

## UNION WITH CHRIST IN HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION

### **TEXT: COLOSSIANS 3:1-4**

#### **INTRODUCTION:**

1. There is a pattern we see in the epistles of the apostle Paul. His epistles can be divided into two sections -- the emphasis in the first section is doctrinal, and the emphasis in the second section is practical.
2. A.T. Pierson said, "The first two chapters are doctrinal; the last two are practical, applying the truth" (*Newness of Life*).
3. In chapter 2, Paul said we are "dead with Christ" (2:20). In baptism, we identify with Christ's death and resurrection (2:12).
4. W.H. Griffith Thomas said, "This is the genuine, adequate means of power against any indulgence of the flesh...This passage...gives the essential secrets of Christian holiness; and we shall see also how all true life necessarily springs from true doctrine" (*Studies in Colossians*).

#### **I. THE REMINDER -- "For ye are dead... If ye then be risen with Christ"**

1. Colossians 3:3 says, "For ye are dead." Dead to the world; dead to sin; and dead to worldly pleasures and ambitions.
2. Romans 6:8 says, "Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him." We are dead to sin. Romans 6:7 says, "For he that is dead is freed from sin."
3. Once someone asked George Muller the secret of his service for God. George Muller said, "There was a day when I died, utterly died, died to George Mueller, his opinions, preferences, tastes and will, died to the world, its approval or censure, died to the approval or blame even of my brethren and friends, and since then I have studied only to show myself approved unto God" (A.T. Pierson, *George Muller of Bristol*).
4. We died with Christ, and we are risen with Christ. Romans 6:8 says, "Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him."
5. Colossians 3:1 says, "If ye then be risen with Christ..." "If" here means "Since" or "In view of."
6. Paul is clearly assuming this resurrection as a fact, admmissive of no doubt. Christians were raised spiritually when Christ was raised physically.

7. The death and resurrection of Christ is the turning point in human history. We date time by BC -- Before Christ, and AD -- *Anno Domini* (The Year of Our Lord).
8. Those who are anti-Christian have attempted to replace this with BCE (Before Common Era) and CE (Common Era), but this has not caught on with most people.
9. The resurrection of Christ is presented in the New Testament as a proof, a pattern, a power, a promise, and a pledge (W.H. Griffith Thomas).

\* a proof -- of our acceptance with Christ, "Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification" (Romans 4:25).

\* a pattern -- for holiness. Romans 6:4 says, "As Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."

\* a power -- for Christian character and service (Ephesians 1:18-20).

\* a promise -- of our own resurrection. First Thessalonians 4:14 says, "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him."

\* a pledge -- of our life hereafter. Our Lord said in John 14:9, "Because I live, ye shall live also."

10. First Corinthians 15:17 says, "And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins."

## II. THE REALIZATION -- our union with Christ

1. Realizing and understanding our union with Christ, we are called upon to "seek those things which are above," and to "set our affection on things above" (3:1, 2).
2. There is an important contrast here -- "where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God" (3:1), and "not on things on the earth" (3:2).
3. What we love we become like. Therefore, we are to set our affections on heavenly things, not worldly things. Our "thoughts should be occupied about the things where Christ now dwells, where our final home is to be, where our great interests are...the great object of our contemplation should be the heavenly world" (Albert Barnes).
4. The Greek word translated "affection" is usually translated "think" or "mind." We are to be thinking of heavenly things, not worldly things.
5. The Jews in Rome said to Paul, "But we desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest" (Acts 28:22). In other words, "what is on your mind."
6. Paul wrote in Romans 12:3, "For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more

- highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith."
7. The word is often translated "mind," and it can refer to either a spiritual mind or a carnal mind.
  8. Spiritual mind: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:5).
  9. Carnal mind: "Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things" (Phil. 3:19).
  10. This involves our entire personality, the whole bent of our inner nature -- a man is either carnally minded or spiritually minded.
  11. Because of our union with Christ, God wants us to "seek those things which are above" and "set our affection on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col. 3:1, 2).
  12. A.T. Pierson said, "From the moment of faith in Christ, being thus bound to Him and identified with Him, there should be an *absolute cessation of all known sin* -- nay, more, the level of earth should be left below and behind for a new level of an essentially heavenly life -- lived in Christ" (*Newness of Life*).
  13. Or as W.H. Griffith Thomas put it: "Thus, by realizing our identification with Christ and acting upon it, our condition is made to agree with our position, and holiness is that blessed outcome."

