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## Colossians 3:1-4

### Christ Our Life

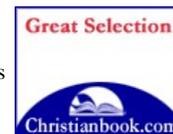
The baptism of the believer is a beautiful picture of our new relationship with Christ. We have become identified with Him. We who were dead in trespasses and sins were co-crucified with Christ, co-buried with Him, co-resurrected with Him and are now seated with Him in the heavenly places. Our old life was buried, and we are now alive in Christ. The ordinance of baptism portrays that change in the believer when he put his faith in Christ and was born again. We are new creatures in Christ Jesus. We who were dead in our trespasses and sins are now alive.

The apostle Paul wrote: "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 2:12, NASB95). "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. . . . Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him" (Romans 6:4, 8, NASB95)

Baptism is a definite action we take to identify ourselves with Jesus Christ. It is the declaration to a watching world that we are declaring that something has already taken place in our lives. We are stating to witnesses that we have united ourselves with Christ and that we too died and rose again with Him. We die to the old life and old sins with its guilt. We rise to new life in Christ. Baptism is a beautiful picture of what Christ did for us on the cross and His resurrection, and what He has already done in our lives spiritually.

The Christian died with Christ and there has taken place a break with our past.

We are raised with Christ. We put our faith in Jesus Christ and have been spiritually resurrected. This took place the moment we believed on Christ as our personal Savior.



We will one day appear with Christ in glory because we are already seated with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. This is our blessed hope and it gives us assurance to live for Christ every day.

Baptism symbolically pictures our vital union with Christ. With Him we are buried, raised and appearing.

Christ is our source of eternal life. In the words of the apostle Paul, Christ is our life.

The apostle Paul wrote in Colossians 3:1-4 about this new change in our lives. "Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory" (Colossians 3:1-4, NASB).

We have a new relationship with Christ Jesus and a new position before God. We have already had a spiritual resurrection, and one day when Christ returns we are going to have a new resurrection body! Referring to our spiritual resurrection Jesus said: "Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live" (John 5:25, NASB95). Then He went on to speak of our future resurrection: "Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice" (John 5:28, NASB95).

The apostle Paul declares you have been raised up with Christ in the past, your life is hidden with Christ in God now, and you also will be revealed with Him in glory in the future.

Our new identification with Christ is expressed in the preposition with :"

Dead with Christ.

Buried with Christ.

Made alive with Christ.

Risen with Christ.

Hidden with Christ.

Appear with Christ.

We have a new relationship with God based upon our relationship with Christ. Did Christ die? So did we by our identification with Him. Was He buried? So are we, together with Him. All of our past with its sins and guilt are gone. Was He raised from the dead? So are we. Has He ascended to heaven? So have we. Is He now hidden and invisible? Yes, we cannot see Him with our naked human eye. Nor can the world see our spiritual life hidden in Christ. Will Christ appear in glory? Yes, and so will we. One day this hidden life in Christ will be made visible for the entire world to see. He will appear in glory, and we will be with Him. All of these realities that we observe objectively in Christ we have subjectively in our vital union with Christ. This new life for the time being is hidden with Christ, but will one day be unveiled in all of its glory with Him. "Your life is hidden with Christ in God," writes the apostle Paul. In fact, "Your life has been and as a result remains hidden with Christ in God."

### **WE HAVE A NEW POSITION WITH CHRIST**

The apostle Paul stresses the fact that we have a new position before the LORD God through Jesus Christ.

#### ***You have died with Christ.***

The apostle Paul had already told the Christians in Colossians 2:20, "If you have died with Christ . . . or better "Since you have died with Christ." You could translate it, "In view of the fact that you have died with Christ." The word "if" in our English translations is not intended to express doubt or uncertainty, but a reality. Since or because you died with Christ is the reality of every born again believer in Christ Jesus. This is a fact in the life of the believer. A break with the past has taken place. Christians are dead to sin in Christ. Paul is pointing to a moment in time when the individual turns from his unbelief and puts his trust in Christ. It is referring to his conversion.

