

“New Life in Christ”

July 2, 2017

Colossians 3:1-4

I. Introduction

In the first 2 chapters of Colossians Paul reviewed doctrines concerning Jesus Christ. As a member of the Trinity, Jesus Christ is fully man and fully God. Paul described the preeminence or supremacy of Christ. He is preeminent in creation because He is the Creator. He is preeminent in redemption for He is the Redeemer. He is supreme in the church because He is the One who gave Himself for the church. Paul also discussed the different things that lead people away from Christ. He warned about enticing words which can bedazzle and mislead. He warned against philosophy, legalism, mysticism, and asceticism—all which lead people away from the person of Jesus Christ.

Now in the final two chapters of Colossians, Paul moved into the practical application of the doctrines he had been discussing. It does no good if a person can declare and even defend the truth if he fails to demonstrate it in his own life. Sadly, there are some Christians, and some who claim to be Christians, who will defend the truth at the drop of a hat, but their personal lives deny the doctrines they profess to love. Writing of such people, **Titus 1:16** says, “**They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good.**”

As so many people are trying to do today, a person cannot say, “*I am a dedicated Christian,*” and then live his or her life as he or she pleases. Being a Christian must have a definite effect on how one behaves. Faith in Christ means being united with Christ and if we share His life, we must follow His example. He cannot live in us by His Holy Spirit and permit us to live in sin. Paul began the application part of his letter by reminding Christians of their “**New Life in Christ.**” Things should change, as he wrote in **Romans 12:2**, “**Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.**” Paul began his description of this new life by giving the cause.

II. New Life in Christ

A. The Cause: “**Since you have been raised with Christ.**” Some translations may have the word “*if*” but the better translation is “*since*.” That believers “**have been raised with Christ**” is without a doubt. There is no “*if*” to it, it is an accomplished fact. **Romans 6:3-4** puts it this way, “**Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.**”

The “*baptism*” here is not just into water, but an immersing into the Savior’s death and resurrection. Through their union with Christ, believers have died, have been buried, and have risen with Him. Through saving faith, Christians have entered into a new dimension. They possess divine and eternal life, not just an endless existence, but a heavenly quality of life brought to them by the indwelling of their Lord and Savior. This exalted position in Christ isn’t a hypothetical thing or a goal for which one strives, it is an accomplished fact—every Christian has a new life in Christ. 2

Corinthians 5:17 says, “**Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!**” The risen Christ is the only path to holiness, not self-denial, or angelic experiences, or some rules or ceremonies. But with this new life, there comes responsibility—it doesn’t “just happen.”

B. The Responsibility: “**Set your hearts on things above.**” This time the better translation is “*keep seeking the things above,*” it’s a continuous action, a daily action. “*Seeking*” implies an urgency and a desire and an ambition. When we watch the Olympics or a professional golf match or any other competition, we see people who are running or performing to win the prize. These people are seeking; they’ve set their hearts on the ultimate goal. Similarly, Christians should be seeking Christ and His purposes, plans, and power. It means to view things, people, and events in this world through His eyes and with an eternal perspective.

“**Things above**” refers to the heavenly realm and focuses on the spiritual values that characterize Christ—things like tenderness, kindness, meekness, patience, wisdom, forgiveness, strength, purity, and love. But Christians aren’t left on their own resources. These are the fruit of the Spirit from **Galatians 5:22-23** and come when one chooses to be filled or, as **Ephesians 5:18** says, continually filled with the Spirit. Jesus told the disciples in **John 14:13-14**, “**And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.**” Believers can be assured that what they seek is there—**2 Corinthians 1:20** says, “**For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ.**”

Paul went on to say how to seek the things above, he wrote: “**Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.**” This is a choice that one makes. Christians must choose to seek heavenly values. One not only seeks *heaven*, one must also think *heaven*. The Bible is the only reliable source of knowledge about the character of God and the values of heaven. **Philippians 4:8** says, “**Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable-- if anything is excellent or praiseworthy-- think about such things.**” With these heavenly values filling a person’s thoughts and with the power of the Holy Spirit, sin will be conquered and godly behavior will result. This doesn’t mean that Christians leave this world or ignore

it, they just view it from a different perspective—a godly perspective. It means that Christians look at earth from heaven’s point of view. It means that the practical everyday affairs of life get their direction from Christ in heaven.

C. The Reason: *You died to sin.* Paul then gave the reason that the new life is the norm for believers: “For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God,” i.e. you died to sin. Christ not only died for us, but we died with Him. Galatians 6:14 says, “May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.” The wages of sin is death, so we must die. By union with Jesus Christ, we die the required death in Him. The penalty is paid and sin can never claim us again. We have therefore died to sin in the sense of paying its penalty. The presence and power of sin still affect us—but it cannot condemn us.

Not only have believers died to sin, but their lives are “hidden with Christ in God.” Hidden with Christ in God means believers share a common life with the Father and the Son—1 Corinthians 6:17 says, “But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit.” The Christian life is also a “hidden life” as far as the world is concerned, because the world doesn’t know Christ—1 Corinthians 2:14 says, “The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.” The world doesn’t understand Christians. The Christian’s sphere of life is not this earth, but heaven; the things that attract Christians and excite Christians belong to heaven, not to earth. This does not mean that we ignore our earthly responsibilities; rather it means that our motives and our strength come from heaven not earth. Finally, being “hidden with Christ in God” means that believers are safe and secure in God. As Romans 8:31-39 says, nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

D. The Revealing There’s the cause for this new life, the responsibility of this new life, the reason for this new life, and finally there is the revealing of this new life. The world may not recognize those whose lives are hidden with Christ in God, but that will not always be the case. Jesus Christ is now seated at the Father’s right hand, but one day He will come to take His people home—turn to 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. When Jesus comes, we shall enter into eternal glory with Christ. When He is revealed in His glory, we shall also be revealed in glory. Romans 8:30 says, “And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.” In John 17:22 Jesus said, “I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one.” Christians have already been glorified. This glory hasn’t been revealed yet and won’t be until

the appearance of return of the Savior—1 John 3:2 says, “We know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.”

Paul added one more thought as he described Christ as “*your life*.” Jesus doesn’t just give life, He *is* life. In Galatians 2:20 Paul said, “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” In 2 Corinthians 4:10 Paul wrote that the life of Jesus was revealed in his body. When facing martyrdom, Paul wrote in Philippians 1:21, “For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.”

III. Conclusion

The key to living the new life in Christ is to have a life centered on Christ. The Son, not this present world, is to be the center of the believer’s universe. This new life isn’t something automatic, which occurs without any effort on our part. Turn to Philippians 3:12-14. Paul represented this new life in Christ as being in a race in which the runner has charged off the starting blocks, but there is no reason to gloat over a successful beginning until the race is over. The runner doesn’t congratulate himself on the laps he has finished but concentrates, straining towards what lies ahead—the finish line. Similarly, we need to refuse to be spiritually self-satisfied, to rest on our religious laurels or to be distracted by other things. We need to press on; to strain for the goal, the finish line.

So how is your race going? Have you experienced “bumps in the road”? Contrary to the health and wealth preachers, the Bible doesn’t promise that this new life will be easy—Hebrews 12:2 says, “Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” Like Paul, like Jesus Christ, we must focus on the goal and endure the hindrances that come. But we don’t have to run in our own strength; Philippians 4:13 says “I can do all this through him who gives me strength.” But we must do our part—we must continually seek the things above and not be waylaid by earthly temptations. Let me close with two familiar verses from Isaiah—Isaiah 40:30-31: “Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.”