

Colossians 3:1-4

new Life in Christ

11/10/2020

Open your Bible, please to Colossians 3. I will read from verse 1

3 If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ²Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. ³For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

If you have been here for the last several weeks, you know we finished looking at Colossians 2 last Sunday, and because the first two chapters of this book are so important to the rest of the book, I put a very brief summary of chapters 1 and 2 in the bulletin for you to refer to, possibly keep in the book of Colossians in your Bible..... **(put Augustine, and Jesus Thank you)**

Paul has been telling us over and over and over all about who Christ is, and what He has done and how that has affected us..... He has given us a lesson in Christology or the doctrine of Christ..... and has demonstrated over and over and over that Christ is preeminent and He is sufficient and He is God..... in fact, look at the sheet in your bulletin, let me walk through it with you.....

SHEET

I hope you will keep that in your Bible and glance at it from time to time.... it is not exhaustive, but it is a start.....and it is important that we grasp these truths, especially the ones related to who Christ is and What Christ has done for us in regards to our redemption or our salvation.....

It is overwhelming.....all of this and more, not because we deserve it, not because we merit it, not because we have done any good things to earn it..... but because of God's grace and mercy..... remember, His mercy is more.

These are the truths that Paul builds on for the rest of the book of Colossians.....

This is Paul's teaching pattern throughout the letters he wrote..... he first lays out all of the doctrinal truths to those he is writing to, and only after he expounds the truth about who Christ is, what He is done, and how that affects you.....

He first anchors us in what we believe, then he admonishes us on how to live based on our belief..... It is always belief before behavior, doctrine before application, or faith before practice

And with this as his pattern, Paul proves that belief and behavior go hand in hand..... and if you do not have the doctrinal teaching to give you the foundation for your behavior, you will just try to obey by your own effort and in their own power.....

behavior without understanding the theology that helps us in our behavior leads to self-righteous moralism.....it leads to believing you can live the Christian life in your own power, it leads to religious life that is void of Christ..

So, now that Paul has explained what happened to us, and has refuted the false teachers in chapters 1 and 2.....

now, beginning in chapter 3, he is telling us what we should do or what our lives should look like as we live as Christian believers in a world that is hostile toward Christ...

And as we look at verses 1-4, you will notice that as a believing Christian you will have new desires, you will have a new identity, you will have a new life, and you will have a new hope.....

It begins with the phrase, "if then you have been raised with Christ," Of course, this takes us back to chapter 2 verses 12 and 13 that tells us we have been raised and made alive with or in Christ.....

And, as you know, it really is a summary statement for, "if you are a believing Christian..." Only you can affirm if you have been raised with Christ.....As Paul writes this, he is not assuming that everyone hearing this letter read has been raised with Christ or is a believing Christian.....but, he is saying that if you have been raised with Christ, then there will be some specific evidences of that..... Namely, you will have new desires, a new identity, a new life, and a new hope...

if you have not been raised with Christ, or you are truly not a believing Christian, none of this will matter to you..... you won't have new desires... You won't have a new identity.... You won't have a new life, And you won't have a new hope.....

So, I want to encourage you this morning to pay close attention, and examine yourself to see if you are in the faith and if you cannot affirm, "Yes. I have trusted Christ to save me." Then ask God to open your eyes to the Savior.....this passage, really shows the new aspirations and desires of a genuine believer.....and if these are not a part of your life, then you may not be a believing Christian....you may not understand salvation....

To put it in one phrase, I would say that these 4 verses are telling us that "Jesus Christ changes everything..." ,,,,Paul is just giving us a glimpse of how the inward workings of God by His Spirit laid out in chapters 1 and 2 have changed everything about us..... To say it a different

way, it is a summary statement of II Corin 5:17, "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away, behold all things have become new."

and it is these in changes that have taken place that give you the grace to be free from the indulgences of your flesh mentioned in chapter 2 verse 23 that the false teachers and their outward demands cannot free you from.....