The death of the believer with Christ is a death to the law, sin, and guilt. "For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God" (Romans 6:10, NASB95).

The Bible tells us we have all come short of the glory of God and "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 3:23; 6:23). The soul that sins will surely die. However, Jesus Christ went to the cross and died in our place as our substitute. He paid the debt in full on our behalf (Rom. 5:6, 8). We receive eternal benefits of that death on our behalf when we put our faith in Jesus Christ as our Savior. Not only has a break with the past taken place, but Paul says a change has taken place, and there is also newness of life.

Dying with Christ describes one characteristic of what God does for us at conversion. To become a Christian is to die with Christ. Just as physical death marks the end of a person's earthly life, so dying with Christ is the passing on spiritually to a new existence in which the power of sin and death are broken. It is the end of death in trespasses and sins and the beginning of eternal life in Christ Jesus.

Paul is not teaching annihilation of our old nature. He is not saying it has ceased to exist. The evil nature is not eradicated; it will be with us until we die physically (1 John 1:8). He declares that the believer has a new principle operating in him. He has a new mindset and new spiritual power operating in him. His attitude toward the flesh and his old nature has changed. The power of our old nature is broken. The believer no longer has to yield to these desires. He has a choice of yielding to the old nature or the new man.

The power of indwelling sin is broken by the believer's identification with Christ in His death and resurrection. As a result, he has received a new nature produced within him by the work of the Holy Spirit.

#### ***You are raised with Christ.***

Paul uses the same expression in Colossians 3:1. "If then you have been raised up with Christ . . ." (v. 1). Paul is boldly walking around on the other side of the grave with Christ! "Since you have been raised up with Christ" pictures the positive side of our vital union with Christ. The condition "if" in English in this verse should not imply uncertainty here. It is a fulfilled condition. The idea is "since you are a believer. Since you were raised together with Christ makes plain our vital union with Christ."

The Christian baptism by immersion is a beautiful reminder of the reality that when Christ was raised from the dead we were raised with Him.

Alexander Maclaren said, "There is only one thing that will put the collar on the neck of the animal within us, and that is the power of the indwelling Christ."

The Christian is dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

We have the resurrection power dwelling in us. The Christian is raised with Christ and shares Christ's new life. He shares the triumphant victories of the resurrection life.

These words remind us of Ephesians 2:5-6. "Even when we were dead in our transgressions, [God] made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

No dead person can resurrect himself. If a dead person is resurrected from the dead, it must be done for him. Similarly, a person who is dead in sins cannot resurrect himself. God must do it for him. I see a lot of people trying to resuscitate themselves, and it is impossible. Eternal life is a free gift of God to sinners who come God's way and trust in Jesus Christ alone to raise the dead. Conversion, spiritual birth, regeneration, spiritual resurrection is an act of God. No man can do it.

God alone raises the dead. God alone can give a man dead in trespasses and sins a new realm of spiritual life.

Have you been born again? Have you experienced a spiritual birth and been spiritually regenerated? If so, then Paul's statement is a fact about your spiritual life.

Since you have been raised up with Christ is a truth about the believer. Remember you are alive in Christ. A change has taken place in your heart. You are a new creation, made new in Christ Jesus by the Holy Spirit.

Paul writes, If you have been raised up with Christ meaning to raise up together. We have been co-resurrected with Christ. The Christian has not only died with Christ but also has been raised with Him. Along with Christ he has already been raised from the dead! The resurrection of Christ is a picture of what happens to a person in conversion. Christ was raised from the dead to live a new realm of existence, and the believer is raised by the power of God to a new kind of life. The believer in Christ has been raised from the dead spiritually. He now has eternal life.

The apostle Paul is assuming his readers are Christians, and this truth is a reality in their lives. If then, as is the case, you were raised together with Christ is a wonderful fact about every believer. We have a new relationship with God as a result of what Christ did for us.

### ***We have a vital union with Christ.***

We have a vital union with Christ Jesus. Christ is so joined to the believer that we have been raised with Him. You died, and your life is now hid with Christ. Christ is our life. We now possess within us the resurrection life. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God (v. 3).

