

Series: *Christ Preeminent In You*

Title: "The Supernatural Character of the Christian Faith" (Colossians 3:1-4, John 16:8-15)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 9/15/2013

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In our present series of messages, we are focusing on the teaching of Scripture concerning the imperative of a Heavenly orientation on the part of the individual believer in the Lord Jesus Christ and also the church as the body of Christ.

Our theme passage for this series is found in Colossians chapter 3 beginning at verse one. If you are able to do so as you are listening, I trust that you will turn with me to this passage and focus your attention upon it. We will also be examining several other passages of Scripture during this message. But we begin once again at Colossians chapter 3, verse one. The Apostle Paul by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit gives us this Divine imperative:

If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

A Vital Imperative

In our last several broadcasts, we have been seeing that this imperative to focus our minds, and our attentions, and our loyalties on things above has to do with the fact that *Christianity is a supernatural faith*. This is a lost emphasis in the Christian church in our time. The orientation of so much of the church today is materialistic and naturalistic.

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One of the stations on which *The Scripture-Driven Church* broadcast is heard is a station in the city of Monrovia in the nation of Liberia in West Africa. The management of this Christian radio station has placed a very good doctrinal statement on their website. It begins with these words:

We believe in a supernatural Bible, which tells of the supernatural Christ, who had a supernatural birth, who spoke supernatural words, who performed supernatural miracles, who lived a supernatural life, who died a supernatural death, who rose in supernatural power, who ascended in supernatural splendor, who intercedes as a supernatural priest, and who will one day return in supernatural glory to establish a supernatural kingdom on the earth.

That is an excellent statement of the essentials of the Christian faith. And then, of course, their doctrinal statement goes on to explain each of these points about the supernatural character of God, and of His Word, and of the incarnate Christ, and of the Gospel, and of the Christian life in this present age, and of the life to come in eternity.

But today, individual Christians and the church as a body seem to avoid the word "supernatural" in speaking of the Christian faith. It is as though many in the church are scared to speak about the supernatural character of the Christian faith. Many Christians in many churches are afraid of what unbelievers will think if we speak in these terms.

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But if you take away the supernatural character of the Christian faith, if you minimize it, if you eliminate it from the teaching of the church, what do you have left? You have a religion that is emptied of its power. You have a Bible that is no longer the Word of God, but merely the word of man.

If you remove or minimize the supernatural character of the Christian faith, you have what the Apostle Paul fearfully described at the beginning of Second Corinthians chapter 11. You have a so-called "Christianity" that is robbed of its supernatural character. It is, as Paul said, another Jesus, a different spirit, and a different gospel. It is a counterfeit. It is not the authentic Biblical Christian faith.

Christians Must Never Be Ashamed of This

Bible believing Christians and the true church of Jesus Christ must never be ashamed of the supernatural character of the Christian faith. And that is why – if indeed we have been raised with Christ – we must "seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God." We must "set our minds on things above, and not on things on the earth." We have died to these things. We are alive in Christ. And that is a supernatural life. Never forget that. Never lose sight of that supreme and glorious fact.

Truly and properly understanding the supernatural character of the Christian faith requires an understanding of the doctrine of the person and work of God the Holy Spirit in this world at large, and in the life of the Christian individually, and in the life of the church as the body of Christ.

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The individual who has been indwelled by the Spirit of God from Heaven has a supernaturally-granted understanding of the Gospel of Jesus Christ that the unbeliever does not have.

The Christian who is indwelled by the Holy Spirit has a supernaturally-granted understanding of the Word of God that the unbeliever does not and cannot have.

The person who has been indwelled by the Spirit of God from Heaven has a supernaturally-granted understanding of his position when he was still outside of Christ that the unregenerated person does not have.

The person who has been indwelled by the Spirit of God from Heaven has a supernaturally-granted understanding of his present position in Christ that the unbeliever does not have.

The Christian indwelled by the Spirit of God from Heaven has a supernaturally-granted understanding of his future position in Christ that the unbeliever cannot have.

The individual who has been indwelled by the Holy Spirit of God from Heaven, has supernaturally-granted access to power in this present life that no one else can have.

God the Holy Spirit is the One who indwells, and empowers, and enables, and equips the believer to have these things and to exercise these things. And so, that is

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why we are focusing on the doctrine of the person and work of the Holy Spirit in this series at the present time.

