

# Because Christ Rose

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[ 0 : 00 ] Colossians chapter 3, if you have a Bible with you, that's where we're going to be this morning, Colossians chapter 3, verse 1 through 4. If you were here last week or the week before that, you might say to yourself, this is Resurrection Sunday, why are we still in Colossians?

Well, as I began to look at it and see where we were headed over the course of a couple of weeks, I noticed that Colossians 3, 1 through 4 deals with the resurrection, so I thought, this is great. We'll just stay right in Colossians and we'll preach on the resurrection all at the same time.

So, you're welcome. You're welcome. Colossians chapter 3, verse 1 through 4. Let's read the text and then we'll pray and then we'll get started.

Beginning in verse 1, it says, If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things that are above, not on things that are on earth, for you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. Let's pray.

[ 1 : 18 ] Father, we confess to you that we need your spirit to understand what's in front of us. We struggle in our own minds and our own hearts with thoughts and ideas and things that are put into our minds from ourselves, from the people around us, from our culture.

And what we want to do this morning, Fathers, we want to understand what you have inspired by your Holy Spirit, that it might shape and mold our hearts and our thinking.

And I pray, Father, that you would illuminate us through your word. Help us to know who you are, what you've done, what you require of us. Help us to see the splendor and the glory of all your work.

And we pray this in Christ's name. Amen. Amen. So I think it's pretty much time to plant some things. At least it is at our house. At our house, my back porch has got numerous number of pots and they have all kinds of seeds in them.

We've got cucumber. We've got zucchini. We have got some squash. We have got some arugula. We've got some oregano, some dill, some basil, some mint.

[ 2 : 32 ] We've got tomato. We've got... Did I leave anything out? Shh. Oh, my goodness. Okra. Oh, okra is... Okay. Okra is fine if you like it.

It doesn't come off the plant fried, so I'm not sure I like it. The coolest thing was yesterday. We got up and I think it might have been the squash or it could have been the zucchini one.

And there were two sprouts in the pot yesterday morning. And there was a spot where you could tell a sprout was trying to push the dirt up, right? You could just look. It was just a crack, right?

Just a little bit of crack that you could see. And by the end of the day, guess what? That dirt was flopped over and that sprout was tall. And I was just like, that is so cool.

Like, I am not a plant person, right? You know, I'll eat some plants. But like, I just don't do much with plants after that. And... But it reminds me of the illustration that Jesus used in John's Gospel, chapter 15, verse 5, where he says this.

[ 3 : 35 ] He says, I am the vine and you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, it is he that bears much fruit. For apart from me, you can do nothing.

I'm the vine. You are the branches. Abide in me and I in you. It is he that bears much fruit.

For apart from me, you can do nothing. We know this illustration from Jesus. We know this truth from Jesus.

But I think often as Christians, we don't understand really exactly the full implication of what he's talking about. And this verse is very much connected to the passage that we're looking at this morning.

Jesus is basically saying that because he's the vine, the branches are vitally connected to him. So the branch gets its life from the vine.

[ 4 : 33 ] The branch gets its DNA from the vine. The branch gets its nourishment from the vine. Anything that happens to the vine happens to the branches. If you pour things around the roots that are bad for the whole plant, it's going to make it to the branches because it's going to come through the vine.

There is this united to Christ idea throughout the New Testament. It's this idea that as Christians, we are united to Christ.

We are in him. And in our passage in front of us in Colossians, it says that we were raised with him. We have a spiritual connection to Christ. So that what happened to Christ happened to us. He died. We died.

He rose. We rose. He ascended. We ascended. He rules and reigns. We rule and reign with him. Paul talks about this same thing in Ephesians chapter 2.

[ 5 : 40 ] Where he talks about in verse 4 that God's rich in mercy. He has this great love, verse 5, that when we were dead in our trespasses, he made us alive together with Christ.

So when Christ was made alive there in the tomb, we were made alive with him. Verse 6 says that we were raised up with him. That we were seated with him.

If we are Christians, and we're truly Christians in heart, not just in name and claim, then we are vitally, really connected to Christ.

We are united to Christ as branches are united to a vine. We have a vital, actual, real connection of spiritual life, of supernatural spiritual life in connection to Christ.

And without that connection, we can produce no fruit of righteousness in our lives. Now, why is all of that important? That's a big background. That's a whole series of sermons as a background to get you into our text today.

