Hidden in Christ Jesus

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[0:00] 4. It is the transition in the book of Colossians, and therefore these few verses, this short paragraph, is worth spending just a little bit of time on so that we can really set our heart and minds again afresh to begin a new week. Now hear God's word. Colossians chapter 3 verses 1 through to 4. If you then have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on the things that are on the 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.

It's hard to perhaps begin this section, given everything else we've said up to this point, when it mentions this idea of the church, the people of God, being hidden. But this idea of being hidden is to great benefit in many ways, because we recognize that there is a future beyond us, and we know what that future is. It's not a future of uncertainty, but it is a future of things that have already been accomplished in Christ Jesus. But at the cross, Christ has secured everything, and we are just moving into the future that God has already accomplished, planned, and laid out, and we're just yet to move in and enjoy it. Therefore, I just want to take your mind back to how we began this book. And it was with a reminder that grace and peace was not a greeting, but a declaration of what you have in Christ Jesus, that you're a people of grace. We don't deserve anything that we have here, and yet we have it all. To think of ourselves as undeserving people may be quite a negative thing to do, but think about it for at least a while, that what you have, you have because of God's grace and God's mercy. And the peace that you have is because God has lavished you with these gifts that come from him.

We are a people who don't deserve anything, but we have everything in Christ Jesus. That's how the letter begins. And of course, once Paul has laid out that Christ is the center, it would make absolute sense for you to remain in the center and not to move out to other areas. Christ is preeminent, and therefore there's no need to move away from him. To move from the center is to move from him. To move from Christ is to move into error. We've seen all of this so far. And therefore, the full Christian life, a true biblical spirituality, what does a spiritual person look like? Well, it looks like a person who holds fast fast to the center, following Christ, setting their minds on Christ, their hearts on Christ, growing in the knowledge of Christ, recognizing that we are full in Christ Jesus, and we are free in Christ Jesus. We are free from sin, the power of sin, the condemnation, and we are free to love God with all our heart, soul, and mind. Something which we could not do if we were not saved. It is not possible for an unbeliever to love God. It is not possible for an unbeliever to have that singular devotion. That is something which we can only do once we have been given the grace of God. And you have been given that. You have been given that so that you can have this singular devotion that we now come on to into chapter 3. Now, what chapter 3 does, or at least this short paragraph, is something really important because it puts the focus on identity rather than on belief. Why is this important? Well, because

Christians throughout the ages have been quite adapted in telling you what they believe. And we've all seen Christians who state beliefs and act in a different way according to what the Bible teaches. This shows us two things. That one, what they believe is not what the Bible believes, or at least is proclaiming. Or two, that what they say they believe, they don't actually believe because their actions say something different. What Colossians 3 does is it takes the argument just way further down the road to the point where we recognize that everyone acts according to their identity. Not according to their beliefs, but according to their identity. Now, of course, you have died and your life is now with Christ hidden with God. Your identity as someone who belongs to Christ will lead to certain other things taking place.

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[5:26] Of course, you will believe certain things. You will act in a certain way. But you'll do so in a way that is consistent with your new identity. None of you will be putting on an act. You will not be acting in ways contrary to who you really are. This is who you really are now in Christ Jesus. And so what Paul is saying is that with a new identity comes a new behavior. With a new identity comes a new way of thinking. With a new identity comes a new way of living. And this isn't an act. It is consistent with a new identity. This is who you are. This is what you do because of who you are. And so Christians are not acting until Christ returns. They're not going out into the world telling that this is what we ought to do now and putting on an act until Christ returns. Why is it important to understand? Well, because we don't want to be a people who can simply state what we believe. We want to be a people who live according to who we are. And therefore, what Paul does here is he convinces you this morning who you are.

