

Living Differently For Christ

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[0 : 0 0] Okay, let me begin with a question for the Christian believer. A question for the Christian believer.

Is your life noticeably different to those around you? Is your life noticeably different to the people that you live with?

Do we stand out, do you think, as Christians? Or is it more likely that at work, and maybe I don't know, at university, maybe even amongst our families and friends, to all intents and purposes, we are indistinguishable from the rest of society?

That's our question. Is our life noticeably different from those around us? Well, it's to that, I suppose, that the impact of our redemption on the Christian life, it's to that that Paul turns at this point in his letter to the Colossians.

And what we're dealing with here, I suppose you could say, is a transitional portion of Scripture. See, Paul is moving from what was in chapter one, certainly in chapter two, quite a theological discussion of false teaching in Colossae.

[1 : 2 8] And he's moving from that to what becomes a much more practical section towards the end of the letter. So these verses, the four verses that we're looking at at the start of chapter three, they're kind of the bridge between those two things.

So the bridge between the theological and the practical. And what Paul is doing is he's saying to a congregation, quite a young, new congregation, he is saying, live for Jesus.

He's saying, live out your salvation. So let's look at this and let's consider what it is that God, Almighty God has to say to us through these verses tonight.

So please, if you do have a Bible with you, please have it open at Colossians chapter three. And what we're going to do is just note three headings tonight.

The first of which is this, we're going to live differently on whom should we focus? We're going to live differently on whom should we focus?

[2 : 3 6] Okay, tell you what, let's do a bit of biblical detective work, if you like. If you do have a Bible there in front of you, have a look at chapter two and verse 20.

Chapter two verse 20, what does it say? How does it begin? It begins, since you died with Christ, since you died with Christ.

So what Paul's about to do there in verse 20, he's about to go into an implication of our union with Jesus. Do you see that? Since you died with Christ, and he goes into an implication, the implication is, since you died with Christ, don't go back to sort of legalistic forms of worship.

So that's what we've got in chapter two verse 20. Look at the first verse that we've got that we're looking at tonight, look at chapter three verse one.

We've had in verse 20 chapter two, since you died with Christ. Now what we've got, chapter three, since you've been raised with Christ.

[3 : 48] See what it means? It means that everything that Paul is just about to say, everything that we are going to pause and look at tonight, everything here is an implication of what? Of our union.

The fact that we are joined together with the Lord Jesus Christ. So this is big. What is it that he's going to say? Well, look at the first thing he says here, says, since you have been raised with Christ, set your heart on things above.

And I think at that, we've got to be a little bit careful, don't we? Because don't you think that the modern church has got a tendency, what do we say, a tendency maybe towards being a bit soppy, don't we?

We sort of read this and we see it's got the word heart in the verse. So we go, oh brilliant. This is about our affections and this is about our emotions and having a nice little bit in our heart for Jesus.

And that's true to a certain extent, but that is nowhere near as expansive a thought as Paul has got here.

[4 : 54] Now, what he is saying to these Colossian believers is that now, since they have been united to Christ, that everything in their lives should be about their Savior. The, yeah, okay, our emotions and our affections should be about Him.

More than that though, you know, our desires and our ambitions and our hopes and our thinking, everything should be tied up in the Lord Jesus Christ.

But Paul's not naive. If we know anything about Paul, we know that Paul is not naive. And he knows that's a big idea to have everything in our lives caught up in the Lord Jesus Christ.

So what does he do? Look at verse 2. He elaborates on how this Christ-centered life could come about. So he said, set your hearts, or really he said, set your whole life on things above.

Now in verse 2, how do we do that? Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. So what do you think that means?

[6 : 04] What do you think it means not to have your mind on earthly things? This is a Christian. What does that mean? Well, I once had a friend who carried around a magazine wherever he went.

He had a magazine sticking out his back pocket everywhere he went. And it was an auto trader magazine. So if you know that, it's about car sales.

And so if you had five seconds, he would sort of whip out the magazine and be pouring over, thinking about what car he might buy some stage in the future.

Now I think that there is helpful for us understanding what Paul is getting at here. Because what Paul is saying to these young Christians is not so much, and I've got to be careful.

He is not saying, now you've been saved, take a step back and don't engage with the world. If he was saying that, then the rest of the Colossians, a bit of Christian living in the world wouldn't make any sense.

[7 : 12] He's not saying that. No, he is saying, given our salvation, Christians should not be, and please hear this, we should not be infatuated with the things of the world.

That given our salvation in Jesus Christ, that we should not be preoccupied and sort of obsessed by the same things as the rest of the world is obsessed by.

We shouldn't be people who are sort of spending all of our thought time on the computer, on our phones dreaming about cars and homes and houses and our kids schooling.

We shouldn't be like that. We should be different, that our hopes, that our preoccupations should be where? What does Paul say in verse 1?

He should be on the one who is seated at the right hand of God. Did you see how he should be different? He Christ should be our obsession. Now that sounds great.

[8 : 14] You might say, okay, that sounds wonderful. How does that come about? Well I think what we need to know here are that these verbs set your heart set your mind.