[ 6 : 48 ] Because what the Colossians were facing is they were facing people telling them that if you want to live the full Christian life, and if you want to be able to know how to live the abundant Christian life, then do all of these false things that we tell you to do.

And Paul is basically coming and saying in chapter 3, no, no, no, you want a full Christian life? Then you need to know who you are and what God commands. And that's our sermon today.

Who are you and what does God command? And it is this idea of our union with Christ that describes who we are. And I hope that you'll appreciate and see the splendor, the glory, the majesty, the mystery of this thing.

Because there's parts of it that I can explain and parts of it that I can't. And so I want us to see there's four things that he tells us in those four verses about who we are.

And there's two things that he tells us about what we should do. So let's talk about who we are. He talks about who we are by talking about our union with Christ. And the first place that he mentions this is in verse 1, where he talks about our union with Christ in his resurrection.

[ 8 : 08 ] He says, if then you have been raised with Christ. He's assuming the reality of this for the Colossians. He's saying, assuming that you really have been saved, assuming you have been raised from the dead with him.

Now we need to take care of a little problem right here. Because when Paul says, if you have been raised, the good Christian is going to be thinking to themselves, wait a minute, what do you mean have been raised?

Like raised in the past? I thought the resurrection was going to be something in the future. Right? Well, that's true. There is coming a day, a future bodily resurrection for all God's people.

That day has not yet come. But it is what we long for and look for. That day is coming when this old body changes and goes on to, and we have a new body.

But here in this verse, Paul's talking about a reality of a resurrection that has happened for the Colossians. That is not that future resurrection, but it is a spiritual resurrection, as they have been resurrected with Christ.

[ 9 : 23 ] So this resurrection means that they are truly alive. We were dead in our trespasses and sins, but now we've been resurrected in Christ.

His resurrection life flows through us because of our connection to him as a vine to a branch. You can think of it this way, that when he went to the cross, your name was written upon his hand, and when he came out of the tomb, your name was still there.

That as he died, you died. As he rose, you rose. This is who you are as a Christian. You are a resurrected, spiritually connected individual to Christ.

He brings up a second union with Christ. In verse 3, he says that we have died. Now, he doesn't say you have died with Christ. I'm reading that there because in chapter 2, verse 20, he says the exact same phrase, but there he adds, died with Christ.

And he's using it in the same way that is used verse 1. So I'm assuming that he means that we have died with Christ. Now we've got another problem we've got to deal with. Which is it?

[10:40] Which is it? Were you dead in your sins and made alive, or did you die to your sin? You understand what I'm saying?

You've got these two things that are here. You've got this idea that we were dead in our trespasses and sins, yet God made us alive together with Christ. But there's also something about that we have died with Christ to sin.

Hopefully you can begin to see the difference between those two. The point is that when you are lost, when you are without Christ, when you're not a Christian, you live on an earthly plane in which everybody can see.

You're fully alive in a material, physical way. But on a spiritual plane, the image of God in you was ruined, marred, and harmed at creation, at the fall.

And so because of that, on the spiritual plane, we are dead in our sins. All of us, enemies of God, under his wrath.

[11:46] All we did was sin, and sin was in all that we did. We are like the walking dead. We are spiritual zombies infected with sin, and it fundamentally changed everything about us, and what we need is to have another fundamental change to life.

But we died to that life. In Christ's death, we died with him, and in that death, we died to sin, we died to rebellion, we died to that life, because he took our name to the cross.

And it's because of this that Paul says, so set your mind on things above. And the third, the third part of who we are, our union with Christ, is he talks about that we are hidden with Christ.

You see that in verse 3? In verse 3 he says, your life is hidden with Christ. Now what does this word hidden mean? The word hidden means that it is something that really exists that you can't see with your eyes.

Think of Jesus Christ right now. Can you see Jesus Christ with your eyes? No. No, you can't see him right now. Why can't you see him right now?

[13:02] He's with the Father. He's seated upon the right hand of the Father. And we cannot see him. We see him by faith. And one day, our eyes will see him.

But we can't see him now. Because he is hidden from us. That's what Paul is saying, is that there's a reality about you as a Christian, that you're hidden with Christ.

And this real vital connection that you have with Christ, this resurrected life that you have, because you're connected to him, is a thing that is hidden from view.

That the world cannot see it. We are hidden with Christ where he is. We're hidden with Christ in God. Which means that where Christ is seated, we are there too.

The fourth thing he uses to describe who we are, is this union with Christ in his second coming.