Let's just start with the first one..... A Christian believer, one who has been raised with Christ, will have a set of new desires... these will be desires you did not have prior to your faith and trust in Christ..... In verse 1, Paul writes,...."you will seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God." And in verse 2, "you will set your mind on things above, not on things that are on earth."

This idea of seeking things above and setting your mind on things above is on account of an internal change of heart and mind that took place when Christ saved you.....when you were raised with him.....Remember, Paul already explained this to us in chapter 1 and chapter 2

chapter 1 verse 21, we were once alienated, hostile and doing evil deeds against God....chapter 2 verse 13, we were dead in our trespasses and sin... and that verse goes on to say that God made us alive together with Christ..... we were dead, and now we are alive..... and this change that has taken place had given us desires that did not exist in our lives before.....

So, now instead of having our desires and thoughts or our hearts and minds being set on earthly things, they are now set on things above..... what does that mean?

Doesn't this seem to mean that those who were advocating an ascetic lifestyle of self denial, praying for hours a day, and keeping religious ceremonies, and seeking visions.... doesn't it seem to mean that the false teachers are right? We just spent several weeks refuting the instruction of the false teachers in chapter 2.....

and they are trying to convince the Colossians that the way to live the Christian life is through self denial, deprivation, ceremonies, and seeking visions..... isn't that setting your mind on things above?

They are seeking things above by rejecting all the pleasures of this world? Doesn't it seem like Paul is now changing his mind and telling us that we should adopt a monkish lifestyle?

That is not at all what this means

and let me give you two reasons why setting your mind and heart on things above does not mean that Paul is contradicting himself, and encouraging us to be monks.....

First, because of the contrast Paul is making is in verse 2.... "set your mind on things above, not on things that are on earth." This contrast is explained to us in verse 5, when he tells us what he means by things on earth. Verse 5 states, "Put to death, therefore, what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and coveteousness, which is idolatry."

This is really amazing, isn't it? Did you notice that he is talking to believers here..... and he is telling you and I to put to death what is earthly us..... and then he gives this list of sins and it directed to us as Christian people.....

Beloved, the reason why we need to set our minds on things above and not on these earthly fleshly things is because we still have a sin nature, we still struggle with sin.....and, the great thing is that with our new heart and new desires, we now have the power to say no to sin and yes to righteousness.....but we still have to say no..... we still have to set our minds.....

It is always good to remind you that when you became a Christian, you were saved from the penalty of sin, you are being saved from the power of sin..... and one day you will be saved from the presence of sin....

and the being saved from the power of sin is where our daily battle takes place to obey Paul's admonition to set our minds on things above..... our minds do not naturally think of good and godly things..... it does not take long to go from god honoring thoughts to thoughts that are unspeakably sinful and immoral.....

We have all had the experience, even in church, or even when we pray, or even when we are singing where some of the most vile things have come across the screen in our minds.....

I heard someone ask once, "How would you like all your thoughts flashed on a screen for the whole church to see?" Raise your hand..... any volunteers?

our battle begins in the mind, and we seek the things above when to take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ..... we are commanded in Romans 12 to renew our minds....and in Philippians 4, we are told to think on things that are lovely, pure, good, excellent, and worthy of praise,

Prior to becoming a Christian believer your mind was an idol factory, looking for and seeking anything and everything that would satisfy you in that particular moment.....

And, now as a Christian believer who has been raised with Christ, your setting your mind on things above is a conscience choice to think differently than you did before you became a Christian.....thinking on things above starts by putting to death these sinful thoughts....

And they are not just in the moral realm.... We will find out when we continue on in chapter 3 that according to verse 8 we also need to put away these other earthly things.....anger, wrath, malice, slander and obscene talk from our mouths.... isn't it amazing that he is talking about church folk....

Of course, a nice group like Grace Fellowship.... There is no one who is ever sinfully angry at others in this church..... You are always kind and loving... no malice or slander, and you never say things that are obscene, or vulgar, or that you are embarrassed have come out of your mouth? Right?