Not what you are to believe. Well, you are to believe this. But rather, he convinces you who you are. You need to understand that you have died. That you are a resurrected person.
One who belongs to Christ Jesus. Hidden, safe. And when Christ appears, you will also appear with him.
Which is a very strange statement, isn't it? Because we're already here, right? Well, here's the summary. Chapter 3 begins in verse 1 with the idea of the things that we should be committed to and then moves on to why we should be committed to them. If then you have been raised with Christ, there's your death and resurrection, your conversion, that you have gone from death to the old life to new life in Christ Jesus. You are a resurrected person. Then seek the things that are above where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. In other words, now that Christ has the rule and authority overall, now live under his rule. Seek those things. Also, set your mind on things that are above, not the things on the earth. That doesn't mean that you can't enjoy the things down here, but that's not to be where your focus is. No one can serve two masters. They are to seek God rather than trying to provide their own means. You being the other master, of course. Money's not the master, but you give it mastery if you seek it to provide your way through this world. Rather put God first, Paul is saying. The reason, verse 3, here it is, for you have died. That old way has died. There's no need to continue on in that way that doesn't exist anymore. And your life is hidden with Christ in God. And when Christ, who is your life, appears, then you will also appear with him. I can't tell you how important this is for you to appreciate this morning, so we'll spend a little bit of time on what it means to be hidden. As a resurrected person, no one in the world gets to see it because it's hidden. Paul is telling you something that you are. You're a resurrected person. You have died and you have been raised with Christ and no one gets to see it. You get to know it through faith in his word, but it is hidden. And so when the world looks at you, it doesn't see a resurrected person. [9:17] It doesn't see a person who has died. It doesn't see a person who is forgiven. It doesn't see a person who is full in Christ Jesus. It doesn't see a person who is free in Christ Jesus. It doesn't see a person who has a future in Christ Jesus. What it sees is you doing the same kind of things that they do.

What they witness is the physical, and they don't get to see it because it's hidden. All of these truths that we know by faith are hidden realities. They are all true. You know about them by faith, but you don't get to see them. They don't get to see them. And more importantly, you don't get to see them either. Our life is hidden with Christ in God, and when Christ appears, you will then get to see you as you really are. But up until that point, you only get to see yourself in the old body that sinned against God. So we have this tension that we live with, that we are a completely different person that not even we can get to see yet because it is hidden.
That we are a completely different person that the world doesn't get to see because our life is hidden with Christ in God. And therefore, when someone looks at you in the snarky way that perhaps they do, not being a Christian, perhaps they're an atheist or an agnostic or whatever it is, and look at you and think that your life is no different than theirs, of course they're going to think that because the things that are true are hidden. They can't see the truth. You can't see the truth, but you know it by faith in the word of God. You need to hold on to that. You need to walk around as a people with that kind of identity. Though it can't be seen, you won't see it when you look in the mirror. You won't see it when you ask someone else to look at you and describe you. But nonetheless, that is your identity. And it's an identity that is hidden, protected. But it's not going to be hidden forever because there is coming a day when Christ appears and you will appear right alongside with him. That's what Paul is saying here. Now he, when he comes on to say, now seek

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the things that are above, set your mind on the things above, live in this way, now you can understand why.
Because he's saying this is how this type of person lives. Don't be thrown off by your life in this world and think, I have to fit in here. No, no, no. That would be living according to someone else's identity, a person who has died. So what Paul is saying is this, that you need to fully grasp grasp your new identity in Christ Jesus in order to live as Christ wants you to live.
And those things here is firstly to seek the things that are above and to set your mind on things that are above. The reason is because this is where you draw your identity from.
[12:43] This is where you learn who you really are. And this is what will guard your heart and your mind from the world telling you that you're not.

You really are a precious people. But it's hidden. You're forgiven people, but it's hidden. You're full and you're free and you have all of this in Christ Jesus.
You are one with Christ and it's hidden. They don't get to see it. You don't get to see it. Not in its fullness, but nonetheless, it is true.
So if you've been raised with Christ, which you have through your conversion, then seek the things that are above and set your mind there also. And this, of course, is a way of stabilizing your heart and mind.
And especially in a world where your life doesn't look much different than the atheist next door. I have heard it said that John Stott famously stated that if a Christian's life doesn't look much different than the person next door to them, then our Christianity is not having the impact that it should.
[13:59] I completely agree with him. I'm not going to disagree with John Stott unless it's over creation or hell. because he doesn't believe in either. But generally speaking, I don't think that's entirely true.