These are continuous verbs. Do you see what that means? It means that this is about an ongoing daily battle against this tendency to sort of immerse ourselves in the world.

So what we're talking about here is about on a daily basis, you and I as Christians actively setting aside time to think about Jesus.

We do that to read about Jesus, actively making time to meditate upon him and upon the gospel. This here is about getting to know our Savior better.

I think I should say that perhaps such is our attachment to things in this world that maybe we don't like this.

[9 : 26] Maybe we don't like what Paul is saying here. Maybe we think this is not important or this is maybe unachievable.

Can I say to you it is neither of those things? Can I encourage you to ask yourself and really to consider over the last few weeks, even as a Christian here tonight, where has your heart been?

Last few weeks, where has your mind been? Is it just about worldly things? Is it? Well if we want the world to know that we are different that has to change, doesn't it?

We have to be so centered around Jesus Christ that we might even at some stage be able to say with Paul, for me to live is Christ.

So we've seen on whom we should focus. We focus on the Lord Jesus Christ. Second thing we need to consider is if we want to live differently, if we want the world to notice, let's consider on where we should focus.

[10 : 42] So we've seen on whom secondly on where. Excuse me, if you're following me so far, in the first point here we've seen kind of Paul speak to these newest Christians and exhort them to live differently.

Here and now we come to a verse. What was I going to say about the verse? The verse is a glorious verse. It's the first that we'll consider.

I think it's fair to say that verse is kind of as tough as it is dense if you like. Let me read the verse that we have to consider here. So listen to this. So Paul said, set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.

Get an expert. For you died and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. What a verse that is.

Well, read it again. For you died and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. Now, I suppose in the first part of that verse where he says, for you died.

[11 : 45] Paul's obviously given the Colossians reason why they should not be obsessed with the things of the world. Why not? You've died to them in Christ. The old order of things is entirely gone.

You've died. These things have passed away. But really, I suppose it is the second part of the verse that I want us just to focus on here where Paul says that your life as a Christian is now hidden with Christ in God.

What does that mean? As Derek said when he was introducing me earlier on, I'm the minister of a free church congregation in London.

Excuse me. I've been given the sort of make up of the congregation in London quite a lot of thought in recent times.

It's changing, but for a long time there weren't many people in that congregation who were actually born and bred in London.

- [12 : 54] So that meant that for most of the congregation there was somewhere else that they called home. There was somewhere else that when they arrived in that other place, whether it was Scotland or whether it was South America or wherever it was, somewhere else that they would call home, somewhere else, when they arrived back there, there's that sort of sense of familiarity.

You might know it if you're not from Edinburgh yourself. You get back there and there's that sense of recognition about it and there's that sense of sort of belonging.

I think that idea that sheds light on what Paul is saying here in verse 3 because although this idea of our lives being hidden with Christ has caught an awful lot of say about our spiritual status, I think if we're going to understand what it means, we have to really be thinking Paul's thoughts here.

We have to see Paul's perspective. And let me ask you this, those four verses, what do you think Paul's thinking about? He's thinking about heaven, isn't he?

I mean here in these verses Paul is thinking about glory. That is why he does not just speak about Christ. He speaks about Christ seated at the right hand of the Father.

- [14 : 11] He's thinking about heaven. That's why he doesn't say just set your minds on Christ. It's set your minds on things about. He's thinking about glory.

He's thinking about heaven. And so when we see him say here, set your minds on things above for your lives are now hidden with Christ and God, what he's actually saying is some thought is that such is our union with Jesus Christ that in some senses spiritually speaking, even now it is as though we are with Christ in glory.

Now isn't that a big thought? Isn't that a momentous thought that yes, we've died with Christ, we've risen with Christ. It's almost like we have ascended with Christ.

But I do want you to follow me here as we look at an implication of that. See think about this, since we are now in some senses hidden with Christ, it means that tonight in this room if you're a Christian, can I say to you, you are a citizen of glory.

Even now tonight, because of your status with Jesus, that you are a subject and you are a native of heaven. Isn't that a thought?

- [15 : 45] Yes, we've died with Christ, we've risen with Christ. Almost ascended. That your home isn't Edinburgh, your home isn't even earthly, that your true home, your true home is a heavenly home.

Now do you see what that means for your future? It means that when you die and you see for the very first time the new Jerusalem, if you like, and you see its streets and you see its buildings and you see its people, do you see what it means?

Because of your status with Jesus? It means that there will be an unprecedented sense of familiarity. There is going to be this incredible recognition there.

There is going to be this immense, almost overpowering sense of belonging. You are a citizen of glory.

Another implication we have here is that since our lives are now hidden with Christ, here this, our salvation in Jesus is forevermore secure.

- [17 : 05] I wonder if you see what I mean by that. If not, just look at the words that Paul says here. He says, your life is now hidden with Christ in God.

Now think about that. Your life is now hidden with Christ in God. So that means this has already happened. Now that means that no matter what happens down the line if you are a Christian, and it also means no matter the sin, it also means no matter how much down the line the devil tries to wrestle you from the arms of Jesus Christ.