I think it is more accurate to say..... this is a description of all of us at various times in our lives....

To set our minds on things above, not on things that are on earth will mean 2 things... one, it clearly means that you no longer feed the machine..... some of you may not be putting these to death because you feed them.... You feed them by watching sensuality, pornography, movies, videos and all manner of sinful immoral images..... and maybe you are not looking at images any more, but you have so many stored in your mind, you fantasize about them.....

or you feed them by playing and replaying things that you should not be thinking about...

Or maybe you feed them by continuing to mull over a divisive arguments you have had with someone.....that allows your anger, wrath, and malice to fester...

Beloved putting things to death is part of the spiritual battle we face as believers..... And we set our minds on things above, not on things that are on earth by following the pattern Paul laid out in Philippians 4:6

whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. ¹

And, you can set your mind on things above, you can think purely, you can put to death anger and malice etc because you have been raised with Christ..... you are a new creature in Christ.....we will spend more time on this in the weeks ahead....

A second reason why I know that Paul is not saying that that when we set our minds on things above that we go back to living a life of asceticism, and legalism and living monkish lifestyle is because he goes on in chapter 3 verse 18 to command husbands, wives, and children how to live in the home....he goes on from there and commands slaves to work hard and obey their masters..... he commands Masters in chapter 4 verse 1 to treat their slaves justly and fairly...

1 [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Php 4:8). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

Beloved, listen carefully.....

what this means is that seeking Christ, seeking things above, loving Him with all your heart and soul is part of living a normal life here on earth lived in obedience to Him....When you obey Him, you are seeking things above.....

when you love your wife like Christ loves the church, you are seeking things above..... when wives submit to and respect their husbands, they are seeking the things above.....children, when you obey your parents, you are seeking things above.....

So, what this means is, you can be seeking things above not as a monk in a monastery..... rather, when you play with your grand kids..... or change diapers, grocery shop, mow the grass, pay your bills on time, behave honorably at work.....obey and honor the government with an obedient, Christ honoring attitude..... as you daily live for Christ, you are seeking the things above.....

It is so easy for us to over spiritualize everything, to the point that we forget what Paul states in 3:17, "And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. ²"

The new desires He gives us because we are raised with Christ moves us to live our lives in a normal, ordinary fashion, as we give him thanks and praise in everything we say and everything we do....Setting our minds on things above means we are now living under His Lordship, obeying His Word, and for His glory...

pause and you want to because all He has done for you, and He lives in you!

Now, notice that you have a new identity. And your new identity is on account of your new relationship with Christ..... Verse 1, you were raised with Christ; Verse 1 again, you are seated with Christ; and in verse3, your life is hidden with Christ in God.....

Your new identity is fully identified with the Lord Jesus... you are raised with Him.... Seated with Him..... hidden in Him..... He is in you, and you are in Him...

When you put your faith and trust in Christ to save you, I have been saying for weeks that there are many, many things that took place behind the scenes or in the heavenlies that you do not fully grasp or understand until you become more mature in your Christian life.... and you actually learn from Scripture all of the amazing blessings of salvation....

we went over it extensively a few weeks ago, but I want to go over it again....

2 [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Col 3:17). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

If you go back to chapter 2 verse 11..... when you believed in Christ, "you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ." What this is saying is that when you became a Christian,

The flesh of your heart was cut away.....

or in other words, when you came to Christ you were given a new heart,

or to put in another way, the sin and rebellion that had controlled you had been cut away or removed.....

or to put it another way, you died to sin.....

it does not mean that you stopped sinning completely, but it does mean the power of sin over you was broken....

St. Augustine of Hippo, probably the most significant church father, lived in the 4th century and is really credited with helping us understand the effects of original sin..... Other theologians built upon the foundation he laid, but much of what he said regarding our current understanding of doctrine of original sin laid the groundwork for some of the major tenants of reformed theology. I put it in your bulletin for you to read it for yourself...