I think sometimes that we can feel incredibly bad about our life not having the appearance that it ought to have in this world so that people look at us.
And then we get to Colossians 3 and Paul says, well, a lot of it's hidden. They're not going to be able to see it. Not even you can see it.
The actual difference that has been made to you is hidden. But nonetheless, our witness is not a witness to these things necessarily, but it's a witness to Christ Jesus and him crucified.
That truth that sets all men free. And sometimes we can get the confusion mixed up between what it means to proclaim the gospel and what it means to be a witness.
[15:03] They're not the same. There is an overlap, of course, but they're not the same. So what does it mean then to, as these new people with a new identity, to seek and set your mind on the things above?

Well, firstly, understand that you're not an actor playing a role. That in this world, you've not put on an outfit and then you're simply acting out Christianity.
You really are a new person. You are living in a way that is consistent with your identity. Everything else is an act. Only those in Christ Jesus are consistent with their new identity.
In other words, there has to be a singular devotion that you now live your life with. And this singular devotion is not without its practical application. And what that means is fairly simple.
What Paul is teaching us here is exactly what Jesus taught us in the Sermon of the Mount. What is Paul saying?
[16:17] Seek the things above. Set your mind on the things above where Christ is seated at the right hand of the Father. It's exactly the same thing. Why is that so necessary? Well, it's necessary for this reason.

It follows that if you are to seek first the kingdom of God, then you must know what the kingdom of God is. If you don't know what the kingdom of God is, then it's very unlikely that you'll seek it.
So when we speak of singular devotion to the things of God, it is absolutely necessary we know what those things are. When Jesus says, seek ye first the kingdom of God, what do you do?
My point is simple, that if you don't know what the kingdom of God is, you're not going to seek it. You're not going to seek it, not because you don't want to, but because you do not know what you're seeking.
And because you don't know what you're seeking, you end up not seeking it. This is Paul's point. The moment you understand who you are in Christ Jesus, the moment you understand what it is to be a person of God, a resurrected person, the moment you understand what God has taught you,

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you are then able to seek those things above to set your mind on them.
[17:47] Now, the practical side of this is a practical side of Christian living. Let's just go back to the Sermon on the Mount as an illustration. When Jesus teaches us to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, he does so because he wants you to have a life without the presence of anxiety.

And therefore, singular devotion to God is God's way of making sure you have everything you need without the presence of anxiety. However, the warning is that no man can serve two masters.
And those who try might be able to provide their needs to an extent, but will do so with the presence of anxiety. Perhaps the anxiety is even the driving force, the motivator that keeps them doing more and more and more.
And that is no way to live for a person who now belongs to Christ Jesus. Now, you live with a singular devotion.
Let God take care of the details so that you can have a life free from anxiety. That's what he promises you in the Sermon on the Mount. Singular devotion to God means that your needs will be met without the presence of anxiety.
[19:12] And what we have here in Colossians 3, this short paragraph, just before we get on to stay away from sin and live a Christ-like life, before we even get on to the practical side of Christian living, you have to be established first and foremost in the fact that you are a new person.

And the life that you are being called to live is consistent with your new identity. You're not being asked to put on an act. You're not being asked to fulfill a role contrary to who you really are.
You're not being asked to do something different. This is the very basis of what Paul is saying here. That is, new people, we can easily rob ourselves from the blessings that God gives us by not being a people of singular devotion.
So our life has anxiety, not because we belong to God, but primarily because we're not doing it God's way. And God has a way of removing these things through singular devotion.
Difficult, of course. Because we live in a world where our bodies tell us and our neighbors perhaps tell us and the world tells us, no, we're still suffering the same ills as everyone else.
[20:34] It's true in one sense, but it's not true in another sense. So set your mind on things above where Christ is seated. Set your mind there and keep it there.

