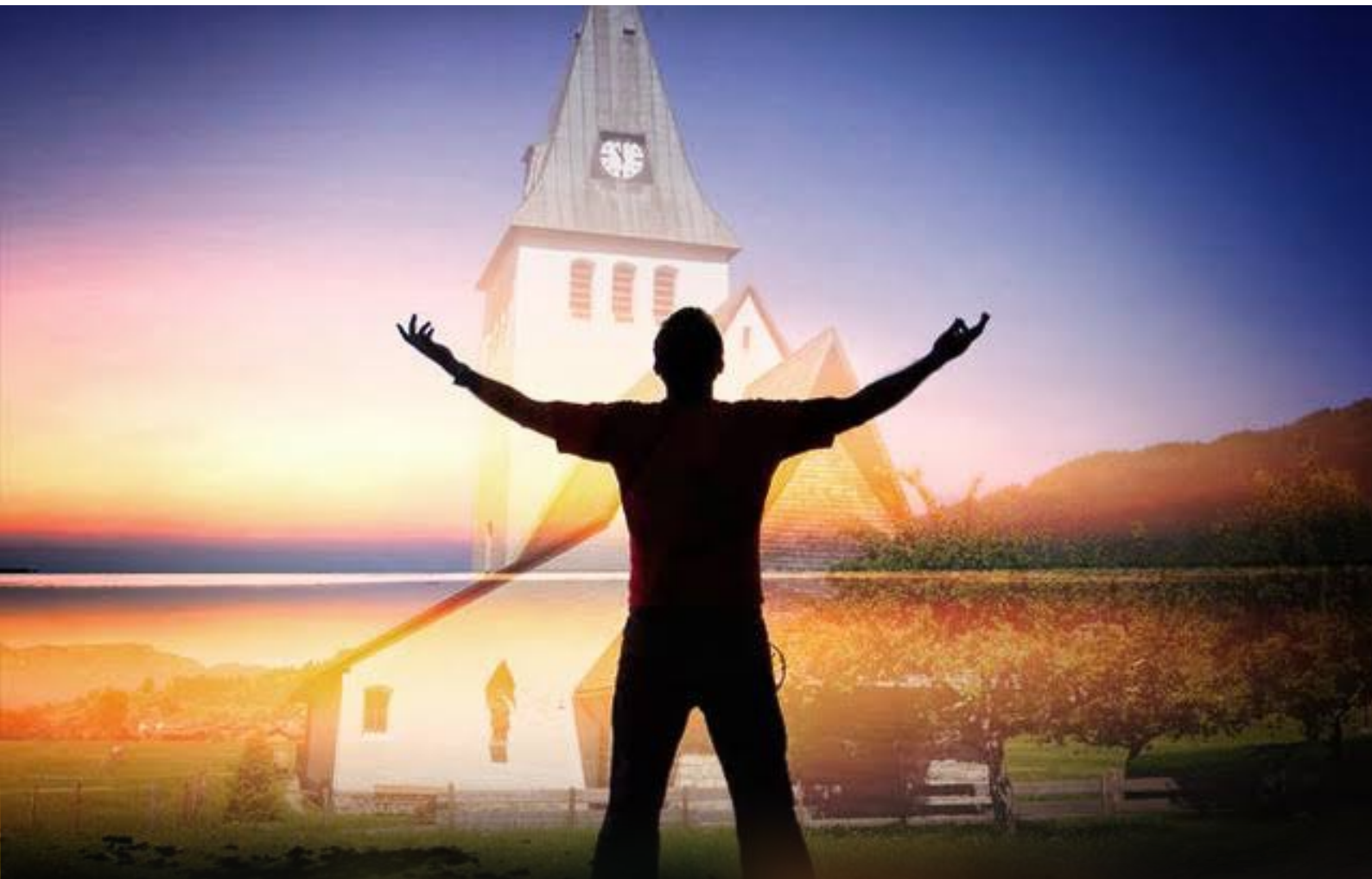




**THE PLATFORM
INTERNATIONAL**

NEW ERA

JANUARY 2023



AN OLD CHALLENGE FOR A NEW YEAR



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Introduction:

2022 is over. 2023 is here. As we stand here at the beginning of a New Year it is a good time to reflect on the year that is ending and look forward to the year that is soon to begin. It is also a good time for God's people to take inventory of their walk with the Lord.

We should take a very close look at where we are in our relationship with Him. We need to examine ourselves and see where we have been, where we are, and where the Lord wants us to be. This passage gives us the opportunity and the challenge to do just that.