Augustine argued that there are four states, which are derived from the Scripture, that correspond to the four states of man in relation to sin:

(a) able to sin, able not to sin

(b) **not** able **not** to sin

(c) able to sin, able not to sin

(d) unable to sin

The first state corresponds to the state of man in innocency, before the Fall; Do you see that? Adam and Eve had the option..... they were able to sin.... And they were able not to sin.... They were tempted by the devil, and they had the option to obey the devil or obey God.....they were able to sin or able not to sin.... And they chose to sin....

the second is the state of the natural man after the Fall; This is so important.....after the fall everything changed..... man, now has a sin nature.... Man, now, according to Romans 3 has no ability to do good or to seek God.... Man is dead in sin and hostile toward God.....

so, even when man does something because of God's common grace that appears good..... At the core of man, he is not able not to sin..... As David stated in Psalm 51, "behold, I was created in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me."

All of our righteousness, all of our best efforts are filthy rags, Jeremiah tells us..... This is how you lived before you became a believing Christian... before you were saved..... And it is on account of our sin nature, on account of our sinful rebellious hearts that we are not able not to sin..... we are slaves of sin.....

the third the state is of the regenerate man; the saved man.... and what a blessing this is! When God regenerates our hard, rebellious hearts and gives us a heart of flesh, and we by faith believe in Christ sacrificial death to cleanse us of our sins, we are now "able to sin or able not to sin."

Because of our new hearts, and the Spirit of God living in us, we are back in our garden state... and now we are no longer slaves of sin.... We now have the ability to say no to sin and yes to righteousness. Our previous hard, rebellious hearts did not allow us the option to say no to sin.....but, now we do! Because Christ lives in us by His Spirit....

and the fourth is the glorified man. what a joy to know that in heaven, we will be unable to sin.....no more sorrow, no more pain, no more death, illness, and no more sin.....

So, what this means is, that before you became a Christian, you were a slave to sin.....you were **not** able **not** to sin..... Once Christ regenerated you and saved you, you are now able not to sin.... let me say it again.....you are now able to say no to sin and yes to righteousness because your heart was circumcised by Christ.... You are a new creature in Christ...

Romans 6:6 states it this way, " We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin³

Prior to our salvation we were alive to sin and dead to God..... after salvation, our new identity with Christ means we are dead to sin and alive to God.....

and therefore, we do have the power and the strength and the desire to live faithfully in our new identity as a genuine Christian believer.... And we don't have to live it alone.....

And, we know this because part of our new identity is that our lives are hidden with Christ in God. There is no doubt that there is a mystery, here, but we have already covered it.....

Remember back in chapter 2 verse 9, "For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily,¹⁰ and you have been filled in him,⁴"

³ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (Ro 6:6). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

Jesus is God; and He lives in me... we know, he lives in us by the Holy Spirit... here, Paul is just saying it a different way..... you life is hidden with Christ in God.....Beloved, that is your new identity.....He is in you, and you are in Him..... it is what Jesus said in John 15..... when he said, He is the vine and you and I are the branches.... Then he commands, "Abide in me and I in you."

Since your identity is that you are in Christ and Christ is in you, then, as I said before, what you see, he sees, what you touch he touches, what you say, he says.... What you spend money on, he spends money on.....

We used to sing in Sunday school

"Be careful little eyes, what you see..... hands what you do.... Ears what you hear".... Why?

"Because....The Father up above is looking down with love....."

I think we need to change that line.... I am not sure it is as biblically accurate as it can be...

how about, "Because Jesus lives in me, and whatever I see he sees..... so be careful little eyes what you see.... Or say or hear...."

you are all wrapped up in Christ..... remember when you used to bath your kids, and maybe you do it with your grandkids..... you take that big towel after the bath, and you wrap them up, so you can barely see their eyes.... They are hidden in there somewhere... warm, comforted, protected, safe..... you are all wrapped up in Christ....