The resurrection life is your life. It is from this position that we live the Christian life.

If then you have been raised with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God (v.1).

Where is Christ? He is in heaven. He is seated at the right hand of God. He is not buried in a grave somewhere in Israel. He is alive. He is where His heavenly Father is right now. Christ is the sovereign King, seated, and therefore entrusted with all power in heaven and on earth. The right hand was considered a place of honor in the first century. Christ must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet" (1 Corinthians 15:25, NASB95).

Christ is in heaven reigning as the sovereign of the universe. Paul says, Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God (Colossians 3:1). The Psalmist David wrote of Him saying: The Lord says to my Lord: Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet (Psalm 110:1, NASB95). The enthronement of Christ has already taken place. He is the exalted King (Phil. 2:8-11). He has been elevated to the most exalted sovereignty over the universe. He touches every corner of the universe with His holy presence.

The ascension of Christ is taught in every area of the New Testament (Luke 24:50-53; Acts 2:33-35; 5:31; 7:55-56; Rom. 8:34; Eph. 1:20; Heb. 1:3, 13; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2; 1 Pet. 3:22; Rev. 3:21).

Because our citizenship is in heaven with Him, our interests are now centered in Him. We must pursue those interests that belong to the heavenly kingdom where Christ reigns. His interests should now be our interests. Our pursuit must now be those things that occupy Him. Our mind, desires, goals and attitudes should be characterized by our vital union with Christ. We should be interested in those things in which He is interested.

Where are you? Hidden with Christ in God !"

We now belong to the heavenly realm. Yes, we still live here on the earth. But our citizenship is now in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ (Philippians 3:20). I travel a lot, so I keep my United States passport with my travel documents so I can readily refer to them when needed. Wherever I go I am reminded that I am a United States citizen. I have proof of who I am and my citizenship. The apostle Paul tells us we are citizens of heaven. We live here on the earth, in a foreign country, but our citizenship and permanent residence is in heaven. If you are a Christian, you are a non-immigrant and an illegal alien here on the earth. Your citizenship is in heaven.

You have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God (Colossians 3:3). Don't tell me the believer is not secure in Christ. Don't tell me you can't live the Christian life. It is not I; it is Christ. 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" (Galatians 2:20, NASB95).

The believer now has no life of his own. It belongs to Christ. Christ is his life. If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness (Romans 8:10, NASB95). Your life is the life of Christ. You possess the resurrection life today. It is eternal life. Those who have been raised up with Christ possess it today, here and now. We enjoy eternal life today.

With this new relationship comes a new responsibility.

### ***WE HAVE A NEW RESPONSIBILITY WITH CHRIST***

So what does all of this mean for you and me? It means that since we have shared in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, our wellbeing is now centered in Him. Christ is our life.

Paul's logic is very simple: You died with Christ and have been raised up with Him, and now He is your life. Your life is intimately coupled with His.

It is from this relationship with Him that we are empowered to live the Christian life as exiles here on the earth.

### ***Keep your focus on Christ.***

Our spiritual growth does not happen automatically. Just as we made a decision to choose Christ as our Savior, we also chose a wholly different

life style.

We must make a choice, many choices everyday of our Christian life.

The apostle Paul says, *Keep seeking the things above* (v. 1b). The idea is to *keep on or be constantly seeking the things of Christ. Keep on seeking everyday Christ who is your life.* It is a continual and habitual action on the part of the believer. Set your thoughts on the things of heaven.

Because we have been born spiritually and share in His death and resurrection, our lives are centered in His life. We share with Him that place to which God has exalted Him. *For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God* (v. 3). Remember God *raised us alive together with Christ . . . and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.* Spiritually, that is where we are right now. Christ is our life. Christianity is Christ.

Since that is true, then why do we live as if everything depends upon what we gain down here? We need to get eternity into the picture. You may feel like you are fighting a spiritual war all alone, but you are not. Get Christ into the picture. Look at everything in your life from the viewpoint of Christ. Judge everything by His standards. Look at it from the values of the new creation.

