

“Risen With Christ”
Colossians 3:1
(Preached at Trinity, July 22, 2018)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As I stated when we entered **Chapter 2**, Paul wasn’t writing four chapters but one unified letter. Chapter breaks were added much later. But there is a general division of this letter into two parts. **Chapters 1-2** deal with the matter of faith. **Chapters 3-4** deal with the matter of life or practice – the outcome of our faith.
2. Paul has been combating the false teaching that was plaguing the Colossian church. As I stated last time, the ultimate characteristic of all false doctrine and all man-made religion is the absence of Christ.
Colossians 2:19 NAU - "not holding fast to the head, from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God."
3. Now, as we enter **Chapter 3** the tone is much less harsh. Paul goes from a strong polemic against the false teaching to a more gentler tone as he shares the profound difference Christ makes in the life of the believer.
Colossians 3:12-13 NAU - "So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; ¹³ bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you."
4. As **Chapter 3** opens Paul is continuing the thought he expressed in **Chapter 2**
Colossians 2:12 NAU - "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."
Colossians 2:13 NAU - "He made you alive together with Him"
As Christians we have been united with Christ. We share in His death and resurrection.
5. **Chapter 3** begins with the familiar “therefore” – the conjunction οὖν. Actually Εἰ οὖν Paul sets it up as a conditional statement. Conditional statements are what we call “If/then statements. If one thing is true then the other is the result.
Paul is saying here, “If you have been raised up with Christ . . . then seek the things above.”

6. Paul is presuming upon the fact of Christ's resurrection. We serve a risen Savior. His resurrection validates His atoning sacrifice.
Charles Hodge – "With a dead Saviour, a Saviour over whom death had triumphed and held captive, our justification had been for ever impossible. It was necessary not only that our great High Priest should suffer in the outer court, but that he should pass into heaven, to present his righteousness before God our justification. Both, therefore, as the evidence of the acceptance of his satisfaction on our behalf, and as a necessary step to secure the application of the merits of his sacrifice, the resurrection of Christ was absolutely essential, even for our justification." ¹
7. Those who receive Christ by faith become united with Him. We are joined to Him. We become a part of His body. Through this union we become one with Him. His death is our death; His resurrection our resurrection.
8. As we enter **Chapter 3** Paul is making certain presumptions:
- A. He is presuming the fact that Jesus Christ has been raised from the dead and sits upon His throne.
 - B. He is presuming the power and authority of Jesus Christ in His exaltation. The idea is that God sits upon the throne and that Jesus Christ is seated at His right hand. The right hand signifies authority and power. Jesus Christ reigns with all power and authority.
 - C. Paul is also making the assumption of the union of Christians with Christ. He is declaring that the resurrection of Christ has a profound effect upon the Christian life today.
9. Paul is not casting doubt upon their union with Christ but stating the actual condition of the Christian. It can be translated, "if you have been raised up with Christ" but it can also be translated, "since you have been raised up with Christ" which is how the NIV translates it.
- A. Paul always exhorted believers to live consistently with their new life in Christ, consistently with being a Christian, consistently with the fact that they have been raised with Christ. Paul continually exhorted believers to live with their lives what they professed with their lips. If you have been raised then show it! Live it! Put it on display.
 - B. He did the same thing in his epistle to the Ephesians:
Ephesians 5:8 NAU - "you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light"
Walk in a manner that reflects what you are. Be what you are.
 - C. Every Christian should ask himself:
"Does my life show evidence of God's transforming grace?"
10. **Verses 1-2** exhort us to live with Christ as our focus. If we have been raised with Him then we are no longer bound by this world.

¹ Hodge, Charles, *The Epistle to the Romans*, Geneva Series Commentary, (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1983), Page 129.

