

RAISED WITH CHRIST

Colossians 3

"If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them. But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all. Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him. Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them. Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged. Bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God. And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ. But he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done, and there is no partiality."

This book of Colossians is one of what is called Paul's prison epistles. It was a letter he wrote to Colosse (ko-lo-say) during his first imprisonment in Rome. The traditional understanding is that Paul had not been to Colosse and that Epaphras had actually started the church there. But more importantly, to the point of Paul's letter to the Colossians, he addressed the issue of Gnosticism. It has been

labeled by some as Christian Gnosticism but really those two terms are completely separate and opposed to each other. Gnosticism comes from the root word "gnosis", which means "to know". It can really be traced all the way back to what the serpent, Satan, said to Eve in the garden of Eden, "And the woman [Eve] said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.' " Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, **knowing** good and evil." (**Genesis 3:2-4**) Not only did they eventually die physically but the image of what was happening was that God removed Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden, after they had eaten of the forbidden fruit, and the symbolism is that they were now in a cursed land outside of the Paradise of the garden of Eden, and that there was a separation from God, as God is no longer said to come to visit them in the cool of the day, and the knowing of good and evil for Adam and Eve didn't help them one bit.

While at the heart of gnosticism is dualism, which is the difference of matter vs. spirit, matter being evil and spirit being good, they were saying that Jesus could not have been God incarnate, that is God in the flesh. There is a lot of aspects to gnosticism, as it contrary to the Word of God but we ultimately find, in spite of gnosticism that Jesus IS the King of kings and He IS on the throne and "that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (**Philippians 2:10-11**) We can look at what Paul was saying in his letter to the Colossians to get at the gist of what was at issue. Earlier, in **Colossians 1:15-23**, Paul says, "He [Jesus] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn OVER all creation. For by Him **all** things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before **all** things, and in Him **all** things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in **all** things He may have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in Him **all** the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile **all** things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross. And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight— **if indeed you continue in the faith**, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister." I counted 7 times Paul used the word "all".

The Apostle John wrote similarly in the beginning of his gospel of Jesus Christ. In **John 1:1-3** he declares, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and **the Word was God**. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made." Some gnostics have said that God the Creator was or is inferior to the Supreme God. Both Apostles, John and Paul were addressing the heresy of Gnosticism. We read further in John's gospel that Jesus IS the Word, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." Jesus said as much. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." (**John 3:16-17**) Jesus elaborated further in saying, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." (**John 14:6**) "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." (**Acts 4:12**)

What gnosticism was teaching was that Jesus was not and could not be God incarnate and that Jesus was not THE Way, or THE Truth, or THE Life. That of course is what would be deemed as "wisdom of this world." You either have life in the Son of God or you don't, plain and simple. And for plain and simple, the Apostle John clarified saying, "He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life." (**1 John 5:12**) "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent." Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men." (**1 Corinthians 1:18-25**)

So now, getting to our text in **Colossians 3**. Paul starts off with, "If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, **sitting at the right hand of God**. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God." The imagery that Paul is speaking of here in saying, "if you were raised with Christ" is that, as Paul explained in **Romans 6:11** saying, "reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord." What

he was saying in that chapter was that as Christ died on the cross for our sins, we are to reckon ourselves also dead to sins but then alive in Christ, just as Jesus conquered death and rose from the grave on the third day. So getting back to Colossians 3 Paul continues saying, "Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory." But once again, going back to the first chapter in Colossians Paul said, "**if indeed you continue in the faith**, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister." That faith then is exemplified, or made known, revealed to others, in how we live. No one will likely suspect that you are a Christian if you are hanging out in a drug house or a brothel. No one is likely to accuse you a being a Christian if you are in a relationship with another person's husband or wife or if you are frequently drunk or high on drugs. As Paul said, "Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them. But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him."