Now, notice 3rdly, if you are raised with Christ, you will have a completely different life.....Verse 3 states that **your life** is hidden in Christ with God....." and Verse 4 states, "When Christ, **who is your life** appears....." At first glance, that does not sound like much..... but Paul is specifically referring to the Lord Jesus as the life of these believers in Colossae.....He is affirming that those who are raised with Christ, those who are Christian believers that Christ is their life

And, why wouldn't he be? After all Paul has explained all about God bringing us from darkness to light,

from death to life,

from under the rule and reign of Satan to being brought into the kingdom of Christ....

When you come to the place where you understand that He redeemed you, rescued you, saved you by His own blood..... that all of your sin was placed upon Him, then He was nailed to the cross..... so you can live with God in Christ for all eternity..... why would he not be your life?

Maybe we should start with, "What is **life** for those who do not know Christ? What do they live for?" Just watch a few commercials, and you will find the pulse of our nation.....Those who don't know Christ live for themselves..... the advertisers know that they are drawn to sensuality, leisure, opulence, covetousness, greed, licentiousness, having more, bigger, nicer, better,the slogan, "He who dies with the most toys wins." is alive and well in our culture...

But, when you are raised with Christ, when you become a Christian believer, everything in your life changed...., and you no longer live for yourself..... Christ is your life..... not only is this speaking of our life on earth, but it is also referring to eternal life..... because in Christ you cannot separate one from the other.... if Christ is your life, eternity is important to you.....

if He is your life,

then you will find all your sustenance in Him.....

all your direction from Him.....

all your affection for Him.....

and all your guidance through Him.... I

f He is your life than you will want to be with Him.....

you will want to know Him.....

you will want to obey him.....

you will want to hear from Him.....

you will want to be near Him.....

you will want to spend time with Him....

I am sure you have heard of men whose careers are their lives..... they wake up in the morning with work on their minds, they spend the day wrapped up in their work, and they go to bed with a file full of papers and they love every minute of it because their jobs are their lives and it is through work they find fulfillment, and gratification, and satisfaction.....

Or your family might be your life..... so everything you do revolves around you and your kids... their activities, their schedules, their interests drive everything about what you do...and this is

where you find your greatest fulfillment and joy... instead of Christ.... And your lack of commitment to the church and your brothers and sisters in the body of Christ is evidence of what your life revolves around...

Or sports and leisure might be your life.....

Remember Jesus' words... "He who loves father, mother, sister, brother more than me is not worthy of me...." It does not mean we do not love those we are closest to..... but they are not our life, Christ is!....

This is what moves a wife to look at her husband and say, "I am not signing the tax return, because there are some things on there that are not honest." Even if it causes friction at home.....

This is what moves an employee to not lie for his boss, even if he might get fired.

This is what moves a teen-ager to tell his friends I am not going to watch that movie or video because of all the impurity in it, even if he gets teased, mocked, and loses his friends...

and, what I am saying is that if Christ was your life, then you would obey Him.....

and, you would find your fulfillment, your satisfaction, your gratification in Him.....

do you?

Do you seek Him?

do you want to worship Him?

do you want to know Him better and love Him more?

Is He your life?

This always brings me back to Luther's a mighty fortress is our God... "Let goods and kindred go..... this mortal life also, our body they may kill.... God's truth abideth still His kingdom is forever....

Covers everything, doesn't it? Goods – all our material possessions..... kindred – all of those who are close to us, parents, spouses, children, relationships..... mortal life..... even our lives are not our life.... Christ is our life... He has a kingdom for us.... An eternal kingdom.... Which so outweighs anything this world offers....

That is so great about Luther is that He was crazy in love with his wife..... and he was a loving involved father.....but he loved Christ more....

which moves us to our last point..... if you have been raised with Christ, you will have a different hope..... Verse 4 states, " When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory."

Beloved that is a statement of comfort..... demonstrating first that He will appear..... he will return..... He is coming back..... Paul did not say, "If" he said "when"..... "When Christ appears." Is that your hope? Do you ever think of his appearing, his return? Do you ever think of heaven and the after life..... because when he appears, you also will appear with Him in glory..... and then you will not be hidden with Christ in God..... all things will be fully exposed and you will see Him as He is.....He is going to appear..... and heaven is awaiting us!

