



# Alive in Christ!

[2:20—3:4]

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*“If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourselves to decrees, such as, ‘Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!’ (which all refer to things destined to perish with the using). . . .*

*“If then 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” (2:20—3:4).*

Different word pictures in the New Testament are used to describe the marked change that occurs when a person becomes a Christian. Paul affirmed that a person becomes a “new creature” (2 Corinthians 5:17). In Colossians the figure of speech is laying aside the “old self” and putting on the “new self” (3:9, 10). Jesus referred to it as a “new birth” (John 3:5).

Becoming a Christian is not adopting a new lifestyle; it is becoming a new person! Twice in Colossians 2:20—3:4 Paul referred to our having died. While this death and rebirth may take place in a short period of time, the making of a Christian, presenting oneself “complete in Christ,” takes time (1:28). Some areas of our lives must be worked with. We are right with God, but we must continue to grow. We know our *position*, a relationship with God and Christ that is real, but the *condition* of our lives daily improves as we mature for Christ.

Three areas we need to work on are identified. The first area consists of the things *to which* we have died. The second concerns the things *for which* we live. And the third relates to the *Someone in whom* we are hidden.

## THE THINGS TO WHICH WE HAVE DIED (2:20-23)

This truth is first of all stated negatively. Evil things no longer have a place in our lives—they no longer dominate us, they no longer control us.

A dead man is no longer moved by the attractions of the world. Fleshly desires do not control him. The devil can no longer dominate his mind. Rules, regulations, philosophies, and even self-abasement do not appeal to him any more. One reason stands out as to why this is so. He is dead!

Paul used as a simple introduction to this section, “If you have died. . . .” The implication is that if these things are still controlling your life, then you have not died! He mentioned three problems the Colossians were having.

Man-made rules and ordinances were a problem. They were being told by false teachers that they could not touch, taste, or handle certain things. While Paul was certainly not saying that the Christian is to be involved in sinful things, he was saying that the Christian is not to be governed by man-made rules and regulations.

Philosophy or a show of wisdom based upon the traditions of men was a problem for the

Colossians. Christians are guided by God, not by man's inventions or wisdom.

Asceticism, the abusing of the body for religious purposes, was a third problem. Abusing the body does not make one more spiritual.

We must be careful to refuse man-devised worship. God has specified what He desires in worship. We do not have a right to impose our ideas. We are to worship in accordance with the spirit and truth (John 4:24). We are to worship with the proper attitude and in accordance with the revealed Word. Jesus prayed to His Father, "Sanctify them in the truth; Thy word is truth" (John 17:17). Thus, we are to be sure we have a command of the Lord for every act of worship. Biblical authority is essential! Why do we do what we do in worship? Is it because we have been authorized by the Scriptures or by man?

### **THE THINGS FOR WHICH WE LIVE (3:1, 2)**

Now for the positive! We have died! We have been raised with Christ! The same line of thought is expressed earlier in this letter and in Romans:

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 (2:12).

Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life (Romans 6:3, 4).

The fact of the death and resurrection in which we participated are mentioned, and the time in which they occurred is emphasized. In the act of baptism, mentioned in both passages, the burial and resurrection occurred.

Two aspirations are essential now. Paul said, "Seeking the things above, . . ." (3:1). The NIV has, "Set your hearts on things above." A dead man does not have the same desires as a living man. We must learn to rechannel our desires. What is *most* important to you? Remember, "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matthew 6:21). The command of this verse is imperative. We *must* take the responsibility. A new person does not come from the waters of baptism full grown. Much growing has to take place after baptism! The responsibility is ours!

Paul also said, "Set your mind on the things above" (3:2a). Love is an action of the will, a determination made and followed through. But this is an imperative! You must "set your mind"!

Notice the contrast: "Not on the things that are on earth" (3:2b). John showed the same contrast: "Do not love the world, nor the things in the world . . ." (1 John 2:15).

### **THE SOMEONE IN WHOM WE ARE HIDDEN (3:3, 4)**

How we look at our Christian lives is vital to our spiritual growth. We read,

I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; . . . (Galatians 2:20).

. . . Christ shall even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain (Philippians 1:20, 21).

Knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, that our body of sin might be done away with, . . . (Romans 6:6).

Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God (1 Peter 4:1, 2).

Do you not know . . . that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body (1 Corinthians 6:19, 20).

When we became Christians we surrendered our lives to our Lord and Master. But remember that we are not full-grown at birth. We will be growing the rest of our lives!

What happens when we stumble and find ourselves still drawn to the evil desires we once knew? The "old man" is trying to resurrect himself! We still have to keep him dead. We have to develop a totally new viewpoint. Paul was writing to Christians when he said to "set your mind on the things above."

### **CONCLUSION**

We have put on Christ! He is our Mediator. He is our Lord. He will be with us even to the end of the world. Hide your life in Christ! Surrender your will and receive His.