- I. "If you have been raised up with Christ"
- A. Paul is saying that the resurrection has everything to do with our lives today.
1. Our resurrection isn't only a future expectation at the end of the age. There is also a present dimension.
 2. This is not to diminish the reality of our future hope. We are awaiting our physical resurrection and glorification at the end of the age. But we possess in ourselves the life and power of the resurrection today.
 3. Remember, the Colossian church was being threatened by two dangers: The danger of false doctrine and the danger of reverting to pagan ways. **Verse 1** speaks to both.
 - a. If you've been raised with Christ, why would we seek fulness apart from Him. If Christ is seated at the right hand of Majesty shall this not keep us looking to Him alone. The solution to false doctrine is Christ. The end of man-made religion is Christ.
 - b. And if we have been raised to newness of life shall we not keep seeking those things consistent with our resurrected life. The same power that raised Christ now works within us. **Romans 6:4 NAU** - "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."
 4. Paul knew that the power for living the Christian life is Christ **Ephesians 3:14-16 NAU** - "For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, ¹⁵ from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, ¹⁶ that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man,"
 5. He wrote of Christ's resurrection power **Philippians 3:10 NAU** - "that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death;"
- B. If you have been raised up with Christ, then there will be outward realities that demonstrate the inward change
1. If you who were dead in sins are now raised to a new life in Christ what effect does it have upon your life?
 2. Paul says let the power of Christ's resurrection manifest itself in you. He is reminding us that sin no longer has power over us. We are no longer servants to sin.

- II. "Keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God."
- A. Those who are risen with Christ should keep their eyes on Christ—all that He is, all that pertains to Him, all that reflects Him, all that glorifies Him.
Hebrews 12:2 NAU - "fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."
1. Seeking things above does not mean we are detached from the realities of this life. Paul isn't saying that there are no Christian businessmen or parents or statesmen. There are many earthly things that require our attention. Paul is saying that all of these things are lived in light of our union with Christ, in light of the resurrection.
Colossians 3:17 NAU - "Whatever you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus"
 - a. Paul is simply saying that the Christian must have all things under the right perspective. All things are under the lordship of Christ.
 - b. The Christian businessman has Christ as his focus. He conducts his business under the authority of Christ and in light of eternity. The danger is there are continual situations that distract the focus.
 - c. The Christian parent has Christ as the focus.
 How many people actually do this? How many people actually raise their children with an intentional focus upon Christ?
 The danger is to begin to make the children the focus. It takes great discernment to know the difference. Having children are a blessing from God, but they are not the focus.
 - d. The Christian statesman (or politician) has Christ as his focus. But there have been few in history who have actually served in this manner. Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego should be our models. They served the king with faithfulness, but their focus was God. They were actually serving Him.
 2. Jesus is the focus of our life. Notice, His exaltation seizes our affections. "where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God."
 3. Nicolas Byfield states that such a life is the fruit of having our hearts changed "from the cares and delights of this life, to a constant desire of the second coming of Christ, to translate us to the presence of glory in heaven."²
- B. Paul is saying that the resurrection of Christ gives us a different perspective on life
1. This life is not all there is. This life is only temporary.
 2. This has always been the heart of God's true people
Hebrews 11:13 – "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of *them*, and embraced *them*, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth."
 3. We should be occupied with our Father's business until Jesus comes back.

² Byfield, Nicolas, *Commentary on Colossians*, (Stoke-on-Trent: Tentmaker Publications, 2012) Page 249.

- C. Again, Paul is not saying that this world has no relevance. But we must always guard against worldliness.
1. Worldliness is the opposite of what Paul is speaking about here.
 2. Worldliness is making this present life our priority.
The lost man is blinded by this world. He cannot see beyond it
His is in love with this world, intoxicated by it.
Philippians 3:18-19 NAU - "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."
 3. The New Testament speaks loud and clear regarding worldliness
1 John 2:15-16 KJV - "Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶ For all that *is* in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world."
Loving the world is placing our affections upon it, making it our treasure, seeking it as our reward.
 4. Christians are in this world but have higher priorities.
 1. The Christian must maintain heavenly priorities – Kingdom priorities. The charge to us: "Seek first the Kingdom ..."
"How can my life reflect the glories of Christ?"
 2. He has his heart upon drawing nearer to Christ. How does this decision affect my growth as a Christian?
 3. The Christian keeps the church as a priority. The church is at the center of the Christian life. The New Testament doesn't recognize Christianity apart from the local church.
 - It is the means of teaching and grace by which our faith is strengthened.
 - It is the conduit of our service
 - It provides for us accountability and the benefit of pastoral leadership and guidance.

