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Set Your Affection on Things Above

By *C. Young*

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These short studies on the topic “Set Your Affection on Things Above” were originally written as individual blog posts. They have been adapted for easier reading in booklet format, but I have kept them in the first person. There are so many wonderful truths and happy promises! May these be a blessing to you!

Set Your Love Upon God

The first verse in the series "Set Your Affection on Things Above" is Psalm 91:14 which says, "Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name." The first concept I will be considering for this verse is "Set Your Love upon God."

"Set his love" – delight in, desire, long for (*Strong's Concordance*)

God is Almighty. He is great. He is the most High. Yet, He is not beyond my reach. I can delight in Him. I can desire Him. I can long for Him. If I seek Him, He will be found of me. (See Jeremiah 29:13) God is not trying to run away from me but is waiting with stretched out arms for me to return His love.

Since God is high above all, it seemed a good place to start to set my affection on Him. But how? What does it mean to set my love upon Him? In his book, Treasury of David, Charles Spurgeon quotes from Mary B. M. Duncan's thoughts on this verse. She says it so beautifully that I will quote her here. May it be spiritual food for thought!

"'He hath set his love upon me.'

"We have a similar expression in daily use, which means the bending of all our energies to one end -- a ceaseless effort after one object. We say, 'I have set my heart on such a thing.' This is what God will have from us -- an intense, single hearted love. We must love him 'with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our strength, and with all our mind,' so that, like Jesus, we may 'delight to do his will.'

"Just let us think of the way in which setting our heart on anything affects us, head, hands, time, thought, action -- all are at work for us [our?] attainment. How we sacrifice everything else to it! Comfort, ease, present advantage, money, health, nay, our very selves, go freely for the sake of our cherished wish. Have I so 'set my heart upon' God?

"Temperaments differ. This may be an overdrawn picture of the way in which some of us seek a cherished object. But each knows his own capability in this way. God also knows our frame, and requires his best at every man's hand."

~Mary B. M. Duncan.

O, God, help me set my love on you! You love me and You ought to be all my desire.

I Will Deliver Him

The second concept I will be considering from Psalm 91:14 is "I will deliver him." Again, here is that beautiful verse. *"Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name."*

Pursuing after God, seeking Him, desiring His presence, and finding my place near to His heart, has its rewards. If I set my love upon God, He will deliver me. That is His promise.

Deliver – carry away safe, cause to escape (*Strong's Concordance*)

When I run to God, He will carry me away safe and cause me to find my escape in Him.

Escape – to get clear from danger or evil of any form; to be passed without harm (*Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language, 1913 edition*)

"⁷Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers: the snare is broken, and we are escaped. ⁸Our help is in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth." (Psalm 124:7,8)

I Will Set Him on High

The final concept I will consider for Psalm 91:14 is "I Will Set Him on High." In the second half of this verse God says, *"I will set him on high, because he hath known my name."*

"I will set him on high" – high, lofty, safe set up on high, to be too strong (*Strong's Concordance*)

"Because he hath 'known' my name." "Know(n)" – acknowledge, comprehend, consider, discern, discover, familiar friend, kinsfolk, kinsman, know (to be learned) (*Strong's Concordance*)

This is not just a casual knowing God's name, but a relationship with God. It is learning to know God so well that He is my familiar friend, that He becomes as close as a kinsman. It is learning to comprehend God and discover what He is like. It is the experience of learning Christ.

Knowing God and learning Christ is the key to safety. Proverbs 18:10 says, *"The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe."*

If I learn Christ, if I know God's name, He will set me on High. He will put me in a safe place, a place too strong for the enemy. God is my place of safety.

Beautiful Things to Seek!

Colossians 3:1 says, *"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God."* This is the next verse in the study "Set Your Affection on Things Above."

Seek those things which are above – long after them, desire them, endeavor to find them. (See *Strong's Concordance*) Two things are mentioned in this verse as being in the place above where I am to seek. This is God my Father and Jesus my Savior. I must seek to be with them.

God is sitting on His throne, and Jesus is seated at His right hand. He is King of kings and Lord of lords. Yet, my Father and my Savior bid me come into their presence. Hebrews 4:16 says, *"Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."*

I must seek my Father and my Savior. God invites me to come boldly to His throne. I do not need to fear because it is not a throne of terror; it is a throne of grace. There I do not find condemnation; I find mercy. There I do not find judgment and harsh sentences; I find grace to help me in time of need. Oh, what a King! Truly, "The King of Love My Shepherd Is"!

What treasures are those I find above!

The throne of grace

The King of love

My Father

My Savior

Mercy

Grace

Beautiful things to seek!

