

And then by the work of the Holy Spirit, the second thing we mentioned there briefly, as he's talking about putting aside the old man and putting on the new man, he just defines briefly the new man, which is Christ in you. And he briefly defines it this in verse 10. And you put on the new man who's being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the one who created him.

This means that he's being renewed. You're finding out who you really are, who is the new you. You're discovering who you really are as you discover who he really is.

That's why it's so necessary to be abiding in him. Do you know who you are? Don't give me your name and your address. Do you know who you are? You discovered it as you discover who he is.

And secondly, well, what are you to do? Do you want to know what you should do? You know, you just want to make a Christian feel guilty. Ask them, do you know the will of God for your life? What do you mean by that? You know, people, we all feel we're such bad Christians, but what are you supposed to do? What is the will of God? Do you know the will of God for your life? The will of God of your life, what you should do is all hid in what Christ has been made to you. Now, I know that sounds a little spiritual, but that's the will of God.

Even your sanctification, that's the will of God, even that you abide in him. Don't talk about your will of God being things you should do. When Paul's talking about understanding the will of God, he means understanding what God has done in Christ.

Forget about yourself just for 10 nanoseconds and see all that God has done in Christ and you'll see what you should do. You have been created for good works, which Christ has done beforehand, made that you should do that. But you'll never find them by saying, what should I do now? What should I do now? Maybe I'll try witnessing.

No, let's see. Maybe I'll try reading my Bible more. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

No, no, no. It's a prayer time. What should I do? You can get yourself in a real religious run around.

What should you do? Well, go into Christ and say, Lord, here I am. I'm in you and you're in me. Thank you for this abiding.

Thank you for this hiding place. And he'll send some registrations inside about what you should do, what you should be. You know, you get blessings in your life and when you get older, the blessings are when you see your children growing in the Lord.

My younger son has struggled in his own way with his Christian life, but he called me just last week and said, Dad, I'm so nervous. I don't know what to do. I said, what's going on? He said, I've been praying and Jesus put this friend of mine whose marriage is falling apart on my heart.

I should go witness to him. I said, hallelujah. You know, he was just praying and the Lord told him to do that.

Now, he wouldn't say, OK, I got a witness to somebody here, because at a church, I got a mark that I witnessed to somebody this week in the book. No, he was worshipping the Lord and reading the word and the Lord put that on his heart. Well, he got up the guts and he went and had lunch with this man and talked to him, shared the Lord with him.

Praise God. You know, the Lord has plans for our lives, things for us to do. Oh, he wants us to be fruitful.

But what does John 15 say? It's only when we're abiding in him we can ever be fruitful. So the place of spiritual ascendancy, I'd just like to say today is very objective. Find yourself in the word of God, as it says here in verse 16.

What a wonderful verse. Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you. And then you have the wisdom to teach and admonish one another with songs and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

Let's be those in whom the word of God richly dwells, and we'll find ourselves by his life increasingly in spiritual ascendancy as we see him enthroned, enthroned as we stand on the truth of the word. Brothers and sisters, this is our precious provision from heaven. Thank you, Lord Jesus, that by your doing, you have become to us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, redemption, and we are dead.

Our lives are hid with Christ in God, and he's transforming us so that we will be like him in glory. What an amazing thing. But if we dwell on ourselves or try to do something in ourselves, we fall prey to religion of all kinds and all subtle complexities.

Oh, grant that all of us here would be solidly in Christ, be known as in Christ as our residents and know his life in us as the speaking, as the rain, as the living waters day by day. Oh, Lord, we know that we won't be raised from this earth by stripping our human bodies, but by being lifted by the spirit of Christ and seated in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus. Oh, we we just say, Lord, by your word, we stand there today.

Grant us to see things from a heavenly point of view. Help us always to know that Christ is reigning upon his throne in all things and bring us to the place where we live a life not so preoccupied with ourselves, but living a life for the one we love. Make these things real to us, even as we examine the word of God to see if these things be true.

We pray in Jesus precious name.

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