

COLOSSIANS
Christ Our Life
Colossians 3:1-4

INTRODUCTION

What is a Christian? How can we define what a Christian is? We might say that a Christian is one for whom Christ died, or a Christian is a forgiven sinner, or a Christian is a follower of Christ. All these definitions are good but probably the best definition of a Christian is one who is alive in Christ, one who shares the resurrection life of Christ, one who is risen with Christ.

As one reads the Bible, it is evident that life for the Christian is intended to be very different from that of the worldling - different in nature, different in outlook, different in interests and different in aim. Why? Because of resurrection life.

Colossians 3:1-4 is one of the golden paragraphs on the Bible. It is also a bridge paragraph between the doctrinal and practical sections of the Book of Colossians. In chapter two, the Apostle Paul has been refuting the false teachings of the Gnostic heretics. In Colossians 2:20, Paul has said that the Colossians “died with Christ” to all the false, man-made, self-imposed forms of religious worship. There has been a severance from the old, sinful unsaved life of the Colossians by virtue of spiritual union with Christ in His death. Christianity is not living in the shadows of the Old Testament, nor is it going through endless ritual and tradition, nor is it being bound in conscience by religious legalism, nor is it keeping man-made rules, or adopting external ascetic practices to punish the body so as to take away inward sensual lusts. The Apostle Paul makes it abundantly clear that holiness, godliness and ethical living cannot be attained by external ascetic practices. In fact, rules and regulations imposed on the flesh only aggravates and excites the inner lust of the sin nature. According to the Apostle Paul, the way to curb the lust of the sin nature is to live in the reality of our spiritual union with Christ in His resurrection. God has provided inward resurrection power not religious piety to curb the flesh. Religion kills the spirit but Christianity brings the spirit alive!

In Germany, there was a Jewish family which lived in a predominantly Lutheran town. The Jewish father was a businessman and could not get the Lutherans to trade with him. So he gathered his family, told them why he felt Judaism is right, but said he was converting to Lutheranism in order to provide for his family. His son was so disillusioned by this act of thinking that Judaism and Christianity were mainly economic and political religions, so he abandoned both. That sons name was Karl Marx.

Colossians 3:1-4 is also a bridge to the rest of the Book of Colossians which deals with experiential, practical and ethical living because of resurrection power. We see that because of resurrection power the Christian can put down the lusts of the flesh and can display positive graces in life, and can have a dynamic marriage, and can love and discipline children, and can have a consistent Christian work ethic, and he can be honest and caring as an employer. All this is covered in chapters three and four of Colossians. Why is it possible? Because of resurrection life!

RISEN WITH CHRIST (3:1a): ***Since, then, you have been raised with Christ...*** - The Apostle Paul has no doubt; it is an assumed fact - they have been raised with Christ. The Colossians not only died with Christ but they were raised with Christ. When Christ left the tomb, we left the tomb with Him. As Christians, we share Christ's resurrection life which becomes the source of power for all that we do.

Our position is that we share Christ's life. Our experiencing that life is by exercising faith in Christ and claiming that life as ours.

A New Affection - Set Your Heart On Things Above: ***Set your heart on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.*** - Because the Christian has resurrected life, he is commanded to act on that power and set his heart on things above. We are to be constantly seeking, making sure our interests are centered in Christ. Notice we are to set our hearts, our affections, our love on the resurrected and ascended Christ who sits at the right hand of God in absolute authority, interceding for the Christians. We are to seek spiritual realities from Christ. Our attitudes, our ambitions and our whole out look on life is molded by our relationship to Christ. Now this does not mean we are so heavenly minded we are no earthly good. In chapters three and four of Colossians, we see how we are to live the life of Christ in all the major relationships in life. Paul is not thinking about other worldliness where the Christian withdraws from all the work and activities of the world. On the contrary, the Christian with the life of Christ faces all the challenges of the world with confidence.

Christians are to love heavenly realities. The purpose of the church is not to make good churchmen but to make Christians who are alive in Christ. It is possible to get some people to church who show signs of reform. They may become better husbands, wives and parents, better business people and they may stop certain gross habits, but that is not the essence of Christianity. Christianity is making a new man who loves heavenly things. Real Christians love Christ. Christianity isn't getting interested in church. People will talk forever about the church and what the church is doing, but they won't talk about the Lord. There are millions of church members who have never been born again and have never been risen with Christ. Consequently, they are spiritually dead churchmen with no life of Christ in them.

When we set our heart above, we come to center all our interests in Christ. After conversion, this may take a while but it comes as our heart is directed towards Christ who sits on the right hand of the Father in heaven.

The way to progressively fight sinful lusts is to replace evil thoughts with righteous thoughts, to substitute earthly affections for heavenly affections, to seek a Christ centered life rather than a self-centered life.

Are you aware of the teachings of the old astronomers concerning our planetary universe? Ptolemy was the first in the field (A.D. 127-51), one of the most eminent of the scientific men of the ancient world. He taught that our earth was the center of the universe, and that all else revolved around it. How grand to think of ourselves as the hub of the universe! It took something like thirteen hundred years to dispel the illusion. Copernicus (A.D. 1473-1543) demonstrated that the sun was the center, with the earth and all else revolving around it. POINT: I wonder how long it takes Christians to realize that the world does not revolve around them but around Christ. It takes a very long time for some Christians to learn this truth.

