

All of Christ for All of Life

Colossians 3:1-11 by Mark Hammer

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Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. 3 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.

Colossians 3:1-4

REALLY LIVING

We all love stories of the folks who find the courage to fight against tyranny. The movie *Braveheart* is one such story, as William Wallace, played by Mel Gibson, with his deep love for his homeland, Scotland, leads them towards freedom and independence from England rule. Towards the end of the movie there is a scene where Wallace, who has been betrayed to the English, sits in prison awaiting his imminent execution. The princess of Wales, who wants to free him, visits him and asks that he would recant his rebellion, hoping it would save his life. Wallace clearly knows what is at stake, and so he stands his ground without shame, as the princess says, “I come to beg you to confess all and swear allegiance to the king so that he may show you mercy.”

In a despondent tone, Wallace responds, “If I swear to him, all that I am is dead already.”

With tears in her eyes, the princess says, “You will die. It will be awful.”

To which Wallace replies with confidence, “Every man dies. Not every man *really* lives.

What does it mean to *really* live? What is living? What is life? What is life all about? What is your life about? This question is important, and demands a thoughtful answer, because how you answer determines how you live.

What is life to you? If I were to ask some of your closest friends or family what your life is about, what would they say? Money? Music? Having fun? Movies? Family? What would they say about you and your life? Would it reflect qualities and priorities that would be true of Christ or would it be in opposition to Him? Would it be characteristics that seem heavenly in nature or characteristics that seem more in common with the

corrupted passions of this earth? We love the saying, “All of Christ for all of life,” but **most of the time that confession from our lips is contrary to the rhythms of our life, as practically we live out “Some of life for some of Christ.”** A compartmentalized Christianity seems to be the norm these days, as we attempt to fit Christ into our lives, instead of making all of our life subject to Christ. Our lives should be about bringing glory to God and enjoying him forever, but this can’t be done apart from Christlikeness—Christlike living.

In the letter to the Colossians, Paul is reaffirming to his readers that Christ is to be their life. There’s nothing greater than being completely and wholly found in Him. He’s not to be an add-on or extension, and He’s not interested in competition. **He wants you to be fiercely formed into His likeness, instead of Him being casually integrated into yours.**

BURIED TO LIVE

“*Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ...*” (Colossians 3:1a). Baptism is a clear and present picture here. As Paul writes in Romans 6:3-4,

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 might too walk in newness of life.

To be raised, you first need to be lowered. To have a new life, you need to first have the old life put to death; we identify and reveal that truth in water baptism by the grace of Christ.

In CS Lewis’ book, “The Voyage of the Dawn Treader,” we discover a boy who becomes a dragon when he puts on this wristband that makes him greedy and prideful. At some point in the story he meets the lion, Aslan, the Christ-figure. The lion takes him to this high mountain and tells the dragon that it must be undressed, so the dragon scratches its scales off only to find new scales. The dragon finally figures out that he cannot shed his scales on his own power and authority, but Aslan can, and so the lion takes his massive claws and digs deep into the dragon’s scales and rips them away, uncovering and destroying the flesh that the boy had been controlled by.

We see a similar kind of picture, as Paul already expressed that

In Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of flesh by the circumcision of Christ; 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 (Col. 2:11-12).

We go down into the water as a person trapped in worldly scales, and we come up out of the water new and refreshed clothed in Christ. Baptism is not something we can do to ourselves, but it is a sacrificial act done to us. In actuality, Paul is boldly saying, “If you have been raised to new life, live like it! Walk in newness!” The problem with many Christians is that we profess being clothed in Christ, and yet we still live as though we’re covered in scales. **We profess new life in Christ, and yet we still live like the dying world around us**, brothers and sisters this cannot be!

LOOK HIGHER–LIVE HOLIER

Therefore, if you’ve been raised with Christ, “...*keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth* (Colossians 3:1b-2). The word “set” (phroneō - φρονέω) is being used in present tense, and this word is used to convey an attitude or a way of being. We’re to crave for things Christ craves for. We’re to have the same attitude as Christ (Phil. 2:5). Is this true about you?