Verse 4 gives us this great thought, that when Christ appears, that is going to be his second coming, when he comes back, then you as a Christian will also appear with him in glory.

[14:21] Our union with Christ is not just in what he did in the past, but it's also what is yet to come. We are united to him in these things.

To appear with him in glory, then, is going to mean that this external life, this body that we have right now, is going to morph and change and be transformed to match the supernatural life that we already have.

You see, where we are as Christians, is that we have already obtained and yet not yet. We have all that we need, but not yet.

We're fully saved, but not yet. We're fully supernatural, but not yet. We're fully, you understand what I'm saying? The beginning stages are there, but the harvest and consummation is yet to come.

And that's what Paul talks about in 1 Corinthians 15. When he says this, I tell you this, brothers, flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

[15:25] Behold, I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet, for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will

be raised imperishable.

Right there, if you're a Christian, you have already been raised spiritually. That's why you're saved. That's why you have that life connected to him. You're intertwined with him.

You abide in him. You get your life from him. And that's the reality of who you are now. And one day, one day, when he comes back at the last trumpet, then the body will follow suit and will be raised imperishable.

Verse 53, for this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. Now, that's a lot of information pretty quickly.

And that whole subject matter is vast and deep. And I'm not saying I can get us to the realities of all of these things, but this is who Christians are. If you trust in the Lord Jesus Christ with all your heart, soul, and mind, this is who you are.

[16:43] You are a branch connected to Christ. And if you are not a Christian, then you are not sharing in these realities.

And you're not sharing in these realities because you have, frankly, a stiff neck and a prideful heart. Because with that prideful heart, you refuse to see yourself as anything but okay.

You think you're just as good as anybody that goes down to that church. You think you do just as well, if not better, than many of those people. But you don't do it for the glory of Christ.

You do it for your own self-satisfaction. Because you know, as sinners, we tend to compare ourselves with one another.

But to become a Christian, you have to stop comparing yourself to one another and compare yourself to Christ. And so long as you remain stiff-necked and refuse to look at your own sin, so long as you lack this humility, you need to understand that God opposes the proud.

[17:53] and gives grace to the humble. And if you stay in that condition, then you will suffer under His punishment forever.

But these realities, you can share in these realities by repenting of being the boss of your own life, by trusting in Christ, by repenting of being the one to call the shots in your own life.

By turning to Christ and asking Him for forgiveness. But you know, I need to make application of these truths of who we are to you who are Christians.

I would probably make the assumption the vast majority in here are. And so I want you to try to grasp what this is going to mean for you. And I want to start by telling you just a real brief story. My dad fought in Vietnam and he told us a lot of different stories about being over there. But one of the stories is a story about a scar that's on his leg. That scar on his leg is from a sniper bullet that just grazed his leg.

[19:05] He was a lieutenant when he went over in the army and then eventually became a captain there in the field and he was a part of the artillery. And I think about that and I think about what he suffered and sacrificed on the field there.

And it makes me think about so many who have sacrificed a lot more than that. Their lives were lost there on the field. And I think about that because that sacrifice of those who have gone before us, those who have given their lives in whatever war from our country, they did so in order to provide for me the freedom to live my life.

They did that in order to provide the freedom for you to live your life. And like it or not, they did that to provide the freedom for those who are anti-military, anti-American to be able to live their lives.

And here's the thing that we've got to understand about the work of Jesus and his death and sacrifice and the military sacrifice of our men and women who have fought for our freedoms.

They are nothing alike. They are nothing alike. And here's why. My dad's sacrifice on the field of battle does nothing to vitally, really, deeply, actually change anything in anybody.

[20:37] That's why people who've been died for still riot, protest, and do other things. Because that death, the death of the military that serve us, is a death that helps us to maintain our autonomy.

It helps us to maintain our self-rule, to do what I want to do with my life because that's the way our whole system is designed. But Jesus' sacrifice and Jesus' work is all about losing your autonomy. It's about giving up control of your life. It's about turning it all over for Christ to become your life. You are a branch to be vitally connected to Christ with this spiritual life.

And Christian, this is who you are. Our obedience to Christ as Christians is not about having someone do something for us, then we get to live our own lives building up our own worth and hope to present that back to God as being something akin to what He did.

We're not living private lives any longer. We are simply acting out the vitality that we have from the vine.

[ 22 : 03 ] We are living on His resurrection power. And that ought to encourage you as a Christian. That ought to encourage you. I mean, if you think about the vine and the branch for any length of time, the life of the vine is flowing through the branch.