*Keep on seeking the things above.* Be constantly setting your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. Paul tells us in verse two to set our minds on, keep on thinking about, ponder and long for the things that are in heaven where Christ is. We need to look at them from Christ's exalted point of view. We need to be reminded of that every day of our lives.

Paul is writing Colossians from prison in Rome. At the same time he wrote to the church at Philippi, *For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain* (Phil. 1:21). For to me to live is Christ, and to die is better yet. Why? Because to die is gain. I will have an even greater intimacy with Christ in heaven. Christ, who is our life *will be revealed in all of His glory.*

Earlier Paul had written a great truth for Christians. *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 delivered Himself up for me* (Galatians 2:20).

Alexander Maclaren said, *If a man wants to love Jesus Christ, he must think about Him. We must focus our mind on Him. Set your minds on the things that are above, and that will consolidate and direct the emotions; and the thoughts and the emotions together will shape the outward efforts. Seeking the things that are above will come, and will only come, when the mind and heart and inward life are occupied with Him.* "

Jesus said it best in Matthew 6:33. "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you" (Matthew 6:33, NASB95).

### ***Renew your mind.***

The way you think ultimately affects the way you live. *Set your mind on the things above* (Col. 3:2). The writer of Proverbs in 23:7 admonishes us, *For as a man thinks within himself, so is he.* What are you calculating in your mind about the true values of your life?

When you are growing spiritually, you are thinking differently. You cannot let your mind dwell on a sinful life style and grow spiritually.

"And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect" (Romans 12:2).

We seek what we set our minds on. Yes, we have many things in life we must tend to daily, but we are not to let these become our aim, our goal or master. When the mind is seated in Christ, we will take care of the pressing things that demand our attention at work or with family, but as soon as our mind has dealt with these needs it returns to its center of gravity that is Christ.

The things on the earth are not in themselves sinful; they just aren't the passion of our lives. Learn to clarify your Christian values daily. Keep the focus on Christ. You do not have to become a monk or isolationist and withdraw from the world.

"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" (2 Corinthians 10:5, NASB95).

### ***The hidden life***

The believer's life is hidden with Christ in God (v. 3) speaks once again of our vital union in Christ Jesus. We are identified with Christ.

The Christian life receives its sustenance from the secret springs of Christ. *I am the Vine you are the branches* (John 15:5). Apart from Me you can do nothing. You and I cannot live the Christian life without abiding in Christ. Our spiritual life is nurtured by this vital union with Him. Our safety, security and spiritual well-being depend upon His. Because *your life is hidden with Christ in God, your life is an extension of that inseparable life which is Christ's at the right hand of God.* "

We are secure in this intimate relationship with Him. Our life is hidden with Christ in God in a safe place, and Satan and no one else can touch us without God's sovereign permission and watchful care. The Christian's life is safely hidden away with Christ. Our security depends upon Him. *Because I live, you shall live also* (John 14:19b).

"Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? . . . For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth,

nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38-39, NASB95). Yes, my Christian friend, your life is hidden with Christ in God beyond the reach of anyone or anything. The hope that is founded on His sovereign word can never be overthrown.

"You have died. You have died to your old life in Adam when you placed your faith in Christ. Albert Barnes wrote, "As Christ became literally dead in the tomb, so we, in virtue of our connection with Him, have become dead to sins, to worldly influences, pleasures, and ambitions. . . . We are to be to them as if we were dead, and they had no more influence over us than the things of earth had over Him in the grave. "

It is upon this great truth that Paul builds this great chapter. Because we died with Christ and have been raised to new life with Him, our union is with Christ in God. "

With Christ in God is the foundation of our vital union with Christ. We are hidden with Christ. Everything about our relationship with God is bound up in our relationship with Christ. We died with Him; we have been raised up with Him; we are hidden with Him. Christ is our life. We have eternal life with Him. Christ Himself has His life in the Father. Every believer has his being there with Him. Our vital union is bound in this fellowship of the God-head.

