

Tabernacle Missionary Baptist Church
2080 West Grand Blvd.
Detroit, Michigan 48208
Nathan Johnson, D.D., *Senior Pastor*

Lesson 8: First Place in Our Affections Scripture: Colossians 3

Goal: To embrace and fulfill our covenant relationship with God and one another.

Objective: To understand why the church should have the highest place in our affections.

Church Covenant Segment: “We engage..... to give [the church] a place in our affections, prayers, and services above every organization of human origin; ...

Introduction:

First place in our affections is that part of the church covenant that addresses the questions of where our priorities, affections, and loyalties lie. Colossians 3:2 instructs us to set our affections on things above. Can we love Christ and not love the church which He founded (Eph. 1:22-23)? The church is a holy institution and was established by God (Matt. 16:18). It is not to be compared to any other organization and requires our best in regard to our time, talent and resources. Through the church the gospel of salvation is revealed to mankind. The church should receive the highest place in our affection because through it God gives the grace of life.¹ Finally giving the church its proper place in our affections demonstrates our commitment to the Greatest Commandment (Matt 22:37). It is not the church building that we set our love upon, but it is to God that we primarily direct expressions of love with the church sharing the greatest affection above any institution.

Dialogue Web ~ an Interactive Bible Lesson First Place in Our Affections

Typically when we hear the word affection we focus on emotionality. The word ‘affection’ in the Greek is *phroneo* translated from the word *phreneo* meaning *to exercise the mind; by implication to be mentally disposed more or less earnestly in a certain direction, to interest oneself in (with concern or obedience): set the affection on, be of one, be of the same, mind, regard, savor, think*². Our regard of the church is not purely emotional but founded upon insightful spiritual concepts based upon God’s love and perfect plan for mankind and the finished work of Christ such that our perceptions and directionality are influenced. The question arises, what are the things that we are to set our affections upon? One is the relationship that God has set in motion with us through the death of Christ upon the cross. As a result we are justified or placed in right relationship with God. We have the seal of promise residing within us. We are made

¹ Turner, William C., *A Journey through the Church Covenant*, Valley Forge: Judson Press, 2002, 45

² Strong, James, *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance*, Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1984

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heirs to every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus. We are to love His Word. Love it enough to live by it daily, study it, and spread it everywhere. The affections Paul speaks of “cultivate sensitivity to the things of Christ—a sensitivity implanted and nourished by the Spirit that produces a yearning for what God has decreed.”³ We are to allow ourselves to be drawn into the church’s life through the communion of the Holy Spirit.⁴ We covenant to pray for the church, to give service within the church, ideally where our spiritual gifts can best function. This does not mean that we neglect our families or other social responsibilities.⁵ To give the church our affection above any other human organization is to make a quality decision backed by a “radical commitment” to things above.⁶

First Place in Our Affections	Scriptures <i>What the Word Says</i>	Class Discovery Points
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Guiding Questions</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What are some things people put in place of the church? 2. What does it mean to set your affections on things above? 3. How are our affections for the church determined? 4. Why should we have a genuine affection for the church? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Luke 18:29 2. Galatians 4: 8-9 2. Matthew 16:18 3. Philippians 4:8 4. Colossians 3:1-2 5. Matthew 28:19 6. John 15:16 7. Romans 2:1-2 8. Matthew 5:6 9. Matthew 6:33 	<p style="text-align: center;">Application (s) to the Church</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 3. 4. 5.
<p><u>Class Summary Statement</u> <i>The church ought to have first places in our affections because...</i></p>		

³ Turner, William C., *A Journey through the Church Covenant*, Valley Forge: Judson Press, 2002, 42

⁴ Ibid Pg. 44

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Turner, William C., *A Journey through the Church Covenant*, Valley Forge: Judson Press, 2002, 43

Lesson Summary

“The church is not of human origin and must have the highest place in our affections.”⁷
“Unlike other institutions, the church was instituted by our Lord. Its origin is in the will of the Father, the sacrifice of the Son, and the power of the Spirit.”⁸ What characteristics make the church different from all organizations on earth? No other organization has a divine imprint, destiny, or purpose. Because it is centered in the will and purpose of the one true and living God, it is a “living organism”. We make a fatal mistake when we treat the church as if it is on the same level as other human institutions. No one can bring anything to gain entrance into the body of Christ—no initiation fees, dues, or qualifications can accomplish it. The only “rite of passage” is through the shed blood of the Lamb of God—Jesus Christ. When we accept Jesus Christ as our personal Savior, we are escorted into the Body of Christ by the Holy Spirit—this is “baptism in the Holy Spirit”. Because the church was founded on the finished work of Christ and is directed, sustained and kept by the work of the Holy Spirit, we err when we impose human understanding and restraints on it. The church is the witness of God’s response of love and grace towards a sinful and wayward mankind. To adopt and impose the world’s ways of governing, accomplishing the work or patterns of living for the church is an affront to a Holy God! Our blueprint for governing, accomplishing God’s goals and living together are found in God’s Word. This powerful understanding has great implication for both leadership and followership in the church. The church is our place of worship where we gather with expectations of receiving God’s blessings to sustain us through our earthly pilgrim journey and into eternity. When we covenant “to give [the church] a place in our affections, prayers, and services above every organization of human origin” we are promising to live our lives (individually and corporately) as God has ordained us to live, to fulfill His purpose and mandates for the church, and to do it HIS WAY!

Going Deeper (Personal Reflection)

1. What have you done in order to establish a better relationship with Christ?
2. In what ways can you make sure the church has your highest affections?
3. Discuss some ways by which placing Christ above all others will develop strong character in you.

Closing Prayer:

⁷ Turner Jr., W.C. (2002). *Discipleship for African American Christians: A Journey through the Church Covenant*. Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press. Pg. 42

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Where we are in the Church Covenant... *

HAVING BEEN LED, AS WE BELIEVE, BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior; and on the profession of our faith, having been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, we do now in the presence of God, angels and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another, as one body in Christ.

*We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love; **to strive for the advancement of this church in knowledge and holiness;** to give it a place in our affections, prayers, and services above every organization of human origin; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline and doctrine; to contribute cheerfully and regularly, as God has prospered us, towards its expenses, for the support of a faithful and evangelical ministry among us, the relief of the poor and the spread of the Gospel throughout the world. In case of difference of opinion in the church, we will strive to avoid a contentious spirit, and if we cannot unanimously agree, we will cheerfully recognize the right of the majority to govern.*

We also engage to maintain family and secret devotion; to study diligently the word of God; to religiously educate our children; to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintance; to walk circumspectly in the world; to be kind and just to those in our employ, and faithful in the service we promise others; endeavoring in the purity of heart and good will towards all men to exemplify and commend our holy faith.

We further engage to watch over, to pray for, to exhort and stir up each other unto every good word and work; to guard each other's reputation, not needlessly exposing the infirmities of others; to participate in each other's joys, and with tender sympathy bear one another's burdens and sorrows; to cultivate Christian courtesy; to be slow to give or take offense, but always ready for reconciliation, being mindful of the rules of the Savior in the eighteenth chapter of Matthew, to secure it without delay; and through life, amid evil report, and good report, to seek to live to the glory of God, who hath called us out of darkness into his marvelous light.

When we remove from this place, we engage as soon as possible to unite with some other church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's word.

**New Feature: Each month we will include a copy of the Church Covenant and highlight the current lesson. It is our hope that this will give the larger context for the passage being studied.*