

**Colossians 3:1-17**  
**(Malachi 3:16-18)**  
**“New Life in Christ”**

**Introduction**

We have before us one of Paul’s most helpful and comprehensive descriptions of our new life in Christ. If it seems strange to us, then we have not yet realized what the Christian life was meant to be, not merely in theory, but in practice. If it seems impossible to us, then we are at least beginning to get the point and to reach the place where we will decide whether to go on trying to live out of our own resources, or will finally cast ourselves utterly upon the grace of God, grace not merely greater than our guilt, but greater also than the power of sin to hold us back from the new life God offers us in Christ Jesus.

Paul opens with this tremendous challenge: “If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above ... [and] set your minds on things that are above.” How are we to do this? First by realizing that, if we are children of God, then we have died with Christ, been raised with Christ, and our life is “hidden with Christ in God.” What in the world are we to make of such language?

Remember what Jesus prayed in the upper room the night before he died? He asked this for all of us who would believe in him: “I do not ask for these only [those with him in the upper room], but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me ... I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and loved them even as you loved me” (John 17:20-23). Paul tells us that God answered his Son’s prayer for us, and that when he saves us, he makes us one with him. We are incorporated into Christ and his Spirit is given to us, so that it may also be said of us that he is in us and we are in him, a new creation.

Now what ought the implications of such an incredible transformation to be? What should this look like? Well, one can safely suggest that it should look radically different than the typical life of Christian people in the west today. American Christians ordinarily do not look radically different than nice people who have no faith whatsoever. That is, in fact, the greatest indictment the world makes against us: that we do not live up to what we profess to believe.

The problem is not new: Paul faced it as well and wrote as he did to urge Christians on to higher ground, to hold up a picture in his words and in his life of what life in Christ is meant to be. To see the picture, it is important that we remember that by “earthly things” Paul does not necessarily mean lakes and trees, or business meetings or education. Nor, by “heavenly things” does he necessarily mean Bible study or going to church or pearly gates and streets of gold. One can do business for

the glory of God and one can go to church to meet attractive women. It's not only what we do, but why we do it that makes something earthly or heavenly, in the biblical view of things. Paul will end by saying, "And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus" (3:17).

This morning we will overview these verses and then hope to return in future Sundays to look more carefully at them.

## Body

- 1. There is something we must understand: The Christian life depends, not upon one part of our salvation – such as adoption or justification – but rather upon our union with Christ (3:1-4).**

*In Christ, you have died  
In Christ, you have been raised to new life  
In Christ, the glory now hidden will one day be revealed*

- 2. There is a death we must die every day: There are things within us – old patterns of thinking and acting – that we must put to death if we are to be, in daily life, what we are in Christ. Note how Paul moves from external actions to internal motives (3:5-11).**

*The Lust of the Flesh: Sexual Sin  
The Lust of the Eye: Materialism  
The Pride of Life: Broken Relationships*

- 3. There is a life we must live every day: There are new patterns of thinking and acting that we must embrace if we are to be, in daily life, what we are in Christ. (3:12-14).**

*The Identity of One Chosen and Beloved in Christ  
The Character and Behavior of Christ  
The Love of Christ*

- 4. Paul shows us how to start (3:15-17).**

*Let the peace of Christ rule in your heart, with thanksgiving.  
Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, with thanksgiving.  
Let the name of Christ be the key to everything you do, with thanksgiving.*

## **Conclusion**

The life that Paul describes is the life we all desire at the end of the day. But that life cannot be added to our natural life, to the broken, misshapen, rebellious person that even the best of us is by nature. It is only for those who in Christ have died to the person they once were and have been raised up to new life in Christ. Paul challenges us to be what we are in Christ, to take him into the world, to love the unlovable, forgive the guilty, to live lives ruled by Christ's peace, indwelt by Christ's word, and lived in his name and for his sake. Thus, our lives become a prayer of praise and thanksgiving to God for the glory of his grace.

"If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above." If you are in Christ, then be what you are!

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