

On Things Above

3 Specific Things

In the 13th century Florence Italy had ascended to the apex of wealth and prestige as the commercial center of wool trade in Europe.

... it was experiencing the first banking boom in world history

... The city was literally bloated with prosperity and wealth ... one of the richest ...

Their ascendancy in prestige and affluence caused comparisons to be drawn, by many, to the glories of ancient Rome ...

... and to celebrate this newfound glory the citizenry of Florence decided that they would construct a new cathedral ...

... in the style and glory of those great Gothic cathedrals of northern Europe

... one that would rival the Hagia Sophia built in Constantinople in 537

because its wool trade and a boom in commercial banking (the first of its kind in the history of the world) Florence Italy was practically bloated with wealth

So, in 1296 the citizenry of Florence Italy began construction on the Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore ...



Construction began the foundation and walls were built ...

...but then came the bankruptcy of the banking system followed by the plague of the Black Death

... and for nearly a century the new cathedral was a little more than an abandoned building site

... the unfinished façade on the open ground looked more like an archeological ruin than a construction project ...

However, by 1418 wealth and prosperity returned to Florence Italy and construction of the Cathedral of Santa Maris del Fiore resumed ...

The walls had been completed and then came the time for the construction of the great crowning dome.

Unfortunately, the ambition of the Florentine citizens exceeded the abilities of any Florentine architect.

According to the original model the dome of the Cathedral of Santa Maris del Fiore would need to have a span of 138 feet ...

... the only known structure with a dome span this great was the Pantheon in Rome which was built during the time of Christ by Marcus Agrippa and rebuilt by Emperor Hadrian in 126 A.D.



The Romans may have left behind this great building but what they did not leave behind was design plans or building instructions.

The problem facing the leading citizens of Florence was how to build such a great dome without the already constructed walls buckling beneath the weight of the great dome.

The city council (called the Signoria) decided to have a competition contest to solicit ideas from the people (anyone could enter) ...

... whoever came up with the best proposal would be awarded the contract to build the dome and receive the wealth of a king in payment.

One of the contestants that entered this contest was a sculptor and artist named Filippo Brunelleschi

Brunelleschi proposed building an egg-shaped dome supported by stone ribs ...



... and his proposal was judged to be the best.

However, before giving him the contract and awarding him the monies the committee demanded that he tell them exactly how he planned to construct the dome.

But Brunelleschi adamantly refused to reveal his secret

The city council continued to press him until he reached into his pocket and took out an egg ...

... Brunelleschi offered this challenge—if any of the committee would tell him how to make that egg stand on its end, he would tell them his plan for building the great dome.

He offered the egg to each member ... and each member (with no answer) turned him away

With no one member able to accept his challenge, Brunelleschi banged the upright egg sharply on the table so that it cracked open but remained upright.

The committee immediately protested saying that any of them could have done this,

... but Brunelleschi replied:

... ‘Yes, and you would say the same thing if I told you how I planned to build the dome.’

4 million bricks, 1500 tons of rock, and 15 years of labor later the monumental task was completed.

... here, in the building of this cathedral, archeological discovery, science, mathematical creativity, artistic skill, and ingenious invention all came together

... to create one of the crowing achievements of the early Renaissance period.

It is the ultimate human achievement ... but that is all it is.

... human achievement limited by human intellect and human potential.

Today in 4 short verses the Apostle Paul tells us a secret that is far more valuable than Brunelleschi’s dome design.

... Paul uncovers for us a reality that is so astonishing ...

... that if you can see and believe this reality for what it really is ...

... you will be radically different from those who have not seen it and do not believe it.

Paul says that if we will have the heart to embrace this reality, it will strengthen our inward assurance

... and from that inward assurance will flow a life of desired obedience.

So, Paul tells us 3 specific things about embracing this new reality.

1. Keep SEEKING and MEDITATING

Therefore, if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. (Col. 3:1-2)

Paul begins with a conditional statement “if you have been raised up with Christ” what does that mean?

The word for “raised” actually means “co-resurrection.”

In Ephesians 2 Paul says something very significant when he describes an unbeliever as someone who is “dead in their trespasses and sins.”

Resurrection is only necessary if you are dead.

But this is exactly how God finds everyone of us “dead in our sins.”

But thankfully God doesn’t leave us the way He finds us ... look at what Paul writes ...

⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶ and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, (Eph. 2:4-6)

In Romans 6 Paul writes that we are raised “to walk in newness of life.”

To the Corinthian church in 2 Cor Paul writes we are a “new creation.”

To be raised with Christ is another way of saying “redeemed” “saved” “born again”

Paul says if you put your faith in Jesus Christ then do 2 things:

- Keep seeking the things above
- Keep meditating on the things above

Because we are resurrected, we now **live in** and **with** Christ.

... and this new reality brings a new way of focusing and new way of measuring value.

... and this new reality orbits around this one word ABOVE.

Paul wants us to understand that the **Lordship of Christ over everything** is key.

What should I **give my life to pursue** ... Christ and the things of God?

What should I **focus on, meditate one** ... Christ and the things of God?