Seek and Desire a Better Country

In Colossians 3:2 the Bible says, "*Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.*"

For the thoughts on this verse, I will quote from Matthew Henry's Commentary. He just says it so well.

"Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth."

"...To seek heavenly things is to set our affections upon them, to love them and let our desires be towards them. Upon the wings of affection the heart soars upwards, and is carried forth towards spiritual and divine objects. We must acquaint ourselves with them, esteem them above all other things, and lay out ourselves in preparation for the enjoyment of them... This is to be spiritually minded... and to *seek and desire a better country, that is, a heavenly.* (Heb. 11: 14,16)

"Things on earth are here set in opposition to *things above.* We must not dote upon them, nor expect too much from them, that we may set our affections on heaven; for heaven and earth are contrary one to the other, and a supreme regard to both is inconsistent; and the prevalence of our affection to one will proportionably weaken and abate our affection to the other."

~Matthew Henry's Commentary

"They that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country... they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city." (Hebrews 11:14&16)

Dead to Sin – Alive to God

Colossians 3:3 tells why I should set my affection on things above.

“For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.” (Colossians 3:3)

The first reason I should set my affection on things above is that I am dead. My old man is crucified with Christ (See Romans 6:6), therefore “It is no longer I that liveth, but Christ that liveth in me.”

I am dead to sin and to this world but alive unto God through Jesus Christ. (See Romans 6:11) The things of this world should have no pull on me. A dead person cannot react. There are things I must do in order to sustain physical life in this world, but physical life is fleeting. It will pass away. My desire should not be here. Things of this earth should not move me. Why should I long after that which will perish?

“²Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. ³Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live.” (Isaiah 55:2,3a)

It is No Longer I that Liveth

It is no longer I that liveth
But Christ that liveth in me.
It is no longer I that liveth
But Christ that liveth in me.
He lives, He lives,
Jesus is alive in me.
It is no longer I that liveth
But Christ that liveth in me.

Words: Unknown

Music: Sally Ellis

Hid with Christ in God

The last half of Colossians 3:3 tells the second reason why I should set my affection on things above and not on things on the earth. It says, "...*your life is **hid** with Christ in God.*"

My life is hid with Christ in God. It is concealed (by covering); it is kept secret. (See *Strong's Concordance*)

My life in Christ is a secret life. It is known only to God and me. Near to God's heart is a special place made just for me by Jesus Christ. That place is one of safety. No one besides me and my Savior can enter it. There I am carried in my Father's bosom and kept by His love. (See Isaiah 40:11) Sin cannot enter there. Satan cannot harm me there. It is my hiding place. (See Psalm 32:6,7)

My life in Christ is a secure life. God holds me safe to His heart where I am kept by His powerful, loving hands. There in that safe haven, nothing can pluck me out of God's hand. (See John 10:27-30) In Christ I have received eternal life. No one can take that life from me.

When my earthly life is ended, my life in Christ will go on. I will still be safe in my Father's bosom, held close to the heart of God by His powerful hands. But there will be nothing to molest me, no sin to tempt me, no pain or sorrow to afflict me – only peace and happiness for ever.

Seeing this is my future and my life is even now safely held until then, my affection should not be on earthly things. They do not belong to me. They are only borrowed for a while. There is an inheritance reserved in heaven for me. I should set my heart on that inheritance which is "*incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven*" for me. (See I Peter 1:4)

I Shall Be Like Him for I Shall See Him As He Is

Colossians 3:4 tells the third reason why I should set my affection on things above. It says, *“When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.”*

Christ is my life. He is my life now. He keeps me living, moving, and breathing and also gives me spiritual strength. Without Him I can do nothing. (See John 15:5) With Him I can do all things. (See Philippians 4:13)

Christ is my eternal life. In John 14:6 Jesus says, *“I am the way, the truth, and the life.”*

Right now I do not have the privilege of physically being with Jesus and seeing Him as He is, but that day is coming soon. Christ will appear, and I will appear with Him in glory. When He comes to receive me, I will be like Him. I John 3:2 holds out to me a beautiful promise, *“Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.”*

I must set my affections on things above because

1. Jesus is my life
2. He is coming soon to receive me unto Himself
3. I will see Him as He is
4. I will be like Him

“And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.” I John 3:3)

“O, Lord Jesus, even so come quickly! And while I am waiting for You to come, help me to set my heart on You and keep me pure. For I shall soon be with You and see You as You are and be like You! Amen!”

Love Not the World

I John 2:15-17 says, "¹⁵Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. ¹⁷And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

Oh, how much is in these verses! However, I will try to draw out just a few thoughts.