The greatest reward is stated in Colossians 3:4. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory. "

### **WE HAVE A NEW MOTIVATION FOR CHRISTIAN LIVING**

Everything Paul has taught so far becomes the greatest motivation to dwell in the secret place of the Most High.

Christ is the atmosphere in which the Christian dwells. That environment affects everything in the believer's life. "Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father" (Colossians 3:17, NASB95).

#### ***Christ is our life.***

Christ . . . is our life should be the greatest motivation to dwell in His presence daily. Christ is in us and we are in Him. We enjoy this vital union with Him that fills us with His life. We have a vital connection with Him that gives us eternal life. He lives in us and we in Him. This eternal life is really His life in us.

Our present connection with God in Christ is a matter of inner experience. It is hidden with Christ in God. The Holy Spirit works within our lives to reproduce in us an increasing likeness of Christ. This is our daily sanctification, and it will continue until that great day of glorification. "But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit" (2 Corinthians 3:18, NASB95). The Holy Spirit is transforming the believer from one stage of glory to another. It is invisible to the world, but fully known by the Holy Spirit. This life in Christ is not as yet a full and open manifestation. Even the believer is not fully aware of what God is doing in his life. However, when Christ comes we shall be like Him. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

H. C. G. Moule said, "You shall be manifested with Him, He shall be manifested in you. See that you use Him as your life today, in the uplifting hope of such a tomorrow. "

The believer's life that is now hidden in Christ will be revealed in glory when Christ returns. The day of the resurrection will bring to glory what is already true of every believer in Christ. We live in the now and the yet to be. We live in the reality of His presence now. The hope of glory will give way to the realized glory. Christ in you is the hope of glory today.

We are the people "to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27, NASB95). What a privilege to be His chosen servants, saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. We are the recipients of His saving grace. What a privilege to have this intimate love relationship with Him. Christ is the life of all who are in vital union with Him by faith.

#### ***You will be revealed with Christ in glory.***

When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory. When Christ returns in glory the things that are now veiled will be illuminated in a bright light of glory. Paul is referring to a future time when the personal, visible coming of Christ will be revealed. When Christ . . . is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory. It will be a glorious appearing, and we will be with Him.

"See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure" (1 John 3:1-3, NASB95).

When Christ is manifested in His presence, then all who share His life will share His glory.

We will exchange this earthly body for a spiritual body prepared for heaven and eternity. It is a body of glory. The word *doxa* means brightness, splendor, radiance. A great change will take place in an instant, the twinkle of the eye. We shall all be changed (1 Cor. 15:52). This flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.

Everything will be made manifest and clear. What we see dimly now will be clearly seen when Christ returns.

Our life is hidden with Christ in God today, but one day it will be gloriously manifest to all the universe to see. Today we belong to the invisible

realm, but one day in a glaze of glory our Lord will return and we shall be like Him. The manifestation of the Son of God is also the day when the Lord God will manifest the sons of God.

Wheat and tares grow together side by side now, but one day it will all change. Christ is coming back and then we will be revealed with Him in glory (Phil. 3:20-21; 1 Cor. 1:7-8; 1 John 2:28; 3:2).

These great truths not only give us security for today, but also hope for tomorrow. It gives us inner strength for living the Christian life. Because Jesus Christ is our life, He is also our hope, our only hope for time and for eternity.

The Lord Jesus Christ is Life itself. He springs up within my heart, rising to eternity.

### **SOME ABIDING PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS**

1. When we have an intimate personal relationship with Christ Jesus, we have the motivation and power to effect positive change in our lives.
2. When we keep our eyes focused on Christ, we get eternity into the picture, and we see life from a totally new perception.
3. When we realize we have been raised up with Christ Jesus and seated with Him in the heavenlies, we will clothe ourselves with garments fit as heavenly guests.
4. When your life is hidden with Christ in God, you dwell in the secret place of the Almighty.
5. When Christ, who is our life, returns, then you will be revealed with Him in glory.
6. When we live the Christian life from the overflow, our lives are filled with heaven on earth.

If you need help in becoming a Christian here is [A Free Gift for You](#).

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Series: Paul's Letter to Colossians

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