

Becoming Like Jesus – Part 1: A Change of Focus
(Colossians 3:1-4)

INTRODUCTION:

1. I have been thinking about the kind of life that is supposed to be lived by those who claim to follow Christ because at times I see it, whether it be in myself or others, and at times I do not.
2. I have been thinking about it because being a disciple of Jesus requires drastic change in our life—change that makes us like Jesus that can be seen by all (John 13:34-35 – “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, **even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.** ³⁵ **By this** all men will **know that you are My disciples**, if you have **love for one another.**”).
3. I have been thinking about this because this change is often a real struggle, being a total change, a from-the-innermost-part-of-our-being-outward change, affecting our whole mind and actions.
 - A. For, the gospel’s message is to conquer the mind (2 Cor. 10:3-5 – “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, ⁴ for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. ⁵ We are destroying **speculations** and every lofty thing raised up against the **knowledge of God**, and we are **taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ**”).
 - B. And Christ intends that it conquer our every action (Col. 3:17 – “**Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus**, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.”).
4. To make these changes, we must start with a proper foundation, something upon which we can firmly stand, which is Jesus.
 - A. Therefore, in the Colossian epistle that we are going to address today, like other epistles, you see a pattern designed to bring about these changes which first lays the foundation of Christ and builds on that.
 - B. In the first half of the book, Jesus and what God has done for us through Him are the focus.
 - i. In chapter 1 Paul speaks of how Jesus:
 - a. Has rescued us from darkness and put us into His kingdom, being the One who is the very image of God, who created all things, rules all things, and holds the entire universe together by His power (1:15-20). So, what a kingdom that is!
 - b. Has reconciled us, though once alienated by our sins, through His death to present us holy and blameless before God at the end, if we remain firmly established in the faith, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel preached (1:20-23).
 - ii. In chapter 2 Paul:
 - a. Calls on them to take their stand on the foundation of Christ (Col. 2:6-7 – “Therefore as you have **received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him,** ⁷ having been **firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established** in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude.”).
 - b. Reminds them of Christ’s deity and rule and how he has made them complete (Col. 2:9-10 – “For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, ¹⁰ and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority”).
 - c. There are many other things that come to play in our lives that we shall see.
5. Based upon Jesus and all that God has accomplished in Him, the Holy Spirit presents what this is to mean for the life of a Christian and the changes it must produce.
 - A. In the Col. 3:1-4 Paul speaks of God’s desire for those in Christ to change their life’s focus.
 - B. For, if we are going to be like Jesus, we are going to have to be focused on Jesus, making him our life’s foundation, our all in all.

BODY:

- I. **We must seek those things above (Col. 3:1** – “Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.”).
 - A. The blessing: If you have been raised up with Christ?
 1. This is not a question to bring doubt in these brethren’s mind, but a rhetorical question designed to call attention to how God had raised them up from the dead in baptism (Col.

2:11-13 – “and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; ¹² having been **buried with Him** in **baptism**, in which you were also **raised up with Him through faith** in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. ¹³ When you **were dead in your transgressions** and the uncircumcision of your flesh, **He made you alive together with Him**, having **forgiven us all our transgressions**”).

- a. So, whether Jew or Gentile, they now stood as covenant people of God having *received the sign of spiritual circumcision* when they put to death their old self, the life lived according to the flesh, burying it with Christ in baptism (2:11-12a).
 - b. And, in their baptism they were also *raised up with Him through faith* in the **working** of God, or God’s *energeia* (strong, powerful, effectual working), which was seen when God *raised Jesus from the dead* (2:12).
 - c. As a result, they were now alive with Jesus, having been forgiven of their sins (2:13).
2. So, these brethren, like all who are in Christ, were infinitely blessed by God raising them up with Christ, seeing it meant newness of life characterized by freedom from sin!
- B. Required change: If you are raised with Christ, **seek** the things above where Christ sits at God’s right hand on the throne!
1. The negative side of baptism—a death and burial—implies the positive side—resurrection to a new life lived in a heavenly fashion.
 - a. This new life severs our connection with the old ways, the old order of life.
 - b. The new life is one “with Christ,” with the One with whom we were raised!
 2. If we have been raised up from the deadness of sin brought about by a fleshly focused life, we must **seek** the things above.
 - a. For, this is where Jesus, our Lord, is found, as He sits ruling on God’s very throne.
 - i. We miss the significance of Christ sitting on God’s throne because we are unfamiliar with the rule of kings in our society and world.
 - ii. For, a king rules with absolute authority, and his will is the focus of all who are in his kingdom.
 - iii. And, if you are in Christ, you are blessed to reside in Christ’s kingdom and he must be your focus (Col. 1:13-14 – “For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”).
 - b. So, we must **seek** the things of above, or make *diligent effort* not simply to *discover* the things of Christ, but to *obtain* them, to make them ours!
 - i. Jesus said this is how it must be (Matt. 16:24-25 – “Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. ²⁵ For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.”).
 - ii. It is not surprising that Paul would describe his life as a Christian in similar fashion (Gal. 2:20 – “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 gave Himself up for me.”).
 3. So, those raised up from deadness in sin, disciples of Christ, **seek** to know and live according to the things above, the things of Jesus our Lord, that He has expressed to us in His word.
- II. We must set our minds on things above (3:2 – “Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.”).**
- A. Here, as the Spirit often does, is emphasized the importance of what is being commanded by repeating it in a slightly different way.
1. He did this earlier in Col. 2:12-13 by telling how Christians have been (2:12) *buried* with Christ in *baptism* and *raised with Christ* through faith in the working of God, and then how

Christian (2:13) were *dead* in sin (buried) and *made alive with Christ* (resurrected) through forgiveness.