As Christians often do, pushing the patience and goodness of God, they will say, we are no longer under under the law but under grace, in Christ. That of course is true IF you are in Christ Jesus. "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death." (**Romans 8:1**) Is it still possible to stumble in temptation and succumb to the will of the flesh? Yes, of course. Sadly, to my regret and shame I've done it hundreds, if not thousands of times. But, today, here we are, a new day is upon us, and as Jeremiah the prophet said in **Lamentations 3:22-24**, "Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness. "The Lord is my portion," says my soul, "Therefore I hope in Him!""

As children of God, in Christ Jesus, we are assured that "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (**1 John 1:9**) Yet as we are no longer under the law we are told what is the will of God, "Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint

against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection." You may be thinking, "I can't do that!" That's right, now you got it! Paul says in **1 Corinthians 1:30-31**, "But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption— that, as it is written, "He who glories, let him glory in the Lord." To further show that really, within ourselves we can not be righteous and holy as He is holy, Paul says in **Ephesians 2:8-9**, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast." So if it is faith in Christ Jesus that saves us, is it not, faith in Christ Jesus that is going to get us to what we are called to do? Paul continues saying, "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." (**Ephesians 2:10**) Paul said as much in **Philippians 2:12-13**, "Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure." God works in us the fruit of the Spirit of "...love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires." (**Galatians 5:22-24**) We are His workmanship, He works in us to will and to do according to His good pleasure, and He works in us all the fruit of the Spirit IF we, as Paul said, continue in the faith. "The just shall live by faith." (**Romans 1:17**) That faith is in believing that, "He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ." (**Philippians 1:6**)

"And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him." If God can't be glorified in what we're doing then something's wrong. In our interactions with others especially. When we let God work in us, His fruit of the Spirit, other people will take notice. We are to be His light to this dark world. Jesus said, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven." (**Matthew 5:16**) That's right though. I can't do it, you can't do it, no one can do it. If we could, then we wouldn't need Jesus, would we. He is our Wisdom. He is our Righteousness. He is our Sanctification and He is our Redemption. "that, as it is written, "He who glories, let him glory in the Lord."" (**1 Corinthians 1:30-31**) We live by faith in the Son of God. He gives us wisdom, He saves us, He sanctifies us, He justifies us before God our Father, and He redeems us by His shedding of blood and dying on a cross. He took our sins upon Himself. Therefore it is our calling, our responsibility to have the same mind that the Apostle Paul had when he said, " I have been crucified with Christ; 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 for me." We have the choice to let Christ reign in us, to where He is, not only our Savior but also our Lord. "And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ. But he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done, and there is no partiality." What's the point of it all, you ask? We will be rewarded for how we let Christ work in us, in bearing fruit for His glory. Some we may never see on this side of eternity. There are many times I question whether anything I do is accomplishing anything. Yes, I too have my human moments. But, I am reminded that it IS Christ Jesus who is doing the work for His eternal kingdom and for His glory. We will be rewarded for our faithfulness, some rewards we'll see in this lifetime and many, many others we'll have to wait to see them.

In closing, Jesus says in **Revelation 22:12**, "And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work." Then in verse **14-15** it says, "Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city. But outside are dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie." I don't want to be one of those outside of the gates of the city. We may have been born into sin, outside of the Garden of Paradise but Jesus had made a Way for us to get there. Jesus has gotten us this far and He promises us that He will get us through the gates and to the tree of life. The world longs for a way to find the fountain of youth, the way to eternal life. But there is but one Way, His name is Jesus the Christ, the Son of the Living and Almighty God. Praise His name.

"Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, **looking unto Jesus**, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."
(Hebrews 12:1-2)

Heavenly Father,
I confess that I have sinned against You.
I ask that You forgive me of my sins.
I believe that Jesus died on the cross for my sins,
I confess with my mouth that Jesus is my Lord,
and I believe in my heart that You raised Jesus from the dead,
so that I can have forgiveness of sins,
and be reconciled to You, God, My Father.
I now commit to You, that I will repent of my sins,
and live in the newness of life,
being led by Your Holy Spirit,
all this I pray, in Christ Jesus, my Savior and Lord. Thank You Lord!