Last Week I was occupied in cleaning out our shop room. This particular shop room had become cluttered with a lot of things that were no longer needed. Of course, there were a few things in there that just needed to be relocated and in the process of our clean-up operation, I uncovered a few things that caused me to take a walk down memory lane. As I cleaned that shop room in our house, there were some things that were retained, some things that were released, and some things that were remembered.

As I read these verses, I find that they challenge God's children to do exactly the same thing. As we look at our lives in the light of these verses we are challenged to retain some things, to release others, and remember the rest. I want to open these verses today and share with you the challenges that they contain. I want to show you that God has a plan for your life, He wants certain things from your life, and that He has the right to demand these things from your life. Notice the challenges contained in these verses as I go on the thought "An old challenge for a new year." Read **Colossians 3:1-4**.



1. SOME THINGS MUST BE RETAINED

Read **Colossians 3:1-2a**

As I cleaned our shop room last week, I found several items that were important to us. We did not throw these items away but we kept them so that they might be of use to us. In a spiritual sense, Paul is telling us that there are a couple of precious spiritual possessions we would do well to hang on to.

I. An Awareness of Our Foundation

Read **Colossians 3:1a**

Paul tells us that we are "risen with Christ". The word "if" is not a statement of possibility, it's a declaration of a spiritual reality. Paul is saying "...Since you have risen with Christ..." – Paul is discussing our spiritual position. When Jesus Christ died on Calvary, every person who would ever place their faith in Him also died that day, (Galatians 2:20; Romans 6:1-11). In a spiritual sense, we died to the penalty and the power of sin when Jesus died on the cross.

Because I am dead I do not have to worry about being punished for my sins. The price has been paid and I have already died (**Romans 6:23**). Because I have died with Christ I have also been liberated from the power of sin in my life (**Romans 6:14**). There is a sense in which every child of God is dead! They are dead to sin, (**Colossians 2:20**).

In this verse, Paul reminds us that we have also been raised up with Jesus. When He died, we died. When He rose from the dead we rose from the dead as well. When He got up every person who would ever believe in Him got up as well. We must never forget that we are dead to sin and alive to a new life in Jesus! This knowledge will help us live clean and close to the glory of God.

II. Attention to our Focus

Read **Colossians 3:1b-2a**

Since we have been raised to a new life in Jesus, we are told to seek those things which are above. The verb "seek" is in the Present Tense – Imperative Mode. In other words, we are told to continually be seeking those things which are above.

The second verse builds on that thought by telling us to set our affections on things above not on things on the earth. The word "affections" refers to the mind. We are told here to focus our thoughts on heavenly things, not earthly things. We are to set our minds on the things of God and on the things that bring glory to Him. A quick look at some of the verses following this verse gives a little insight into what Paul is talking about here. We are to pursue:

- A. A deeper knowledge of Jesus, (**Colossians 3:10**)
- B. A clean, holy life, (**Colossians 3:5-9**)
- C. Godly virtues, (**Colossians 3:12-17**)
- D. Holiness in our domestic life, (**Colossians 3:18-21**)
- E. Holiness in our social life, (**Colossians 3:22-4:1**)
- F. An effective prayer life – (**Colossians 4:2**)
- G. A fruitful witness – (**Colossians 4:3-6**)

In other words, we are to live like Jesus lived, (**1 John 2:6**). We are to live out the fruit of the Spirit on our life's day by day, (**Galatians 5:22-23**). We are challenged to live out our lives with genuine spiritual values and not the values of a fallen world. As we give our attention to these spiritual and heavenly things we are enabled to live a heavenly, holy, God-honouring life in this world.

We are to allow a heavenly perspective to govern our earthly walk! Every decision, every activity, every plan, and purpose are to be considered in the light of eternity. Everything is to be laid out before the Lord and considered not from an earthly, sensual perspective, but from the viewpoint of Heaven.

God's people are called upon to become heavenly-minded. This is possible because of our Lord's presence in Heaven. From His place at the Father's right hand, Jesus makes intercession for us and He gives us all that we need to live for Him in this world, (Hebrews 7:25; Romans 8:31-34). As we prepare to enter a New Year, may the Lord help us to realize who we are and what we have in Jesus. May that realization change our walk for His glory!