2. Here Christians are commanded (3:1) to *seek* those things *above* where Christ is, followed by the command (3:2) to *set our minds on things above and not on the earth* (3:2).
- B. When we are raised up with Christ in baptism, it requires a new mindset, that we *set our minds (phroneo)* on *things above and not on the things that are on earth*.
1. The KJV here translates this as “affections” and not without reason, seeing the word carries the idea of what we “ponder and yearn for” (*Hendriksen*)
 - a. So, Paul is telling us that what a Christian thinks about, what he/she *values and loves*, changes from what he/she thought about and valued and loved before their salvation.
 - b. Paul emphasizes this change in mindset in Philippians 3:17-20 when he calls on brethren to “join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us. ¹⁸ For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are **enemies of the cross of Christ**, ¹⁹ whose end is **destruction**, whose **god is their appetite**, and whose **glory is in their shame**, who **set their minds on earthly things**. ²⁰ For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.”
 - c. We simply cannot please God, but in fact stand opposed to Christ, if we choose to live an earthly, fleshly focused life!
 2. As Christians raised with Christ, we must look at the world and our lives in it from Christ’s exalted standpoint, judging all things by His standard.
 - a. This means Christians stop thinking selfishly and begin thinking sacrificially like Jesus (Phil. 2:5-8 – “Have this **attitude (phroneo – esv “mind”)** in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but **emptied Himself**, taking the form of a **bond-servant**, and being made in the likeness of men. ⁸ Being found in appearance as a man, **He humbled Himself by becoming obedient** to the point of **death**, even death on a cross.”).
 - b. Only when we have this unselfish mindset of Christ that we can hope for salvation (see Phil. 3:17-20 – focused on self and flesh equals being enemy of Christ).
 - c. So, my friends, do not get caught looking down when Judgment times comes for you, living your life as though real life is found in the temporal things of this world!

III. Reasons for a heavenly mindset (3:3-4 – “For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ, **who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.”).**

- A. You have died, and your life is hidden with Christ (3:3).
1. Paul again turns us to baptism, where one dies to sin and is buried with Christ (Rom. 6:3-7 – “Or do you not know that all of us who have been **baptized into Christ Jesus** have been baptized into His **death**? ⁴ Therefore **we have been buried with Him through baptism into death**, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. ⁵ For if we have **become united with Him in the likeness of His death**, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, ⁶ knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; ⁷ **for he who has died is freed from sin.**”).
 2. This death does not mean that there is no life left in the Christian. Instead, our “life is hidden with Christ in God.” But what does this mean?
 - a. This would mean that because *we died* and were *raised with Christ*, our lives/will show Jesus, not self, to the world (Gal. 2:20 – “**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.”).
 - b. This may also refer to the *protection* our spiritual lives receive in Christ.
 - i. There should be comfort in the thought that our lives are *hidden in Christ*, in the resurrected Lord who rules the entire universe!

- ii. What greater assurance could we be given concerning the fate of our souls than that they have been entrusted to the care of Christ Himself?
- B. When Christ is revealed at His coming, we will also be revealed with Him in glory (3:4).
1. The world may overlook us, ignore us, reject us as weak and foolish, not part of what is real, but they are wrong.
 2. They do not understand that we are citizens of a heavenly kingdom of great glory.
 - a. Our life is not focused here, but lived looking up and eagerly waiting for Jesus, our king, **who “is our life,”** who will return and save us (Phil. 3:20-21 – “For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; ²¹ who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.”).
 - b. We are displaced on this earth, but we know something much greater awaits us.
 - c. I am so glad of that when I look around and see so much sin, suffering, and death. I cannot think of anything better than that.
 3. So be glad if you have been raised with Christ and have Him in your life (1 Jn. 5:11-12 – “And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. ¹² He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.”).

CONCLUSION:

1. So, my friends and brethren, I want to encourage you to look up and seek Jesus.
 - A. I know that is sometime hard with all that Satan does to hide Him from us.
 - B. This is why you and I must examine ourselves to know where we are looking, where our affections lie, whether our life is focused on things above where Jesus rules on God’s throne.
 - C. For only those who are found looking there, seeking the things of Jesus and making them their life, are truly blessed with the hope of being saved in the end.
2. Will you come by F-R-C-Bp?