We began by seeing that, in Acts chapter one, the Lord Jesus instructed the disciples to wait in Jerusalem for the coming of the Holy Spirit upon them, so that they might receive power in order that they might be witnesses of the Lord Jesus Christ, witnesses of who He is and what He has done, not only in Jerusalem, not only in the surrounding regions, but to the very ends of the earth.

We also saw, in the second chapter of the book of Joel in the Old Testament, the prophecy, the promise, of the coming of the Holy Spirit upon all believers, both Jew and Gentile, during this present age. We have seen that the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is not, as some falsely teach, a "second blessing." The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is the first and foremost of all the spiritual blessings that God gives to each and every believer in Christ.

The Supernatural Character of Salvation

Today I want to focus our attention on some additional very important aspects of the person and work of the Holy Spirit. And for that purpose, I want to focus our attention on the words of our Lord Jesus Christ Himself when He was on this earth. From the very beginning of His ministry all the way to the end, the Lord Jesus taught and explained the person and work of the Holy Spirit.

In the Gospel of John chapter 3, we find Jesus in the very early days of His

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ministry being approached by Nicodemus, the leading religious teacher of Israel in that day. Please turn to John chapter 3 with me if you are able. Nicodemus had begun to understand that the Lord Jesus Christ was someone different from all of his past experience. He said, "We know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs [the supernatural things, the miracles] that you do unless God is with Him."

And then, we read that Jesus answered Nicodemus by explaining to him that there was much more involved in the supernatural character of the kingdom of God than the signs and the miracles that Jesus was doing. The supernatural character of the kingdom of God involves a supernatural rebirth that is sovereignly brought about by God the Holy Spirit. John chapter 3, verse three:

Jesus answered and said to [Nicodemus], "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

This is the essence of salvation: "Unless one is born again..." The words that are here translated "born again" literally mean "born from above." But Nicodemus did not understand this. His thinking was earthbound. His mind was still set on the things of earth, and not on things above. And so, verse four:

Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?"

And so, Jesus patiently explained it further. Verse five:

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Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water [that is, natural birth] and [born of] the Spirit [the new birth], he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit." (John 3:3-8)

"The Flesh Profits Nothing"

The new birth means being "born from above." It means being "born of the Spirit." Salvation is the sovereign and supernatural work of God the Holy Spirit. Jesus explains this further to his disciples in John chapter 6, verse 63. He said "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing."

The very essence of salvation, the very essence of the new birth, is that it is supernatural in character. It is not of the flesh. Jesus said, "the flesh profits nothing." In the original language, this means that the flesh, the things of earth, the things of man, are of no advantage in obtaining eternal life. They are not the means by which eternal life comes.

So much of what we see in the church today is focused on the flesh. The so-called worship service very often is nothing more than an appeal to the flesh. The so-called preaching in so many nominally evangelical churches today is nothing but

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an appeal to the flesh. A promotion of the flesh, and the desires of the flesh, and the interest of the flesh.

In many nominally evangelical churches today, what is called "becoming a Christian" is nothing more than an act of the flesh. Coming forward in a church service. Saying certain words, whether you really understand them or really mean them, or not. Being baptized, whether you really understand the spiritual nature of baptism, or not.

"The flesh," according to Scripture, is a name for the old nature, the old man, the sinful nature. But what does Paul say to us by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in Colossians chapter 3? He says that if indeed you were raised with Christ, then "you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God." We must keep ever before us as Christians the vital fact – that the flesh, the natural, the earthly, profits nothing. It is the spirit, the supernatural, the Heavenly, that profits everything.

The Indwelling Spirit: The Answer to Christ's Prayer

And this is why the Lord Jesus Christ sent the Holy Spirit into this world in this present age to indwell every believer in Christ. Turn with me, please, if you are able, to the Gospel of John chapter 14, and verse 16. Here we see a further statement of the Lord Jesus concerning the person and work of the Holy Spirit, and the supernatural character of the Christian faith. John chapter 14, beginning at verse 16. Jesus said:

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And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever — the Spirit of truth, whom the world [the unbelieving world] cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. (John 14:16-17)

God the Holy Spirit is in this world, God the Holy Spirit is in each and every believer in Christ, because our Lord Jesus prayed to the Father and asked him to send the Spirit into the body of Christ in this special way during this present age. Notice also that God the Holy Spirit is with us and in us not only for time but also for eternity. Jesus said that He will "abide with you forever."

Notice also that God the Holy Spirit is "the Spirit of truth." There is no mixture of truth and error in the genuine work of God the Holy Spirit in the believer and in the church.