Seek those things above so that you will be stabilized for Christian living down here. It has a practical side to it. In other words, if you do this, then you will live as Christ wants you to live and your life will be free from the certain vices that are found in the world.
If you don't, if you do set your mind on the things of the earth, then you will encourage into your life the vices that the world has. And we've not got on to the section after this because it's so important for you to understand your identity.
Christianity is not about playing a role. It's about living in accordance with a new identity. And sometimes you can feel like a fraud because you're being told all this truth, that you are a brand new person, that you are perfect in Christ Jesus, that you are loved and you are redeemed and you are forgiven, that you are without spot or blemish.
And then you know yourself throughout the week and go, I just can't believe it to be true. I feel like a fraud. Or don't. That is the very nature of sin and death that doesn't get to see what you see and know.
[22:04] We all feel like frauds when it comes to living for Christ. We all feel like poor witnesses. But your identity tells you who you are.

And Paul is encouraging us to live according to that identity that in many ways is hidden. The world doesn't get to see it and you don't get to see it.
Now when Christ appears, and we'll finish with this, you will appear. And you will appear in all your glory. So let me just for a moment, if I can, reverse the metaphor of the actor and the acting.
For as long as you're down here, you will serve God. And hopefully you will serve God faithfully. So that when you meet him, he'll be able to say to you, well done, my good and faithful servant.
You know, they're the type of words that we want to hear when we meet God. But as long as you are down here, you're going to wear an outfit that's not your own. It belongs to the old man.
[23:11] It belongs to the old self. It perishes. It doesn't look like new life. It doesn't even feel like new life at times. When we're in hospital, we suffer just like everyone else alongside us who's unsaved.

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But our hidden life cannot be seen by the doctors. It cannot be seen by the patients next to us. But we have been raised. And what is happening to us in a physical way is not the truth.
At least it's not the truth of our new identity. It's part of our old identity. And so what we have in this section here, and this is the beauty of it, if I can reverse the metaphor, is that when Christ appears, it'll be like you stepping out onto the red carpet, having finished your role for him on earth.
That each of us have a role. That each of us have a role to play. And some of us have to wear illness. And some of us have to wear hard work. And some of us have to wear pain and sorrow. And some of us have to wear heartache. And some of us have to wear worldly success. And some of us have to wear missionary status or persecution status.
[24:24] We all have a role to play. But then when Christ appears, that's not who we are. Those outfits are removed. And we step out onto the red carpet in all our glory.

A glory provided for us by Christ Jesus. Why? Because that's who you are. What is hidden finally becomes revealed. But for as long as you're down here, you will serve the role that God has given you.
And I pray that you would serve it faithfully. So here's the exhortation. You belong to Christ. You belong to Christ.
And a lot of that is hidden. But it's not hidden from what you know. It's hidden from what you see. The world doesn't get to see it. And you don't get to see all of it.
But nonetheless, it is true. And there is coming that day where you will get to change out of these clothes into the glory that Christ has provided for each and every one of you.
[25:29] And then you will see who you really are. Because up to this point and up to that point, you won't. Only on that day will you see who you really are in Christ Jesus.

Because until that day, it remains hidden. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Well, before we come to the final prayer and exhortation, let us listen to this next song.
Thank you. Thank you for saving me.
What can I say? You took my sin and shame.
A sinner called by name. A sinner called by name. Praise the Lord.
[27:18] So praise the Lord.

For we know you. For we know your truth has set us free. You set your hope in me.
Mercy and grace are mine Forgiven is my sin Jesus, my only hope The Savior of the world Great is the Lord we cry God lets your kingdom come Your word has led me to see Thank you for saving me Great is the Lord So great is the Lord
Great is the Lord So great is the Lord For we know your truth Has set us free You set your hope in me Thank you for saving me What can I say?
Well, my prayer for you is that the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ would be with you all forevermore. And my prayer would also that you would recognize that your identity hidden in Christ is your true identity And that what you see and what others see is not the full reality So my prayer is that the Lord would bless you and keep you as you go your way in Jesus name Amen Amen

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