The mere religious person gives little priority to the church. He keeps the church at the periphery of his life. He may attend on occasion but he isn't connected. He refuses to bring himself under the authority of the church. He remains a lone ranger.

III. Paul states that it's a matter of the mind – Our way of thinking

"Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth."

- A. The lost man sets his mind on earthly things
1. Material goods are his constant pursuit
 2. Worldly pleasures occupy his thoughts
Paul describes them as "lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God"
 3. If we have a worldly mind our heart will be confined to things of this present age – "things that are on earth."
 4. The safeguard against seeking earthly things is not to set our mind upon them.

- a. Instead we must discipline our minds to think on holy things.
Philippians 4:8 NAU - "Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things."
 - b. We must train our minds to think deeply, to meditate carefully, to fill our minds with sanctified thoughts.
5. We must recognize the importance of the mind; of training the mind.
John Stott said in his book, *Your Mind Matters—The Place of the Mind in the Christian Life*
“Perhaps the current mood (cultivated in some Christian groups) of anti-intellectualism begins now to be seen as the serious evil it is. It is not true piety at all but part of the fashion of the world and therefore a form of worldliness. To denigrate the mind is to undermine foundational Christian doctrines. Has God created us rational beings, and shall we deny our humanity which he has given us? Has God spoken to us, and shall we not listen to his words? Has God renewed our mind through Christ, and shall we not think with it? Is God going to judge us by his Word, and shall we not be wise and build our house upon this rock?”³
- B. As Christians our thoughts must transcend this world
Nicolas Byfield: “Heavenly things are above, and therefore for their worthiness fitting your contemplation; and for their difficulty, they cannot be reached without seeking, and diligent study and enquiry . . . and with all wisdom raise up not your thoughts only, but your affections also to the love of heavenly things; and this you cannot do unless you withdraw your affections from things on earth.”⁴
1. What does your mind go to by default? When you aren’t engaged in anything else what do you think about? Of course all of us sometimes daydream about vacations or our latest project – but what captivates your thoughts more than anything else? Does your mind often go to Christ and the things above. Is Christ your greatest treasure.
Matthew 6:21 NAU - "for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."
 2. We must be heavenly minded. We must have heavenly attitudes
Romans 8:5 NAU - "For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit."
 3. We must be single-minded. You can’t look to heaven and earth at the same time.
John Davenant - “No one can savor of things heavenly and things of the earth at the same time. If we be slaves to our earthly desires, we shall never be watchful to promote our salvation.”⁵

³ Stott, John, *Your Mind Matters: The Place of the Mind in the Christian Life*, (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2006).

⁴ Byfield, Nicolas, *Commentary on Colossians*, (Stoke-on-Trent: Tentmaker Publications, 2012) Page 249.

⁵ Davenant, John, *Colossians*, Geneva Series Commentary, (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2009), Chapter 3, Pages 8-9.

4. This is where we consider the importance of Bible reading and prayer – filling our minds with spiritual matters. Filling our minds with Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.
We should seek Christian fellowship as we challenge one another with righteousness.
Men will hate such things if their heart is fixed upon earthly things.

Conclusion:

1. As Christians we must live above this world, apart from this world. Our goals should be different, our desires should be different. And we are looking for a different end with a different hope.
Colossians 3:4 NAU - "When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory."
2. **Verses 5-8** will more fully describe what it looks like to live above this world. But the imperatives of these verses can only be properly understood in the context of **Verse 1**.