The branch is naturally producing the fruit, the vine wants. It's in line with the vine. It's the same as the vine. The branch is not producing fruit in order to get grafted into the vine, but it's producing fruit because it's already connected to the vine.

What a glorious truth. Do you understand what I'm saying? You're not trying to be obedient to God so that maybe He might be pleased with you and say, okay, it's fine, you can come to heaven.

No, if you're saved, you are connected to Christ, you rose with Christ and therefore as you obey Him, you're just living out what's already there and true. And so when He gives us commands in Scripture, when we see something maybe that we've never known was there, you don't have to on your own and your own strength and your own power live that out.

you do it by His power for His glory. And so that means two things, really. The first is, okay, well then what are the things that He commands?

[ 23 : 25 ] If I've got all this power and all this strength because I'm connected to Christ, what is it that He commands? Well, that's my second point and I'm fixing to get to it. But the second thing that means is this, for the Christian, the key to full, holy living before God is found in this prayer.

You're already connected to Christ. You go to Him and you talk and you pray and you beseech Him and that's the key to living out His commands. So now let's talk about these commands.

Talk about the what God commands. There's two things that He commands. The first is there in verse 1. He says, seek the things that are above where Christ is seated at the right hand of God to seek.

This word to seek in the Greek means that you are looking for something to obtain it. You're looking to get something so you can hold it. You can hold on to it. It becomes yours. It becomes your property.

It says to seek the things that are above. Okay. What do we mean by above? We mean where Christ is. Okay. Christ is there. So what exactly are the things that are up there where Christ is?

[ 24 : 37 ] It's Him seated at the right hand of God. God. That's what it is. That's the things. What does it mean that He's seated at the right hand of God? That phrase occurs several times in the New Testament.

It occurs from Psalm 110. The basic idea is that Christ rules and reigns. It's His authority. So what Paul is telling Christians is that they should seek for Christ and His authority to seek and to hold and to have and to obtain and to keep Christ and His authority.

Okay. Great. Right? I mean, it sounds pretty simple and straightforward. I mean, if this is who I am, I'm united with Him and the first command that He's giving me because I'm united to Him is seek me.

That seems pretty simple. I mean, I'm a branch connected to a vine and the vine says seek the vine. Okay. Gotcha. Right? Okay.

Well, what's the second command? The second command occurs in verse 2. It says, set your mind on things that are above. Okay. We've got a similar sort of structure going on here, right?

[ 25 : 51 ] It's a little repeated idea but not exactly the same because set your mind is different from seek. To set your mind means to carefully observe. It means to really observe and then develop a measured opinion about something.

It is the opposite of what happens in political talk. Political talk has a tendency to see one headline today that makes a snap decision and next week another headline that reverses that decision.

This is not what that is. This is a careful study. This is an observation. This is trying to understand something and developing a measured opinion around which your whole life gets shaped.

Martin Luther the reformer as he saw abuses in the church sought to correct them, sought to reform them, wrote all kinds of things, was put on trial for the things that he wrote and when he was asked if he would recant his statements said that unless someone could show him by reason of scripture that he could not change his views.

So here I stand. A measured opinion. Paul wants the Colossians to set their minds then positively, negatively, positively to set their minds on things above where Christ is.

[ 27 : 12 ] He's repeating the same idea that he's just talked about. But then negatively he says not on things on earth. Now what does it mean? Earth. Well it's not the monastic life.

It's not okay get rid of your TV get rid of your mowing you know get rid of your house don't have a mortgage don't drive a car go live out in the woods somewhere by yourself that's not what he's talking about here.

In verse 5 he uses the same exact word. He talks about putting to death what's on earth. Putting to death what's of the earth in you. And what is of the earth in you?

Sexual immorality impurity passion evil desire malice anger and on and on he goes. So in other words what's happening here in this text is that the Colossians have been saying to these Christians listen if you want to live a full Christian life and you want to fight against your sin you need to fast talk to angels and sacrifice animals.

And Paul is saying no no no no no no you want to live a full Christian life you're already connected to the full thing. You're plugged in to the system. You're not going by Wi-Fi you're directly connected in.

[ 28 : 22 ] You have all the power that you need in Christ and therefore therefore because of that all you need to do is fight against your sin and stay connected to him.

Paul is saying remember who you are. You died with him. You rose with him. You are seated with him. You're going to come back with him and because of that set your mind on Christ.