In Romans 8:5 Paul says, “*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.*” **What you crave for in your mind impacts your attitudes which in turn directs your actions**; therefore, transformation occurs, when we focus on the life-giving presence of Christ, so *turn your eyes upon Jesus. Look full in his wonderful face. And the things of earth will grow strangely dim. In the light of his glory and grace.* In the same way it’s written in Philippians 4:8-9:

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. 9 The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

Paul is calling the Christian to have and keep having an attitude that is eternal in nature, not one that’s temporal. As one commentator put it, “*The more the Christian’s mind is attuned with the mind of God, the less the Christian needs external restraints. He is free to do whatever he wants because his “wants are the “wants” of God*” (Unknown Commentator). There is peace in that truth. The more we crave after Christlike wisdom from above, the more Christlike our attitudes, and the more Christlike our decisions and the implementation of those decisions.

So often, we as **God's children**, are plagued by sin that gnaws at our life simply because we are living out the lowly attitude of the world as we once did, instead of the higher attitude of heaven that we now can experience in Christ—displayed by the faithful obediences to which Christ calls us to step into, and provides the strength and grace necessary to do so. Before Christ, the earthly things were our default, but in Him you are no longer bound by those things, but you've been set free to choose to live out your higher calling in Christ!

There are a few ways in which we can take on the attitude of Christ. First, **immerse yourself in the wisdom of Christ**—God's word. When Scripture is ignored, *all* our truths become subjected to our feelings and soon cease to be truths at all. Second, **stay in communion with the people of Christ**—the church, godly men and women, who in love and gentleness will encourage you towards a Christlike attitude. This is why we are not to forsake the gathering (Heb. 10:25); the church is the fullness of Christ, the physical manifestation of Christ to our world. When we come together on Sunday we're reminded of our justification. When we gather here, we encourage one another in our sanctification. As we practice oneness, we celebrate our future glorification. Third, **stay in communion with Christ**—the very one who imparts the wisdom of the heavens—pray often and cry out to Him for help! *Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts; 24 And see if there be any hurtful way in me, And lead me in the everlasting way* (Psalm 139:23-24). In Christ alone, you are freed to live out this everlasting way!

DON'T LOOK DOWN

Because we are to live as people of the everlasting way, Paul encourages us to keep seeking the things above, and he warns us to *not focus on the things that are on earth*. This language, "*things that are on earth*" describes the carnal passions and lusts and desires that are common to the enemies of Christ and their pattern of living. **If you don't share the same attitude as Christ, your life will reflect the opposition to Christ.** What's the benefit, as a follower of Jesus, if you look like an enemy of His? What good can come out proclaiming to be a light to the world, but practicing the darkness of paganism and self worship!?

16 Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, "I will dwell in them and walk among them; And I will be their God, and they shall be My people." 17 "Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate," says the Lord. (2 Cor. 6:16-17a)

Soon, we'll read a list which Paul gives so that we can identify what the "things of earth" are (3:5-9), but right now he's more concerned that we have the attitude of the heavenlies. He wants us to order our lives and our loves correctly—to prioritize things the right way in

glory and honor to our King. **He doesn't want us to be on a quest for temporary happiness but eternal Christlike holiness.** Christlikeness will always bring about true happiness.

CLOTHED IN CHRIST

Paul continues on, saying this is how to live—giving the picture of being clothed in Christ (same as armoring up). Colossians 3:3 says, “*For you have died....*” In verse five, he’ll tell us to consider our earthly members as *dead*; it’s focusing on the reality that your body is no longer a tool for sin, because you are dead to sin and alive in Christ. We do damage to the text when we actually take a phrase such as, “*For you have died...*” as this simple figure of speech or metaphorical language; we do injustice to the text when we encourage believers to live *like* they died. Paul isn’t being cute here; he understands that in Christ, the reality is you did die—you are dead to sin; to follow Christ is to pick up your cross and die; “*It’s no longer you who lives but Christ who lives in you*” (Gal. 2:20). **Christians, it’s not *like* you died to yourself, but you *did* die; therefore stop living *like* you didn’t. Our world doesn’t need Christians being resurrected from the grave, only to live *like* they’re still stuck in it.** As the living, don’t give off the aroma of death. Live out your glorious hope now! Live out your resurrection boldly in this present moment! May everyday of your life be a celebration that you once were dead but now you’ve been made alive, really alive in Christ!

Furthermore, “*...your life is hidden with Christ in God*” (Colossians 3:3b). When someone was dead and buried, the Greeks usually referred to that person as being *hidden* in the earth; and Paul is now saying those Christians who died spiritually aren’t hidden in the earth, but they are hidden in Jesus Christ! What does it look like for us to be hidden in Jesus Christ? Colossians 3:12-17 might be a great passage of explanation, as the language appears to indicate clothing ourselves in Christ—putting on Christ:

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. 14 Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. 15 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. 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.