2. SOME THINGS MUST BE RELEASED

Read **Colossians 3:2b**

As I cleaned our shop room the other day, I came across several items that just had to go. We really didn't have room for some of them and some of that stuff was just plain trash. It has to go and it did. The trash is sitting on the curb waiting to be picked up. Several

bags of stuff that we no longer needed went to Goodwill. While we retained some things, other things had to be released.

In our spiritual lives, the same thing is true. Some things have to be let go. There are some things that try to attach themselves to our lives that are just plain trash.

Those things need to be kicked to the curb. Other things simply don't have a place in our lives and those things need to be let go.

Paul tells us in verse 2 that we are to focus our thoughts on Heavenly things. While we do that we are to avoid getting caught up in all the things in this world that would swamp our minds and hinder our walk. If we allowed the mind to focus on this world it would have no time to give itself to the things of God.

Here in Colossians Paul mentions some dangerous distractions that would hinder our walk if they were allowed to. Let me show you what he says we need to avoid.

I. False Doctrine

In **Colossians 2:8** Paul warns these early believers about those who would carry them off into false doctrinal beliefs. The word "spoil" means "to carry off the booty or to carry someone off as a captive". The enemy would love nothing better than for God's people to get themselves trapped in some false system of belief that takes the emphasis off Jesus. He tells us that the enemy does this through:

Philosophies – This refers to the wisdom of men. Man has invented some strange belief systems over the years, and every single manmade belief system is at variance with Jesus Christ. If what a person teaches is not backed up

by the Word of God; that system is to be avoided by the believer.

Vain Deceit – This phrase means "empty tricks". It refers to those who deceive through trickery or through a slick message. Again, if the message is not Jesus it is not of God. If the focus is not on Jesus and His shed blood it is not of God.

Traditions of Men – Believers are warned to be careful of long-held beliefs. Just because people have believed something to be true and have been taught that something is true does not make it true. We are not to base our faith and our walk on the traditions of men no matter how godly or worthy of respect the man may be. We are to base our belief system on the Word of God alone.

The Rudiments of the World – Again believers are warned against falling away from a mature faith to accept a simplistic doctrine. This phrase refers to an alphabet or things in a row. It speaks of simple things in contrast to a deeper truth. We are to stay with the Bible and try every teaching against the clear Word of God.

If you listen to certain high-profile preachers in our day you hear the very things Paul warned the Colossians about being taught in the pulpits of our day. We are to avoid false doctrine at all costs. We are to run from it regardless of the package in which it is presented.

II. Foolish Demands

In Colossians 2:16-17; 21-23) Paul also warns believers to watch out for people who would place them back under the Law. Jesus came to deliver us from legalism and from the harsh, impossible demands of the Law. Christians are to stand in the liberty they have been given in Jesus Christ.

Paul is telling these believers that no man has the right to be their judge. If they have been saved by Jesus, they have been delivered from the demands of the Law and they enjoy great liberty in Jesus. The only reason that liberty should be limited is for the sake of a weaker brother or sister, (**Romans 14-15; 1 Corinthians 8-10**).

The whole point of these verses is this: true spirituality does not consist in the keeping of man-made, external rules; but in a personal, faith relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. What you do or do not do is not what makes you a spiritual person. Spirituality comes from knowing Jesus and allowing Him to live through you.

Fleshly Deeds – In these verses, Paul lists several common sins of the flesh and admonishes believers to eliminate them from their lives. Let's take a quick look at these verses and what they forbid, (Colossians 3:5-10)

Fornication – This word is translated from a Greek word that

refers to any type of sexual expression. Paul is telling us that any sexual activity that takes place outside the confines of a marriage relationship is a sin and must be put away from our lives, (**Colossians 3:5**)

Uncleanness – This word means “impurity” and it looks beyond the acts of the body into the very thoughts of the minds and the motives of the heart. Not only is the outward man supposed to be clean, but so are the heart and the mind, (**Colossians 3:5**)

Inordinate Affection – This speaks of “wicked passions”. It has the idea of lust for forbidden things. God has marked certain things as being off-limits; this kind of lust seeks out those things and longs for them, (**Colossians 3:5**)

Evil Concupiscence – This means “evil desires”. It speaks of a mind that longs for forbidden things. The person with this kind of mind never commits evil on a physical level but they live in a fantasy world where their most wicked thoughts are acted out in the heart and mind, (**Colossians 3:5**)

Covetousness – This word means “to have more”. It refers to the insatiable desire to possess more than one has been given by God. It is a refusal to accept what you have is the gift of God. It is the placing of things ahead of God and of His will for your life. That is why it is called “idolatry, (**Colossians 3:5**)

