

Jesus is Our Life: Past, Present and Future
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Col. 3:1-4

PAST

If (since) then (therefore): "If this be so, if you were raised with Christ, what follows? You must realize the change" (Lightfoot)

"IF" does not convey uncertainty but is a first class conditional clause which assumes that the statement that follows is true. One can better read "since" or "in view of the fact." In contrast to mystical promises of achieving your "human potential", Paul unveils the true way to "be all that you can be", God's plan for the "human potential movement."

Spurgeon adds: "The "if" is used logically, not theologically: by way of argument, and not by way of doubt. All who believe in Christ are raised with Christ."

Paul is reaffirming that our co-resurrection with Christ is a fact and is not in doubt.

Recognizing our union with Christ, we are called on to show His life in our lives. You can know Colossians 1-2 from memory and everyone knows you know it but if you do not work out your salvation in Colossians 3-4 you are all talk with no walk.

"Reputation is what other people think about you; character is what God knows to be true about you."

Raised up with is a single Greek verb sunegeiro which means raise together (Col 2:12; Eph. 2:6). The past tense indicates our resurrection with Christ is a past completed action, reckoned as true in our life the moment we by faith received Christ Jesus as Savior and Lord. We were raised spiritually and this identification is the foundation truth for our new spiritual position and power to walk in newness of life.

PRESENT

Keep seeking the things above: "aim at and seek the [rich, eternal treasures] that are above" (Amp); "All your aims must center in heaven, where reigns the Christ who has thus exalted you, enthroned on God's right hand" (Lightfoot); "give your attention to the things of heaven" (BBE) "focus on the things that are above" (GWT). The "things above" (the upward things, the treasure in heaven) is emphatically placed first in this clause, literally "the things above, keep on seeking."

"The things above": "The upward things" (cf. Phil 3:13; treasure in heaven, Matt. 6:20). Paul gives this ideal and goal in place of merely ascetic rules, reminding the Colossians that they have been raised with Christ. This is the path to holiness, not self-denial, angelic experiences, or ritual keeping. They should no longer be living the old life they lived before their salvation, but now they should lay hold of the eternal life of Christ since they have been raised to live on another plane in another kingdom. They should not be ignorant or forgetful of who they are in Christ and how they are to live. All sinful passion is controlled and conquered by the power of the indwelling Christ (Christ in you the hope of glory) and our union with Him. Obviously, the thoughts of heaven that are to fill the believer's mind must derive from Scripture. The Bible is the only reliable source of knowledge about the character of God and the values of heaven. When heavenly values dominate the mind godly behavior is the natural outflow. Sin that so easily entangle us will be conquered and humility, a sacrificial spirit, and assurance will result.

The symbol of a Christian's life is "thumbs up"--"all is well," but also our direction is up, reminding us of where our true resource is found. Seek after and strive earnestly, strive to find something, devote serious effort to realize one's desire or objective, to aim at, to try to obtain some state or condition. Illus: submarine has periscope to see those things that are above. We live in the world, but we must set our minds (affections) on things above, for we are citizens of a heavenly country.

An article in a San Francisco newspaper reported that a young man who once found a \$5 bill on the street resolved that from that time on he would never lift his eyes while walking. The paper went on to

say that over the years he accumulated, among other things, 29,516 buttons, 54,172 pins, 12 cents, a bent back, and a miserly disposition. But he also lost something—the glory of sunlight, the radiance of the stars, the smiles of friends, and the freshness of blue skies.

Set your mind:

"Have a relish for things above", "study industriously things above" (Spurgeon),

"Set your affection on things above" (Webster),

"the things above, keep on setting your mind upon", (Literal)

"Set your heart on things above, not on earthly things" (Montgomery)

"And set your minds and keep them set on what is above (the higher things)," (Amp)

"Focus your minds on the things above," (Jewish NT)

Setting the mind denotes the whole action of the affections and will as well as the reason.

Phroneo refers to the basic orientation, bent, and thought patterns of the mind, rather than to the mind or intellect itself, and refers more to inner disposition, while "keep seeking" is rather practical pursuit.

The sure safeguard against seeking things below, is not to set the mind upon them.

Setting the mind on things above involves an act of one's will and is something we must do continually.

Joni Eraeckson Tada writes: "Why all the verbs in the present tense? Because God wants to get your heart beating with a present-tense excitement, a right-around-the-corner anticipation of Heaven. Isn't that the way strangers on foreign soil are supposed to feel about their homeland?"

MacArthur has these practical words concerning maintenance of an "upward mindset"

"Paul is not advocating a form of mysticism. Rather, he desires that the Colossians' preoccupation with heaven govern their earthly responses. To be preoccupied with heaven is to be preoccupied with the One who reigns there and His purposes, plans, provisions, and power. It is also to view the things, people, and events of this world through His eyes and with an eternal perspective.... When Christians begin to live in the heavenlies...they will live out their heavenly values in this world to the glory of God."

In *Pilgrim's Progress*, Bunyan tells of a man "who looked no way but downward." This poor creature was on his knees in the dirt and filth, working constantly with a rake, trying to unearth some choice morsel that would enrich his life. Yet all the while a bright crown of immeasurable worth was within reach just above him. Bunyan reminds that the rewards of heaven have no appeal unless we set our mind "on things above, not on things on the earth."

Motivated and empowered by His Spirit we master "things" and do not let our possessions "possess" us! "Feet on earth, mind in heaven but not "so heavenly minded that we are of no earthly good." Deep-seated, lasting lifestyle change is rooted in and flows from change in mental focus. How I live flows from how I think.

SUMMARY: PAST AND PRESENT

For you have died....

Note "died" is first in Greek sentence to emphasize this life changing event. "For [as far as this world is concerned] you have died"

And your life is hidden.... "your [new, real] life is hidden with Christ in God " (Amp); "you have a secret life with Christ" (BBE)

Hidden is perfect tense which indicates that it was hidden at some point in time and remains hidden or concealed which conveys the ideas of permanency and irrevocability. The death (aorist tense) is over, but the results of the hiding (perfect tense) of life in Him abide. "The 'death' is fact accomplished; the resulting 'life' is fact continuing."

Three thoughts are suggested by this figure "hidden":

(1) Safety or security: Believers are permanently hidden, securely locked together with Christ. Satan can't break the lock and no burglar (even false teachers) can break the combination. Thus a believer's salvation is safe and secure with Christ. Indeed as Paul writes elsewhere, "who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

(2) Identity. Believers are now intimately linked together with Christ in God. This picture expresses the fellowship of the believer, his identity with his risen Lord. Ignatius wrote, "You are then all fellow travelers and carry with you God, and the Temple, and Christ, and holiness, and are in all ways adorned by commandments of Jesus Christ."

(3). Secrecy/mystery. Life is to be directed toward its source and away from the visible and carnal.

FUTURE

When Christ who is our life is revealed....

The hidden life is not hidden forever. There shall be a glorious consummation at the manifestation of the Son. The writer of Hebrews expresses the aim of the Father to "bring many sons to glory."

One day we will be seen as we really are and the lost world will see who we are in Christ for when we see Christ we shall be like Him.

Then you also with him will be revealed in glory....

That is the joy of this blessed hope. For this the called are kept (Jude 1) and though the adversaries and difficulties are many, "Faithful is He Who calls." Our calling is accompanied with a great hope (Eph 4:4). Those that experience the call not only partake of justification, adoption, and sanctification in this life, but when Christ who is their life shall appear, they shall also appear with Him in glory.