### **III. THE REVELATION (3:3, 4) When Christ shall appear**

1. Right now our "life is hid with Christ in God" (3:3), but some day soon "Christ, who is our life, shall appear," and we shall also appear with Him in glory (3:4).
2. First we recognize our union with Christ (3:1; cf. 2:12, 20). Then we recognize our life is hidden with Him (3:3). Next we recognize the assurance of our future manifestation with Him (3:4).
3. Right now we are hidden and unseen from man. Our Lord wept over the city of Jerusalem, and said in Luke 19:42, "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes."
4. Being hid in Christ also indicates safety. Isaiah 32:2 says, "And a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."
5. The phrase, "hid with Christ in God" (3:3) also indicates security. We are safe in Christ.

6. When Christ returns, we will no longer be hidden but will be manifested with Him in glory (3:4).

### **CONCLUSION:**

1. The teaching that Christ "is our life" (3:4) is seldom considered by many Christians. They may say, "Christ is the most important person in my life," but Colossians 3:4 says Christ "is our life."
2. First John 5:11 says, "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son."
3. The apostle Paul preached to the Athenians on Mars' hill, "For in him (Christ) we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:28).
4. I will conclude with an interesting story told by W.A. Criswell, who for many years was the pastor of the First Baptist Church of Dallas, Texas.

As you know, Napoleon, when he conquered Europe, Napoleon took his family and he sat them every one in great places over the many kingdoms and states and nations of Europe that he'd conquered. Whenever he'd conquered a country, he'd put his kinsmen over it to be king over it or to be emperor over it or to be ruler over it. He took his entire family and spread them around over all of those conquered nations of Europe.

Well, in the days of his glory, Napoleon heard of an uncle that he had never known. His mother was named Letitia Bonaparte, and was born in Corsica. And there had come from Corsica this uncle of his mother, Letitia Bonaparte. And he was a humble pastor of a little church seventeen miles from Florence, and the town in which he ministered had less than a hundred people in it.

And when Napoleon heard of that humble pastor, his uncle, in that little place, he called his general in and sent him, with twenty men, to that little town seventeen miles from Florence, and said, "When you see him, you tell him that no kinsmen of Napoleon Bonaparte ever is to be in a humble ministry, but he's to be the leader, to walk in aristocracy and in pride and in glory! And when you see my uncle, you bring him to Paris, and you tell him we will make of him a bishop. But mostly we will make of him a cardinal in the church."

So this man came, and the history book describes, he was dressed in gold and in finery and a plume on his helmet, with his twenty men, and came up to this humble place, this humble cottage where that pastor lived in a little town of a hundred people, and said to him, "The great Napoleon, the great Napoleon has asked me to come to you and to bring you to Paris. And the

least you can be a bishop of any diocese that you choose. Or at least we shall make you a cardinal and give you a cardinal's hat."

And the humble pastor replied, "No. Nay. No. These are my people and I am their shepherd and I'll not leave them."

The man pressed it upon him and the humble pastor said, "No. These are my people, my sheep, and I'm their shepherd."

And the great general said, "Then I shall take you by force. We'll take you to Paris and make you a cardinal or a bishop against your will."

And the humble man replied, "Sir, if you do that, what would these dear people think and what would the world think? That against my will you forced me into this exalted place when I want to be a humble shepherd with these people?"

Crestfallen, the man returned to Paris and made his report to Napoleon.

Now, I want to tell you what happened. On the Isle of St. Helena, in the middle of the South Atlantic where Napoleon spent the rest of his life in exile on that lonely isle. He died at fifty-one years of age. News came to him on the Isle of St. Helena. News came to him that his uncle had died the shepherd of that little flock at the age of ninety and five years, full of days, blessed of God, loved by the people, honored by the Spirit of God.

And Napoleon found himself facing over the lonely waters of the South Atlantic with a broken spirit and a broken heart and with a remembrance that God's blessings are not upon those who are great and mighty in war or in battle or in finance or in political life or in fame or fortune or any other way by which the world brings its emoluments to a man, but the man is blessed and rich and happy when he humbly and beautifully serves God.

And that is our humble appeal to you in your life. What did the Book say? Set your affection, set your mind, set your goal, set the pattern of your life not upon the things of the earth, the cheap rewards and emoluments of this earth, but set your heart and your mind and the pattern of your life and the energy of your days and the dreams and visions of every tomorrow, set them upon the will of God to serve the Lord. And if you do, all the days of your life will be full and rich and you'll come to the end of the way grateful to God for blessings indescribably precious. God grant it to you, to us.