Anger – This word refers to a deep, smouldering, bitterness. It is an anger that dwells in the heart and makes the angry person hard to deal with. The angry person will tend to lash out in both words and deeds, (**Colossians 3:8**)

Wrath – This word refers to anger that boils over. It speaks of sudden, explosive outbursts of anger, (**Colossians 3:8**)

Malice – This is anger mixed with a desire to do harm to the focus of the anger. When malice is involved, the angry person strikes out to do damage to another person, (**Colossians 3:8**)

Blaspheme – The word literally means “to slander”. It can refer to slanders directed at God or at other people. We slander others when we insult and belittle others. This happens in gossip and when we put others down behind their backs, (**Colossians 3:8**)

Filthy Communication – This refers to “abusive speech”. It speaks of words that are thrown around in an attempt to hurt and wound someone. This usually

happens when people say things they should not say in a moment of anger, (**Colossians 3:8**)

Lying – When we lie to one another, we are using the tool and tactic of the devil, (**John 8:44**). This characteristic has no place in the life of a child of God, (**Colossians 3:9**)

If any of these things are in your life, they need to be out away. They will hinder your walk with God and cripple you spiritually. How can we be victorious over the sin in our lives? One step we can take is to starve the fleshly appetites.

Do not feed the anger. Do not feed lust. Second, we can overcome by crowding it out. We can so fill our lives with positive things that evil has no room to flourish. When we fill ourselves with the things of God, (**Philippians 4:8**) and the Word of God, (**Colossians 3:16**) sin cannot gain a foothold in our hearts.

2. SOME THINGS MUST BE REMEMBERED

Read **Colossians 3:3-4**

As I cleaned up in our shop room last week, I opened a large tote. On top were several things that didn't matter and they were discarded. As I dug deeper, I discovered some things that caused me to take a trip down memory lane. It was a good opportunity for me to stop and remember the blessings of the Lord. These last two verses of our text serve as reminders of some important spiritual truths today. We need to consider them before we leave these things behind.

I. There has been a death

We are reminded again that we have died to sin and to the influence of this world, (**Colossians 3:3a**). One of the surest ways for the child of God to enjoy spiritual victory in his or her life is for that person to understand that they are crucified with Christ, (**Galatians 2:20**). If we can get a grip on that truth and do what (**Romans. 6:11**) tells us to do we would grow deeper in the things of the Lord.

II. There has been a deposit

When we were saved, we were given a new life in Jesus, (**Colossians 3:3b**). This new life imparts to us the "divine nature", (**2 Peter. 1:4**). This new life guarantees the believer's eternal security, (**1 Peter 1:5; Hebrews**

7:25; John 10:28). Because we are hidden in Jesus, we are in protective custody and none of the enemies of the soul can approach us or attack us or take us out of Jesus.

III. There has been a dream

Paul closes this paragraph by reminding us that this world is not the best there is, (**Colossians 3:4**). We may have to deny our flesh down here but it will be worth it all over there. We might have to battle Satan here, but we will enjoy victory there. When Jesus comes our faith in Him will be vindicated and we will be glorified with Him.

Right now, every believer in this room battles the world, the flesh, and the devil. Each of these enemies does everything they can to hinder us and to cause us to fail. One day, the battles will be over. This flesh will be changed and remade in His image, (**1 Corinthians 15:53-54; 1 John 3:1-3**). We will leave this world with its sin, its evil, its problems, its devil and we will go to the land of perfection to bask in the glory of our Redeemer forever, (**Revelation 21:4**).

Right now, I have a dream. I dream of a day when I will go home. I dream of a day when I will see the Lord Jesus Christ. One day that dream will become a reality and I will be in His presence. That is what

we need to remember as we fight the good fight of faith.

Conclusion

That's a lot to take in, isn't it? But, as we stand here on the cusp of a New Year, we need to take a good, hard look at our lives and at our walk with the Lord.

A. Are there some things in your life that need to be Retained? Does your focus need to be adjusted?

B. Are there some things in your life that need to be Released? Do you need to lay down some of the things mentioned in this message?

C. Are there some things in your life that need to be Remembered?

Do you need to take a trip down memory lane and nail a few things down today?

E. Whatever the needs may be today you should listen to the voice of the Lord and do what He is telling you to do. Let's seek to make 2023 the best year of our lives for the glory of God!

Welcome to January 2023 And Have A Bliss-Filled Year Ahead!



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**AN OLD
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