Notice also that God the Holy Spirit is the one "whom the world [the unbelieving, un-regenerated world] cannot receive." The unbeliever cannot, in the power of the flesh, appropriate the person and work and power of God the Holy Spirit. The unbeliever cannot "see" or discern the supernatural presence and work of God the Holy Spirit. The unbeliever is incapable of knowing, of truly understanding, the supernatural presence and supernatural work of God the Holy Spirit. But, Jesus says, "you [the true believer in Me, you] know Him [because] He

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dwells with you and will be in you." This is the supernatural character of the Christian life.

And then notice this, further down in the same chapter, John chapter 14 and verse 26. Once again, the words of the Lord Jesus, John chapter 14 and verse 26:

But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.

Once again, we see the supernatural character of the Christian life because of the presence of God the Holy Spirit within the believer. The Holy Spirit who is the Author of all Scripture is also the Teacher of all things. The central focus of that teaching work of the Holy Spirit is the Spirit's testimony to the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. In John chapter 15 verse 26, Jesus said this:

“But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me. (John 15:26)

The Spirit's Convicting Work

Jesus further explained this in John chapter 16 beginning at verse eight. Please turn there with me if you are able – John chapter 16 beginning at verse eight. Jesus said this:

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And when He [the Holy Spirit] has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged. (John 16:8-12)

Notice that the supernatural convicting work of God the Holy Spirit in this world – convicting the world "of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" – has as its central focus the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

God the Holy Spirit will supernaturally convict the world of sin, Jesus says, because they do not believe in Me. The essence of sin is unbelief. Jesus said in John chapter 3, verse 18, that the one "who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

God the Holy Spirit will supernaturally convict the world of righteousness because Jesus Christ the Righteous One has made full and final atonement for sin, and He is now sitting at the right hand of the Father.

God the Holy Spirit will supernaturally convict the world of judgment because that judgment has already begun in the judgment of "the ruler of this world," the judgment and condemnation of Satan, at the cross of Christ. And all those who follow after Satan will experience that same judgment.

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The Spirit's Testimony of Christ

But notice once again, as we saw in John 15:26, that God the Holy Spirit also testifies of the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ within the believer. Look at the verses that follow in John chapter 16. John 16, beginning at verse 13. Jesus said to His disciples,

I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you. (John 16:13-15)

It is the supernatural ministry of God the Holy Spirit within each believer to exalt the Lord Jesus Christ who is sitting at the right hand of God. "He will glorify Me," Jesus said. He will declare to you the things that are Mine.

God the Holy Spirit is the supernatural witness of the Lord Jesus Christ in this present world, convicting the lost. God the Holy Spirit is the supernatural witness of the Lord Jesus Christ within each believer, equipping us to understand the truth. And he is the supernatural witness of the Lord Jesus Christ within the church, the body of Christ, empowering the church's witness.

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A Vital Question

This brings us to a very vital question: Who is the One of whom the Spirit witnesses? Who is Jesus Christ? Dear friends, I am not asking this question lightly. There is very good reason to ask this question. There is much confusion about this question today.

Who is Jesus Christ? Many today who claim to be Evangelicals are doing the most dangerous thing imaginable: They are teaching falsehood about Jesus Christ. Many in the nominally evangelical church today have believed in a false Christ who is the invention of sinful man and not the Christ of the Bible.

We must be sure that we understand who the genuine Christ is. We must understand who the One is who is sitting at the right hand of God the Father in Heaven. To believe in any other so-called "Christ" is a belief that leads not to eternal life but to eternal damnation.

To believe in a Christ who is not truly God and truly man, to believe in a Christ who is not the Second Person of the Trinity, to believe in a Christ who is not the Creator and Sustainer of the universe, to believe in a Christ who is merely a good moral example, is not to believe in the genuine Christ of whom God the Holy Spirit testifies.

Once again, we must set our minds on things above, where the genuine Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. We must understand exactly who He is. We must

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understand the Biblical doctrine of the incarnation of God the Son. And so, the Lord willing, that question will be our focus as we continue our study of these great and vital issues on our next broadcast.

About the Broadcast

The Scripture-Driven Church airs each week across the United States and around the world. Our goal is that of the Great Commission: to preach the Gospel to the world, and to equip believers to stand upon and live by the sole authority of God's Word, to the glory of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

How You Can Help Us

Above all, please pray for us. The prayers of our listeners and supporters are vital to all we do. We thank you for bringing this ministry before the throne of grace.

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of His inspired, infallible, inerrant Word.**