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world" because "the world passeth away, and the lust thereof." **All** that is in the world is not of the Father. **All** of it will pass away. I do need money, food, and raiment for life on this earth, but even these things will pass away. Although I ought to care for my home and body in as good a manner as God allows, I must not be taken up with these things. They are only temporary. I am just staying here until I move to my real home, my heavenly home. If things get taken away on this earth, I should not get upset. They will pass away some day anyway. My life here is only going to last a limited time.

Love not the world because all that is in it entices the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. Whatever the world offers is never enough. There is always more – better house, better car, better food, more money, more knowledge, and so forth. But all are to perish with the using and none of it can satisfy. (See John 6:27 and Ecclesiastes 5:10)

I ought to seek Christ because "the world passeth away and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

"As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness." (Psalm 17:15)

Heavenly Treasures

In Matthew 6:19-21 we read, *“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: ²⁰But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: ²¹For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”*

Although there is nothing wrong with saving money, gaining riches should not be my goal. Though I might acquire much gold and silver and beautiful clothes, these will not last. Moths will eat the clothes, and thieves may steal the money. *“Surely every man walketh in a vain shew: surely they are disquieted in vain: he heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them.”* (Psalm 39:6)

Instead of seeking after the riches that will perish, I should seek after the true riches that God has for me.

1. Righteousness

“Riches profit not in the day of wrath: but righteousness delivereth from death.” (Proverbs 11:4)

2. Wisdom and understanding

“How much better is it to get wisdom than gold! and to get understanding rather to be chosen than silver!” (Proverbs 16:16)

3. Wisdom, knowledge, and joy

“For God giveth to a man that is good in his sight wisdom, and knowledge, and joy: but to the sinner he giveth travail, to gather and to heap up, that he may give to him that is good before God...” (Ecclesiastes 2:26)

4. The fear of the Lord

“And wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times, and strength of salvation: the fear of the LORD is his treasure.” (Isaiah 33:6)

5. The joy of giving

“Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth.” (Luke 12:33)

There are others also, but I do not have time to cover them all. I pray God will help me not to desire the treasures of earth but to seek after true riches and lay them up in heaven, for where my treasure is, there will my heart be also. Heavenly treasure will never be corrupted, stolen, or fade away.

Covetousness versus Trusting in God

The last verse in the study "Set Your Affection on Things Above" is Luke 12:15, "*And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.*" (Luke 12:15)

Covetousness must be a very serious sin. Jesus said, "Take heed, and beware." Colossians 3:5 says that covetousness is idolatry. That is written only three verses after God's command to "*Set your affection on things above.*" (See Colossians 3:2)

Dangers of Covetousness:

Covetousness turns my eyes off God and focuses them on the world. This can bring several dangers.

1. Covetousness can keep me from bearing fruit and growing in Christ (See Luke 8:14)
2. Covetousness will keep me from being ready when Jesus comes again (Luke 21:34)
3. Covetousness can cause me to deny God (Job 31:24-28)
4. Covetousness will bring upon me God's displeasure (Psalm 10:3)
5. Covetousness will cause me to trust in my own wisdom, but worldly riches do not last. That which I trusted in would soon be taken away. (Proverbs 23:4,5)

Reasons to Avoid Covetousness:

Covetousness, according to Colossians 3:5, is idolatry. It occurs when I desire earthly things and set my heart upon them. This sin comes about as a result of trusting in my own wisdom and seeking after treasures that will perish. In Psalm 62:10 God warns, "*...if riches increase, set not your heart upon them.*" Then God explains why, "*...power belongeth unto God. ¹²Also unto thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy: for thou renderest to every man according to his work.*" (vs. 11b and 12)

1. Riches have no power. Power belongs to God. He can give riches, or He can take them away at any time. It is vain to trust in riches because I can neither gain them nor keep them by my own power, nor can they keep themselves. They are bestowed by God.
2. Trusting in God rather than riches brings God's mercy and reward (See Psalm 62:11,12)
3. Inclining my heart to God's testimonies rather than to covetousness turns away reproach from my life, helps me avoid seeing things I should not see, and brings revival to my heart. Trusting in God's judgments brings stability as it establishes God's word in my heart. (See Psalm 119:36-40)
4. Avoiding covetousness allows me to live longer (Proverbs 28:16)
5. Avoiding covetousness is necessary because I cannot take any worldly riches with me when I die. Covetousness leads to all kinds of evil, but trusting in God leads to righteousness, godliness,

endurance in the fight of faith, the reward of eternal life, and a good testimony before others. (See I Timothy 6:7-12)

The benefits of covetousness are short and fleeting. The benefits of trusting God are eternal. Trusting God leads to joy and happiness.

O God, Incline my heart after Thee!