

Colossians 3:1-4 Living the Risen Christ

1

Introduction

Believers are members of Jesus' Kingdom. Jesus came and died so that we might be set free from the bondage of this world (Gal. 1:4). Although we exist in this world physically, spiritually we are already citizens of heaven (Eph. 2:6). Our spiritual growth, joy, and fruitfulness require that we maintain a proper perspective on this world. We are "aliens and strangers" on this earth (1 Pet. 2:11). We are in the world, but not of the world. Until we realize that basic truth and live it, we will be ineffective in reaching the world with the truth of the gospel.

2

Introduction

Because the things most important to us are in heaven, we must not be entangled in this present world. Paul now moves into the practical side of his epistle. He begins by calling the readers to be preoccupied with heavenly reality. This is the hallmark of true spirituality, and the starting point of practical holiness. Five features will help unfold the power of heavenly living on earth: the reminder, the responsibility, the resource, the reason, and the revelation.

3

Colossians 3:1-4

If then you were raised **with Christ**, seek those things which are above, **where Christ** is, sitting at the right hand of God. ² Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. ³ For you died, and your life is **hidden with Christ** in God. ⁴ **When Christ** *who is* our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

4

The Reminder

Colossians 3:1a

If then you were raised with Christ

If denotes reality and is better translated “since.” Believers having been **raised with Christ** is not in doubt. The verb actually means “**to be co-resurrected**.” It is an accomplished fact. Believers spiritually are entered into Christ’s death and resurrection at the moment of their salvation. Galatians 2:20 says, “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.” In that verse, the apostle shows the union of the believer with Christ, so that they have a shared life.

(See Romans 6:3–4 for more.)

5

The Reminder

Colossians 3:1a

If then you were raised with Christ

Through their union with Christ, believers have died, have been buried, and have risen with Him. By saving faith they have entered into a new dimension. They possess divine and eternal life, which is not merely endless existence, but a heavenly quality of life brought to them by the indwelling Lord. They are alive in Christ to the realities of the divine realm. Consequently, Christians have an obligation to live consistently with those realities

(Romans 6:11–19).

6

The Reminder

Colossians 3:1a

If then you were raised with Christ

Spirituality is the process of living out the reality of our union with Christ. In Him we have all the resources necessary for living the Christian life. Paul emphasizes the centrality of Christ throughout Colossians 3:1–4. By using such phrases as **with Christ** (3:1); **where Christ** (3:1); **with Christ** (3:3); **when Christ** (3:4); and **with Him** (3:4), he stresses Christ's total sufficiency. Unfortunately, many Christians fail to understand and pursue this fullness of Christ. Consequently, because of not knowing what Scripture says, or not applying it properly, they are intimidated into thinking they need something more than Him alone to live the Christian life. They fall prey to false philosophy, legalism, mysticism, or asceticism.

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The Reminder

Colossians 3:1a

If then you were raised with Christ

Paul reminds the Colossians that they have risen with Christ. This is the path to holiness, not self-denial, angelic experience, or ceremony. They are no longer living the old life they lived before their salvation but possess the eternal life of Christ and have been raised to live on another plane. They must not be ignorant or forgetful of who they are and how they are to live. All sinful passion is controlled and conquered by the power of the indwelling Christ and our union with Him.

8

The Responsibility

Colossians 3:1b-2

seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. ²Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.

The present tense of seek indicates continuous action. Preoccupation with the eternal realities that are ours in Christ is to be the pattern of the believer's life. Jesus put it this way: "Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you" (Matt. 6:33).

Paul is not advocating a form of mysticism. Rather, he desires that the Colossians' preoccupation with heaven govern their earthly responses. To be preoccupied with heaven is to be preoccupied with the One who reigns there and His purposes, plans, provisions, and power. It is also to view the things, people, and events of this world through His eyes and with an eternal perspective.

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The Responsibility

Colossians 3:1b-2

seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. ²Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.

The things which are above refers to the heavenly realm and focuses on the spiritual values that characterize Christ, such as tenderness, kindness, meekness, patience, wisdom, forgiveness, strength, purity, and love. When Christians put their minds on the things above, they will live out their heavenly values in this world to the glory of God.