It was a wonderful comfort to the disciples when Jesus told them in John 14," Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. ²In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? ³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also."

He is telling them, I will come... I will appear....I am coming back for you...Does this promise excite you? Does this promise give you hope and strength and rest and security?

Beloved being confident of the promise of his appearing is the grand finale of setting your mind and seeking things that are above..... it is the culmination of having Christ as your life....and knowing that there will be nothing hidden any longer.....heaven is our destination, heaven is our hope, heaven is our final resting place, heaven is what we should be longing for.....

But, while we wait..... we live....in our normal, daily lives.... As husbands, as wives, as children, as single people, as grandparents, as parents....

we live as new creatures....with new desires, a new identity, Christ as our life, and a hope in heaven..... and, in this new state, as new creatures in Christ, We are sent into our fallen world, with our gaze on Christ, our hope in eternity, and a desire to represent the One who saved us....

We are pilgrims.... Strangers and sojourners..... on our way, as Christian was in Pilgrims Progress to the celestial city....

Which should help us rest in all the current unrest in our nation.....

which should help us hope, when there are many today who seem to have no hope..

which should help us trust a sovereign God who is working out all things for His glory

And which should help us desire to be salt and light to a world in darkness

Have you have a change of mind and heart?

Is your identity in Christ

Is He your life?

Are you waiting for the hope of heaven?

And, if you are not or are not sure.....

trust Him today.... Bow to him today..... Commit your life to Him today....

And, as we close in song, the words are also in your bulletin... it summarizes all that has been said....

Nothing is compared to knowing Christ.....

Heaven is what the Old Testament saints saw from afar, longed for.....they were strangers and aliens on earth, but they were looking for a better country, a heavenly one.....

Beloved, Christianity really is a complete change of heart and mind..... and the reason why seeking things above, setting your mind on things above, having Christ as your life, knowing that your life is hidden with Christ in God and longing for his appearing will help in your fight against sin and fleshly indulgences because He is in you and you are in Him, and your mind is being renewed, and your heart has been changed, and you have new affections, and a new life in Christ, and he gives you the grace to say no to sin and yes to righteousness.....

and you are getting to know Him more and more..... and because he lives in you and you are dead to sin and alive to God, the Spirit of God convicts you when you are being tempted.....

and when you fail, and you will, you have an advocate at the Father's right hand, Jesus Christ the righteous.....you confess your sin and he is faithful to forgive you and cleanse you from all unrighteousness, and you continue to seek him and to know him and to love him.....and we will see next week and the week after that he gives you the grace to put off your old self and put on the new self.....

it isn't about self denial and man made traditions..... it is about the Spirit of God living in you and through you and conforming you to his image as you love him, live for him seek him and know him..... He who began the work will finish it.....

Doesn't this passage force us to ask what is a true Christian? and, here me now.....I don't think what Paul is saying is you will know you are a true Christian if you read your Bible every day or if you pray every day or if you have family devotions every day..... those are great, and if you are doing them, don't stop.....

Remember, he is steering these dear believers back to the truth..... they are veering from the truth, and getting caught up in all this man centered traditional legalism and so on..... and as he is admonishing them he is not giving them a list of things to do.....he is not saying do this and this and this if you are truly a Christian.....

What he is saying is, "If you have believe by faith that you are dead in your sin..... and you believe that Christ sinless life and sacrificial death paid for your sin, and are trusting him to save you from your sin and to bring you into His kingdom....

Then you are raised with him, and you should notice the changes that have taken place in your life.... You should have new desires.... Do you? You should have a new identiy..... Do you? You should have a new life. Do you? And you should have a new hope in the eternal home that Jesus is preparing for you..... do you?

And if these things do not stir your heart to think on eternity, to long for heaven, to live for Christ..... then maybe you have never truly understood salvation.