

“Dead in Christ”
Colossians 3:3-4
(Preached at Trinity, July 29, 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. Verse 1 speaks of our resurrection. We have been raised up with Christ. It speaks of our union with Christ. His life is our life, His death is our death, His resurrection is our resurrection. Paul is saying, “Since it is true that you have been raised up with Christ who is seated at the right hand of God, let this be reflected in your life.”
Instead of being earthly minded with your mind bound by earthly things, set your mind upon heavenly things that reflect the Lordship of Christ.
2. **Verse 3** attaches the reason for this way of thinking.
“For” you have died. The word γὰρ can also be translated “because” expressing the cause or reason for something.
Paul is saying, look to things above because you have died to this world.
3. **Verse 3** here is tightly connected to **Verse 1**
“you have been raised up with Christ . . . for you have died.”
In other words, before there can be a resurrection there must be a death.
4. Paul is saying the Christian has died to this earth and has been raised to things above. John Eadie writes – “Neither “seek nor savour” the things of earth; for having died, and having been even buried with Christ, your sphere of being, action, and enjoyment, is totally different from your former state.”¹
5. The spiritual realities of the resurrection are enjoyed now.
“your life is hidden with Christ.” – Paul is speaking of spiritual life enjoyed now, yet the fullness is yet to come. The hidden source of this life is Christ.
6. John Woodhouse – “There has been a decisive end to your old life. The new life we have in Christ cannot be thought of as an add-on to the old life. The new life only comes on the other side of a death. As we trust in Christ, his death is our death. The old life is over.”²
7. Paul’s concern is not with our past death but with the present consequences of the death.

¹ John Eadie, *A Commentary on the Greek Text of the Epistle of Paul to the Colossians*, ed. W. Young, Second Edition., (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1884), 211.

² John Woodhouse, *Colossians and Philemon: So Walk in Him*, Focus on the Bible Commentary, (Ross-shire, Great Britain: Christian Focus, 2011), 184.

I. "For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God."

A. The Christian has died to his former life

1. The Bible teaches this over and over

Matthew 16:24-25 NAU - "Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. ²⁵ "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it."

Galatians 2:20 NAU - "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 6:14 NAU - " But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world."

Romans 6:6-8 NAU - "knowing this, that our old self was crucified with *Him*, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; ⁷ for he who has died is freed from sin. ⁸ Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him,"

2. The Christian is dead and buried with Christ. What does it mean to be dead?

a. You don't need me to explain this in the physical sense. Death brings an end to our physical existence upon the earth. The body ceases to function. The body no longer feels, it no longer has desires, it is no longer affected by the things of life.

b. Paul is speaking of a different kind of death, but it is similar to our physical death.

The Christian is dead to this world. It doesn't attract us.

It is no longer our chief priority.

It doesn't hold our affections.

It is no longer seen as our reward, our goal.

c. The Christian is dead to sin – it no longer rules us

3. It isn't an absolute separation from this life or this world. It doesn't mean we are uncaring and unconcerned about life around us.

The resurrection means we no longer look to this world as our priority, our ultimate source of joy and confidence and peace and comfort.

a. It means if everything we have is gone tomorrow we haven't lost our true treasure

b. It means if we lose our freedom we haven't lost our true liberty.

c. It means we recognize that what we have cannot be taken away
Jim Elliot: "*He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose.*"

Matthew 6:19-21 NAU - "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ "But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; ²¹ for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

- B. Paul gives us some application to how the risen man lives
See Verses 5, 8-10, 12-17
1. The risen man should be characterized by mercy, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, forgiveness, and above all love
 2. Only the risen man is able to do this
- II. Jesus described it as a crucified life
Matthew 16:24-25 NAU - "Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.
 Paul likewise:
Galatians 2:20 NAU - "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me
- A. One of the terrible consequences of the fall is pride and self-centeredness
1. Everything revolves around the all-encompassing "ME"
 - a. My life, my plans, my hopes, my dreams, my job, my family, my advancement. He talks about his rights. He boasts about his accomplishments.
 - b. It is the chief cause of discontent, of sadness & depression, even suicide.
 2. Even his labors in religion are in the interest of self. He may become very zealous, but his motivation is always on gaining for himself. Take away the personal gain and the labor ends.
 3. If you want to test how much this intoxication of self is true in your own life examine how much time you spend talking about yourself – your needs, your accomplishments, your desires. When around others are you more likely to enquire of their life or are you more inclined to talk about yourself. This is one of the dangers of social media - it encourages self-exaltation.
 4. The sad reality is it is a self-defeating life
James 4:6 NAS - "God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble."
- B. The Christian life has died to self. It looks beyond self and considers the needs of others.
Colossians 3:12-13 NAU - "put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; ¹³ bearing with one another, and forgiving each other"
1. It is a life of following after Christ. It is a life of seeking to exalt Him instead of exalting self. Everything must be done with a motive of glorifying Christ.
Colossians 3:17 NAU - "Whatever you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father."
 2. Jesus made this demand upon all who would follow Him
Matthew 16:24-25 NAS - "If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me."
 a. Jesus is saying in **Matthew 16** that coming to Him means dying to self. Instead of living for self the Christian has a higher goal—to live for Christ

- b. Jesus said,
"If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself,
and take up his cross, and follow Me.
 - c. It was prevailing custom for a condemned man to carry his cross to the place of execution
 - d. For the man coming to Christ it signifies a full and complete identification with the life of Christ. It is no longer about "Me" but about "Him."
3. Paul set Christ as our model. If we are crucified with Christ we should demonstrate His selflessness
Philippians 2:3-5 NAU - "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; ⁴ do not *merely* look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. ⁵ Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,"

- III. How is such a life possible? Only through our union with Christ
Verse 1 - "Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ"
Verse 3 - "your life is hidden with Christ in God."
Verse 4 - "When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory."
Verse 11 - "but Christ is all, and in all."
- A. Paul frequently spoke of our union with Christ
 - 1. Paul wasn't saying that our personality is somehow merged with Christ. But he was saying that we have a unique relationship with Christ whereby we share in His accomplished life and work as our Redeemer.
 - 2. Paul said in Galatians that we have died, yet we live – yet it is not us who live but Christ in us.
Paul is saying the same thing here:
Colossians 3:3-4 NAU - "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."
 - 3. We are now one with Him. We have put Him on as a garment. We are clothed with Christ.
Romans 13:14 NAU - "But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to *its* lusts."
 - B. We must not miss the importance of this union.
 - 1. John Murray wrote in his treatise, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied* John Murray – "Union with Christ is the central truth of the whole doctrine of salvation not only in its application but also in its once-for-all accomplishment in the finished work of Christ. All to which the people of God have been predestined in the eternal election of God, all that has been secured and procured for them in the once-for-all accomplishment of redemption, all of which they become the actual partakers in the application of redemption, and all that by god's grace they will become in the state of

consummated bliss is embraced within the compass of union and communion with Christ.³

2. It is because of our union with Christ that we are able to live a life of obedience and a life of good works.

John 15:4-6 NAU - "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, so neither *can* you, unless you abide in Me. ⁵ "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing. ⁶ "If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch, and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned."

Conclusion:

1. Is this the reality of your life! Your life is hid with Christ. You are united with Him.
2. You have been freed from the curse of the Law and freed to live a life of obedience in Christ.
3. Everything has changed! May God grant you to live like you dwell with Christ!

³ Murray, John, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1955) Page 161, 170.