That means you cannot be. It means that tonight if you are in Christ, it means you are safe in Christ forevermore.

Why? Because this heavenly transition in your salvation, it has already happened. Doesn't your heart rejoice in that?

You are safe in Jesus? Do you know what? It is better. It just gets better because I was reading Calvin on this and he was like, no, it is not just that you are secure. Calvin says, no, you have not read it right.

[18 : 26] You are doubly secure because look at exactly what Paul says. Paul here does not just say your life is now hidden with Christ. That would be good enough.

Paul says your life is now hidden with Christ in God. We are secure in the Son as the Son is secure in the Father.

Do you see it? A mighty fortress is our God and in Jesus Christ we are already behind the walls.

So we are citizens of glory. We are secure in our salvation. But then the third implication is really quite simple. Because we are now hidden with Christ, what Paul was saying in the first two verses, they now make perfect sense.

Don't they? You think about it, since our status is now with Christ in glory, why would we focus on earthly things?

[19 : 31] Why would we become so preoccupied with the things of this world? It makes no sense. These things are just passing away. All of this for us as the people of God, all this stuff is just temporary.

Can I say to you, do you want people to notice that you are different? Do you want the people at the workplace and the university to see the hope you have?

Do you want that? We must focus all the more on Jesus Christ. But we must remember that we are citizens of glory.

This is passing and that very, very soon we are going to go home. So we see on whom we should focus and we see on where we should focus.

I just want us to end pretty predictably, I suppose, on when it is we should focus as Christians on when.

[20 : 35] So Paul is giving the Colossians an exhortation to live out their faith.

He's talked about their heavenly status. He ends this transition here with a promise and it is an awesome promise in verse 4.

So I will read it to you. Verse 4, hear this, when Christ, who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

Now what does Paul mean by that? Well there's been a bit of chat in the last week or two about the possible identity of the new James Bond.

I don't want to give you the impression that I'm one of these guys who is on these celebrity gossip websites all the time. I assure you that I am not one of those guys.

[21 : 40] But you know what it's like for them. You know all this sort of to hear that the identity of the new James Bond is going to be revealed and all this sort of media outlets stop and they're all tender hoots to find out who it might be.

Well I think it's that that we've got here.

We've got the Apostle Paul fixed upon a future unveiling. We've got Paul fixed on the coming revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ to all of humanity.

And that's a thought isn't it? As it stands just now in Edinburgh, London, that everyone who is outside of Christ, the carrying on their life, really unaware of Jesus' true identity aren't they?

But that one day that is going to change. And that one day what does Scripture see with a loud command and with the voice of the archangels and with the trumpet call of God.

[22 : 52] Christ is going to appear and he is going to be seen by all people for who he truly is. Now that's a thought that stirs our heart isn't it?

Always the second coming of Jesus Christ. He's coming back and he's coming back in triumph. But do you know what that is not what Paul is focusing on here?

I mean that's great that is an awesome thought. But what Paul wants you to focus on here is really a secondary revelation that's going to take place on that final day.

You see we think about the fact that the Son of God is going to be revealed and that's true and that's glorious. But what else is going to happen?

All of the sons of God and all the daughters of God are going to be revealed on that day. Do you see it? There is going to be this great and awesome vindication for the people of God.

[23 : 56] What does he say here that when Christ appears you also are going to be a going to appear that Paul says later on creation waits with the eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God.

That's going to happen. That's going to happen. There will be this climactic disclosure to all humanity. And what I want to end with tonight is just simply what that will be like for you.

What that will mean for you that final day. Just look at what Paul says, he says when Christ appears then you also will appear with him.

You will appear with him in glory. I wondered do you see what that means? It means that on that final day you will not just be with your Savior.

On that final day you will be like your Savior. In John 3 we shall be like him.

[25 : 01] Philippians 3 says that our lowly bodies and are they lowly? All this aging, all this suffering, all this disease, our lowly bodies will be made glorious.

The people of God will be so transformed on that day that we will yes stand alongside the Son of God to live forever with the Son of God but more than that we will be in perfect resemblance to the Son of God.

We will be like him. So do you see what it is that Paul is doing? What he's saying in the closets, what he's saying to us, he's saying, why on earth would you be so obsessed with the things of this earth when that is coming like a steam train towards you?

Why would we care so much about the world? When a day is coming when we will be made like our Savior, that should be the focus.

Frank, can I ask you, do you see this tonight? Do you see that we should live differently? Why? Because as Christians we are different.

[26 : 16] We have hope. So let us go and let us live out our salvation and let us look to Jesus. Let us look to his home.

Let us look to his second coming when revealed before all humanity. We will stand alongside our exalted King.

Father in heaven, we do thank you for the great implications of the gospel.

We thank you that in Christ Jesus we stand before you righteous. We thank you that our sin is forgiven. And Lord our heavenly Father, we thank you for the future that is ours in Christ Jesus, that we will one day be with our Savior.

We will serve Him. We will live with Him forevermore. And we praise you for that in His most holy name.

[27 : 28] Amen.