A New Determination (Setting The Mind On Things Above~): ***Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.*** -- Christians are not only to seek heaven but think heaven. Christians are to train their minds for spiritual realities. We are commanded to think Christlike about life. While living on earth, a Christian maintains all its normal relationships, but there will be one difference - from now on the Christian will view everything against the background of eternity and no longer live as if this world was all that mattered.

The Christian will determine to fill the mind with godly thoughts. He will be careful about what he hears, what he reads, what he watches and what he daydreams. Everything will be measured by the yardstick of Christ and His moral will for us.

Paul specifically says we are not to set our minds on “earthly things.” He must be referring to the constant pursuit of material wealth, worldly honor, power, pleasures and so forth. To make such things the goal of life can have devastating effects upon any life. We know these things do not bring happiness. If, however, in the providence of God, wealth comes our way we are not to despise the comforts that come with it, but we are not to tarry among these comforts or leave them with regret.

In 1923, a very important meeting was held at the Edgewater Beach Hotel in Chicago. Attending this meeting were eight of the world's most successful financiers. Those present were: 1) The president of the largest independent steel company; 2) The president of the largest gas company; 3) The greatest wheat speculator; 4) The president of the New York Stock Exchange; 5) A member of the president's cabinet; 6) The greatest “bear” in Wall street; 7) Head of the world's greatest monopoly; and 8) President of the Bank of International Settlements.

Certainly we must admit that here were gathered a group of the world's most successful men. At least, men who found the secret of “making money.” Twenty-five years later let's see where these men were:

The president of the largest gas company - Howard Hopson -- went insane.

The greatest wheat speculator - Arthur Cutton - died abroad totally insolvent.

The president of the New York Stock Exchange - Richard Whitney - was released from Sing Sing Penitentiary.

The member of the president's cabinet - Albert Fall - was pardoned from prison so he could die at home.

The greatest “bear” in Wall Street - Jesse Livermore - died a suicide.

The head of the greatest monopoly - Ivar Kruegar - died a suicide.

The president of the Bank of International Settlement - Leon Fraser - died a suicide.

POINT: All of these men learned well the art of making money, but not one of them learned how to live.

RESULTS OF SHARING CHRIST'S LIFE 3:3,4

Christians Died In Christ (3a): ***For you died*** -- Again there is no doubt in Paul's mind. When Christ died, we Christians died and when Christ was raised, we Christians were raised. As those who died with Christ, we have severed our old relationship with the world as unsaved people. As those raised with Christ, we have gone on to a new life in Christ with a whole new set of values.

Christians Are Hidden In Christ (3b): ***And your life is now hidden with Christ in God.*** -- Because we died with Christ, we are hidden with Christ in God. This certainly implies safety. We are safe in Christ. We are secure for all eternity. We have the life of Christ. It cannot be lost. God does not give us life and then say “Don't you lose it,” as if it was our responsibility to maintain life. We have life. Christ is our life, and we are to use that life. To be hidden in Christ also implies secrecy in that we Christians belong to the invisible world of reality which can only be entered into by faith. There is a spiritual world more real than the material world and every Christian belongs to it because he is hidden in Christ.

Christian's Share Christ's Life (4a): ***When Christ, who is our life...*** -- Paul now makes it very clear that Christ is our life. He is the essence of our life. He is the source of our life. He maintains our life. Sometimes we look at a person and say, "Sports is his life" or "Children are her life" or "music is her life" or "Work is his life." For the Christian, however, Christ is his life and he relates everything in life to Christ. ***"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."*** (Gal. 2:20). ***"For me to live is Christ and to die is gain."*** (Philip. 1:21).

Christians Shall Appear With Christ (4b): ***When Christ appears, then you will also appear with him in glory.*** -- That life of Christ which was given to the Christian at conversion, which was maintained all through his natural years, will openly be manifested at the second coming of Christ. The word used here for Christ's second coming is phanerroo which means "an open display." When Christ comes, there will be an open display of Christ and His people.

There is a sense in which the Christian is hidden in Christ and concealed to the world. There are very few non-Christians who can ever recognize a true Christian, but the great day is coming when the whole universe will know we are Christians for we shall be raised from the dead and raptured from the earth to be manifested and openly displayed by our Lord at the second advent. At that day, all the unsaved world's negative verdicts about Christians shall be overturned and Christians shall be vindicated. God in time will vindicate His truth and His people. ***"Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words."*** (I Thess. 4:13-18).

CONCLUSION

For you who are without Christ, we want to remind you that Christianity is not a manmade religion, but a relationship with Jesus Christ. Christianity is Christ and sharing His resurrection life. Christ is the life of every true Christian. Is Christ your life?

How does one get this dynamic life of Christ? He enters into this life by faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. ***“He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.”*** (I Jn. 5:12). Once given this life by Christ, it cannot be taken away. ***“My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand.”*** (Jn. 10:27,28) This life is not boring, dull, drab or unexciting. It is an abundant life. ***“I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full (have it abundantly).”*** (Jn. 10:10). I would remind you that Christianity is not dull and unexciting unless you are not a Christian, or if you are a churchman who is not born again and sharing Christ's life.

Trust in Christ. Believe He is your Savior. Bow to Him as your Lord. Enter into real, abundant, resurrection and eternal life. Then you will never be able to say life is dull, boring and unexciting. You will say life in Christ is real, exciting and the greatest challenge of all.