And that's where we come to verse 4 where Paul summarizes the whole thing. I could have just read you this verse and we could have talked about everything from here but you needed to see all these verses. Verse 4 says this when Christ who is your life appears then you also will appear with him in glory.

Paul makes this stunning statement about the present reality. Christ is your life. Christ is your life. It's what he says in Philippians chapter 1 verse 21 he says for me to live is Christ and to die is gain. In Galatians 2.20 he says I've been crucified with Christ it's no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me.

[ 29 : 42 ] Christ being your life means that you are to seek and to set your mind upon Christ. You're to marshal out all of your mental emotional spiritual resources to learning and enjoying the fullness of who God is knowing him and his ways and enjoying him and all that you understand of him and he tells us there's a future transformation to happen what's going to happen when Christ appears when he comes back than who we really are that's been hidden from sight that's been unseen by human eyes because of this fallen world who we really are will be seen that's what John tells us John chapter three verse two beloved we are God's children now and what we will be has not yet appeared but we know that when he appears we shall be like him because we shall see him as he is these are glorious truths for

Christ the idea of these commands of running after Christ means that we ought to so cling to Christ so study Christ so learn Christ so observe Christ to take every single nuance of his person of his loves of his thinking that we should know his person that we should know his work that we should know the father we should know his spirit that we should know his church that we should understand his bride that we should know his word know his thoughts his delights we study him we take in everything about him when every one of our children were born there was a moment where nobody else is around and I'm going like so what exactly are you raise the arm look at the fingers it's like you know do they have an earlobe like mine that's disconnected or is it connected do they have webs between their toes are they weird like that or do they you know are they they got something missing you know and every inch of them

I'm like what are you this is so bizarre to see this human being at such a small state you know I don't remember myself that way I just took in everything about my kids and it's just like wow they're just so so precious and you love them beloved we should study Christ we should study Christ we should know him and the second thing is that we should be strangers to sin we should be strangers to sexual sin we should be strangers to covetousness we should be strangers to anger we should be strangers to slander we should be strangers to obscene talk and lying things that hurt other people things that are earthly and maybe it hasn't registered with you yet as a Christian but yes you are united to Christ you have this vital relationship with him and all that you do is from that relationship that both fighting sin and that knowing him and obeying him but this whole thing is a war that we're in because the sin that remains in you is this guerrilla warrior that just wants to take your life down and destroy you so you have to be you have to be vigilant in these things but what an

encouragement to know what an encouragement to know that that Christ as he gives us commands isn't throwing a gauntlet down and challenging us to a duel to ask us to obey but instead is saying listen as I rose you rose you have my power flowing through you because you're connected to me so when

I tell you to obey I'm just telling you to produce the fruit that comes from me in other words because of the power of God who raised his son from the dead that power is now in you raising you from the dead preparing you for an eternal weight of glory ready to be revealed in the last days so when you see temptation to sin and you know everyone have been tempted to sin today maybe you were tempted to be hopeless maybe you were tempted to despair maybe you were tempted to be afraid maybe you were tempted to be angry take heart because Christ rose from the dead so that you could set your mind not on things of earth but on things above take heart because Christ rose to empower you to turn from evil and instead to run after the good Christ rose so that you might be raised to life from death and so what should you do as a Christian I just come back to this final little thought here and that's this you relish in resurrection you take a look at the resurrection you see that he's risen from the dead and that being raised from the dead is everything for the Christian life you pray prayer is your vital connection to Christ and you study his word you study him you get to know him you know how do I get to know my wife do we just spend time together not talking you can't understand anybody if you don't understand their self revelation they've got to tell you about themselves and that's what

[ 35 : 51 ] Christ does in his word but you know maybe maybe there are some of you who are thinking to yourself that sounds like a good life it sounds like a great life to think that God has done this in Christ for us and that we can be united to him and have his power in us so that we can live out the way he's called us to live it I mean he's not just some ogre up there going like look I did this really great thing for you now you get yourself in shape he's not that kind God he he his salvation belongs to him from beginning to end he's the author and the perfecter of our faith he's the one that Paul says I'm convinced of this that whatever he has started he will complete so maybe not being a Christian you think to yourself this is a maybe a life that you would like to live then I challenge you and encourage you turn from being the boss of your own life and instead turn to

Christ trust in him ask him to forgive you and then live with him as the boss of!! vitally connected united with him if then you have been raised with Christ seek the things that are above let's pray together