In the same way, Romans 13:12-14 says,

The night is almost gone, and the day is near. Therefore let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. 13 Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. 14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.

Put on Christ—is loyalty language; live loyally to him in faithful obedience in the strength of your Lord for His name sake!

When I was a youth ministry intern during my college years, the youth group I was working with had these t-shirts that teenage student leaders would wear, and they said on the front in big bold letters, “I like Church” and on the back it said, “Mountainview Christian Church Student Ministries.” Most people would correctly assume that one who is wearing that shirt is affiliated with that Church and most likely a Christian. Those shirts represented our Church and Christ to the community, but one particular time, a student from the youth ministry was upset with his school bus driver, and in anger attempted to spit in the school bus driver’s coffee cup when they weren’t looking, but he was caught red handed while wearing his “I like Church” shirt. This news got to our youth pastor who confronted the student and asked for the shirt back, saying that if one is to wear that shirt they must be a positive representation of what that shirt stands for—Christ and His Church. **As we are clothed in Christ, we too must live a life that represents Christ and His bride well.** To simply claim Christianity and worship the things of this world is to be double-minded, a walking white washed tomb full of dead man’s bones.

There are many different ways in which we proclaim our faithfulness to Christ. We might drop hints by sharing with neighbors, family, friends, or those in the community, by letting them know we’ll pray for them, inviting them to church, having the christian bumper sticker on the car, or even passing along some scripture to encourage the weak at heart. All these things communicate some sort of faithfulness to Christ, and they’re great ways to share where you stand, but the problem is when one does these things, and yet the common pattern of their life is more in line with the pagan world around them. It brings confusion. It waters down the testimony of the faithful. The double-mindedness destroys and corrupts. For it would be horrible on the day of judgment, for one who proclaimed Christ in various ways, but truly lived a life that denied him, to stand before King Jesus only to be told to give back the shirt, for I never knew you (Mt. 7:21-23).

The carnal, prideful, detestable, and corruptible things of the world that went with you to the grave, leave them in the grave where they belong; *awake oh sleeper and rise clothed in Christ!* Our lives should look contrary to those of the pagan world, because they practice death but you are called to practice life. Don’t talk like them. Don’t fight like

them. Don't prioritize like them. Don't worry like them. Don't be carried away and moved like them. Don't plan as they plan. Don't play like they play, and certainly don't worship what they worship. **To be "hidden" or "covered" in Christ, means that all of you is about all of Him.** It means that when people look at you, their eyes can't help but to see the Christlike character of your King!

Colossians 3:4 reassures us that, "*When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.*" Paul never understood the life of the believer as separate from the character of Christ. In Galatians 2:20 he said, "*It's no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.*" In the same way in Philippians 1:21 Paul proclaims, "*To live is Christ!*" The way Paul saw it is that Christ is life—He's existence! He is the source of our life! He is the sustainer of our life. He is the redeemer of our life, and so as we're clothed with Christ on this earth, we reveal it to the world through our faithful obedience to Him, and at his return our faith will be proven as valid when we're revealed in our resurrected bodies to the glory of God, and those who aren't revealed with Him in glory weren't clothed in Christ.

PUT ASIDE DECEIT

Colossians 3:5-6: *Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. 6 For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience....* This "sons of disobedience" term is a slam to those angelic "Sons of God" in the Old Testament who willfully transgressed their roles, corrupted all flesh, and took on the worship of men which was to be reserved for the one true God alone—the God of Israel, Yahweh. Paul is warning them to not join them by participating in their wayward actions which caused God's wrath to be poured out (Ps 82; Gen 6:1-8 ESV). He continues by saying, "*...and in them (these acts of the flesh) you also once walked, when you were living in them. 8 But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth. DO NOT LIE TO ONE ANOTHER, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices...*" (Col. 3:7-9). The greek word used for "put aside" (apekdyomai - ἀπεκδύομαι) literally means to "undress." It's the same word used in Colossians 2:15 to describe the "disarming" of the spiritual rulers and authorities who were in opposition to God—"the sons of disobedience," and all who aligned with them. This is separation language. This entire list is full of deceitful actions rooted in self worship and self-preservation. Paul is speaking about willful disobedience to God. Just as the spiritual rulers and authorities in opposition to Christ were displaced and removed from their power, **as Christians we are called to separate ourselves from lies and deceitful living which is in opposition to the character of Christ.**