“We exist for this purpose to possess and communicate”

Now let me tell you why we need to seek the things and meditate on the THINGS ABOVE...

... because if you give your life to seeking and meditating on the things of this earth it will tear you apart from the inside out.

If you are looking down, then you are looking around

... and if you are looking around you are living your life by comparison

- Job
- Finances
- House
- Marriage
- Relationships

People quit jobs, gamble away their money, quit taking care of their house, give up on their marriage ...

... simply because they've been looking so long at somebody else's that they think is so much better they turn and look at their own and say, “what's the use?”

The things of this life only have value and meaning when they are viewed through the lens of the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

The most freeing thing you will ever do is to surrender everything you have and everything you are to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

That single act will change the way you feel, the way you behave, and the way you act.

... that is exactly what Paul says.

⁸ But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth. ⁹ Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices, ¹⁰ and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him-- (Col. 3:8-10)

True unencumbered knowledge comes to you when you seek and focus on the things above where Christ is.

Putting aside anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speak is impossible to do when you are jealous and dissatisfied with your-life, job, income, and stuff ...

... but Paul says when you surrender and release all that stuff to the lordship of Christ it takes the venom out of our attitudes and words.

Whatever comes out of your mouth is rooted in your heart.

Why do we lie to one another? Because we are trying to cover up our **shame!** Our **embarrassment!**

... We are giving way to the **bitterness, hate, jealousy and anger in our hearts.**

Are you having problems at your **job**, in your **relationships**, in your **home**?

... The first step to healing your broken heart and your depressed and sour spirit is seeking and meditating on the things above.

... and look at Paul's description of someone who does this

¹² So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; ¹³ bearing with one another, and forgiving each

other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. (Col. 3:12-13)

Can you see the radical difference between verse 8 and verse 12?

How is this possible?

This is the 2nd specific thing about embracing this new reality.

2. Consider yourself DEAD and HIDDEN

³ For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. (Col. 3:3)

If anyone be in Christ, they are a new creature old things have passed away (been hidden with Christ in God) and behold all things are become new.

When you entered into a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, (in that moment) you “died to the old life” and your new “real life” began “hidden with Christ in God.”

Certainly, there is a great disparity between who we are in Christ and how we live here on earth.

... and that is the larger point here.

... although we all fail from time to time, we can live for God with confidence ...

... we don't have to fall into the trap of thinking that God has abandoned us because of this thing or that

NO!

As born-again Christian we “have died, and this new life we have been given is hidden with Christ in God.”

... to be hidden is to be safe from theft or robbery

...to be hidden is to be protected for safekeeping, and free from the judgment of your enemies.

“Nathan, you have gone too far this time. What you’ve done is horrible and God is ashamed of you”

... Satan it isn’t possible that I done any such thing, I’m dead.

“Nathan you need to be careful that you don’t stumble into false teaching and lose your salvation.”

... Satan not possible, I am hidden with Christ in God.

He hideth my soul in the cleft of the rock, That shadows a dry, thirsty land

He hideth my life in the depths of His love, And covers me there with His hand

3. Do not LOSE HOPE

⁴ When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.

Here is my problem: when I read these verses and see what this new reality is supposed to look like in my life ...

... when I look at my life, I see so little of it.

This Christ likeness that should be there ...

... This surrender to the Lordship of Christ that should be obvious

... this seeking and meditating ...

... If it is there it is so hidden, not even I can see it.

Paul says:

What is hidden now, one day will be hidden no longer.

... one day what God says I am will be revealed.

Once there was a wicked man who fell in love with a virtuous woman.

The man knew that, in his present state of wickedness, he had no chance to woo her and so he put on the mask of a saint to disguise himself.

Sure enough, the woman fell in love with the man—or perhaps it is more accurate to say that she fell in love with the saintly mask.

Years later, when a spurned lover of the masked man showed up, she tried to expose the man as a fraud and insisted he take off his mask so that the virtuous woman could see his ugly face as it really was.

The man protested but after some time he finally gave in to her demand, knowing that when he did all would be lost.

However, when he took off the mask, he discovered what he could not have anticipated: under the mask of a saint, his face had become transformed.

It was now the face of a saint.

So, it is with us.

It's very human, very easy to get discouraged in life ...

... to just say, “the more I try to please God, the more I fail at pleasing God.

ITS ENOUGH TO BREAK YOU HEART AND MAKE YOU WANT TO QUIT.

Paul says, wait, be patient, trust Christ ... and when Christ is revealed you also will be revealed with Him.

My hope is built on nothing less, Than Jesus' blood and righteousness
I dare not trust the sweetest frame, But wholly lean on Jesus' name

**On Christ the solid rock I stand, All other ground is sinking sand
All other ground is sinking sand**

When darkness veils his lovely face, I rest on His unchanging grace
In every high and stormy gale, My anchor holds within the veil

His oath, his covenant, his blood, Supports me in the 'whelming flood
When all around my soul gives way, He then is all my hope and stay

When He shall come with trumpet sound, Oh may I then in Him be found
Dressed in his righteousness alone, Faultless to stand before the throne