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The Responsibility

Colossians 3:1b-2

seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. ²Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.

Paul gives instruction on how to seek the things above. He says, **Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. Set your mind** could simply be translated, “think,” or more thoroughly, “have this inner disposition.”

Once again, the present tense indicates continuous action. The believer’s whole disposition should orient itself toward heaven, **where Christ is**, just as a compass needle orients itself toward the north.

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The Resource

Colossians 3:1c

where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.

The believer’s resource the risen and glorified Christ, **seated at the right hand of God**. This is the place of honor and majesty. The Bible speaks often of Christ’s exalted position. Psalm 110:1 says, “The Lord says to my Lord: ‘Sit at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies a footstool for Thy feet.’ ” Jesus told the accusers at His trial that “from now on the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God” (Luke 22:69). You can also study Acts 2:33; Acts 5:31; Acts 7:56; Rom. 8:34; Eph. 1:20; Heb. 1:3; Heb. 8:1; 1 Pet. 3:22 which all teach that Jesus has been exalted and sits at the right hand of the Father.

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The Resource

Colossians 3:1c

where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.

Because of Christ's exaltation to the Father's right hand, He is the source of blessing for His people. Jesus told the disciples, "And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴ If you ask anything in My name, I will do *it*" (John 14:13–14; cf. 15:16; 16:23–24, 26). Believers can be assured that what they seek is there, "For all the promises of God in Him *are* Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us" (2 Cor. 1:20).

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The Reason

Colossians 3:3

For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

Paul stresses the reason that living in the heavenlies is to be the norm for the believer. Believers have died to the world system, through their faith union with Christ in His death and resurrection. Paul wrote in Galatians 6:14, "But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world." The past tense of for you died indicates that a death took place at salvation.

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The Reason

Colossians 3:3

For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

Not only have believers died to sin, but our lives are **hidden with Christ in God**. What does **with Christ in God** mean?

1. **Believers share a common life with the Father and Son**. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 6:17 that “But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him.” Believers are “partakers of the divine nature” (2 Pet. 1:4).
2. **That new life is concealed from the world**. Unbelievers are unable to grasp the full impact of the believer’s new life, since “But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor. 2:14). The false teachers troubling the Colossians could not grasp the truth that the Colossians had already gained transcendent spiritual knowledge and life, and thus had no need of their false teaching.

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The Reason

Colossians 3:3

For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

3. **Believers are eternally secure, hidden protectively from all spiritual foes**. The blessings of salvation are “an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you” (1 Pet. 1:4). Our great high priest “is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them” (Heb. 7:25). Those to whom the Son gives eternal life “shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand” (John 10:28). They are hidden away deep in the shelter of their God.

All the riches of the eternal God are available to those whose lives are hidden with Him through His Son.

16

The Revelation

Colossians 3:4

When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

Although at this time the world may not recognize those whose lives are hidden with Christ in God, that will not always be the case. **When Christ ... appears (is revealed)** at His second coming, we also will be revealed with Him in glory. The apostle John describes that scene in Revelation 19:11–16. In these verses Jesus is returning in judgment and He will be accompanied by saints. On that day, it will become apparent who really belongs to the Lord. “The Lord knows those who are His” (2 Tim. 2:19), and He will reveal them to the world.

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The Revelation

Colossians 3:4

When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

Paul describes Christ as our life. Christ does not merely give life; He *is* life. Paul said, “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me” (Gal. 2:20). He told the Corinthians that the life of Jesus was manifested in his body (2 Cor. 4:10). When facing possible martyrdom, he could say, “For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Phil. 1:21).

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So What ...

My encouragement is to leave you with a final challenge from these verses.

1. **Seek** those things which are above, where Christ is The key to living the risen life is to have a life centered on Christ (vs 1).
2. **Set** your mind on things above, not on things on the earth (vs 2).
3. **Sever** the dependence upon the things of this world (vs 3-4).

Let us focus on Jesus and not this present world, for Jesus is the center of the believer's universe!