It's pure evil to live out deceitful practices, when we are to be a people of the Truth. Deceitful practices break the world, and that is why as people of truth we don't use "preferred pronouns" that deny one's true sex, because it's not loving to lie to a person. As people of truth, we don't cheat on our taxes, because it's not love to be fraudulent. As people of the truth, we don't destroy people's reputations, because it's not loving to tear down someone created in the image of God. Don't use your body as a tool for deceit, but use it to shine Christ's truth! As people of the truth we don't put anything above Christ, because to do so is aligning ourselves with the evil idolatry of our world.

What you do with your life matters, because the glory of Christ is revealed in our earthly bodies—our physicality. As God revealed himself physically as Christ, the image of God, the face of God, the presence of God, the name of God, you too should represent God through the body He has given you, and this is done by putting off the things which are contrary to Christlikeness and to put on Christ, and to keep putting on Christ!

...Put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him— 11 a renewal in which there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all. (Col. 3:10-11)

King Jesus has re-inherited the nations of those who were at one time enslaved by the sons of disobedience and the deceitful philosophies of men, and now there is freedom in Christ, so don't go back to living in the chains of the grave from which you came. **While on this earth, live for the glory of God, because you are clothed in Christ, make no room for things of the grave.**

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

In our culture we can approach life in two ways: we can either live a "feeling-oriented life" where we just do whatever our flesh feels like doing, but this will inevitably end up leading us towards deceit and practices of death, or we can live a "commandment-oriented life," where by the grace and strength of Christ, we humbly choose to practice faithfulness. That latter approach of life leads to prayers such as this:

Strengthen me according to Your word. 29 Remove the false way from me, and graciously grant me Your law. 30 I have chosen the faithful way; I have placed Your ordinances before me. 31 I cling to Your testimonies; O Lord, do not put me to shame! 32 I shall run the way of Your commandments, For You will enlarge my heart. (Psalm 119:28-32)

Paul's message to the church is the same, in Christ live faithfully in alignment with God's beautiful commandments, which prove death has been conquered and Christ victorious. For as he so clearly articulates,

For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54 But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory. 55 O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" 56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; 57 but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Cor. 15:53-57)

At some point in time, at the coming of the final resurrection—the ultimate resurrection, we will be given bodies that will never perish. Those bodies will be a sign that death has been defeated and that Christ is victorious, but in the meantime, we are still called to put off the old self and put on the new to reveal this truth now. Be clothed in Christ, reveal your loyalty through faithful practices to broadcast to the world that death has been defeated and Christ is victor. **As a Christian, to once again intentionally practice the old self is to defiantly deny the truth that death has been defeated and that Christ is victorious.** In humility, examine your life, confess your sin, and offer up the scaly practices of this world that have no attachment to the cloth of Christ, but only the smell of the grave clothes from which we've been called to leave behind. Put on Christ, your redeemer, your salvation, your life and reveal to the world that you are His to the praise of His everlasting glory.

*O Lord, bend my hands and cut them off, for I have often struck thee
with a wayward will, when these fingers should embrace thee by
faith.*

*I am not yet weaned from all created glory, honor, wisdom and
esteem of others, for I have a secret motive to eye my name in all I
do.*

*Let me not only speak the word sin, but see the thing itself.
Give me to view a discovered sinfulness, to know that though my sins
are crucified they are never wholly mortified.*

*Hatred, malice, ill-will, vain-glory that hungers for and hunts after
man's approval and applause, all are crucified, forgiven, but they
rise again in my sinful heart.*

O my crucified but never wholly mortified sinfulness!

O my life-long damage and daily shame!

O my indwelling and besetting sins!

O the tormenting slavery of a sinful heart!

*Destroy, O God, the dark guest within whose hidden presence makes
my life a hell.*

*Yet thou hast not left me here without grace; The cross still stands
and meets my needs in the deepest straits of the soul*

*The memory of my great sins, my many temptations, my falls, bring
afresh into my mind the embrace of thy great help, of thy support
from heaven, of the great grace that saved such a wretch as I am.*

*There is no treasure so wonderful as that continuous experience of
thy grace towards me which alone can subdue the risings of sin
within:*

Give me more of it! [Give more grace!]

AMEN

(Valley of Vision - Prayers of the Puritans)