

Act Like You've Been Raised with Christ

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[0 : 0 0] verses 1 through 4. 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 me pray. Heavenly Father, thank you for your word. Thank you for the ability to read what you have inspired the Apostle Paul to write to this church in Colossae, to see how it applies to us, to see how it applies to our life and ways that it caused us to live differently.

Lord, I ask that you would apply it with your spirit, that those who don't know you would come to know you, and those who do will be drawn ever closer. In Jesus' name, amen.

So we're looking at chapter 3 of Colossians, and really this is a pivotal passage in the book of Colossians. It's one of the ones the elders described it this morning as the crux of the book.

[1 : 1 1] It's really the pivot point. And like Romans 12.1 that we just read a minute ago, in Romans there are 11 chapters of doctrine, and then Paul starts going into, now here's how you need to live your life based on that.

Here's how you apply all the doctrine that I just laid out. It really marks the doctrine of what is true from the duty, which is what we must do. It marks the transition from what is true to what you need to do.

And it's really important that we get that order right. It's important that we make sure that we get the doctrine and the duty right. And preaching through a book, preaching through the whole counsel of God, means it's easier for us to walk through an entire book, to see the whole pattern that was inspired by the Holy Spirit.

But it can be a temptation for us to pick one of these or the other. It can be a temptation for us maybe to pick the doctrine. To say, let's ignore the duty.

Let's just talk about who God is and what he's done. Just be happy in the doctrine. And it can be a temptation to pick the duty.

[2 : 2 2] And to say, these are all things you need to do. Don't worry about what God's done. Don't worry about what God's done. Just go and do all these things. And we need to make sure that we get that right. Years ago, my brother and I used to seesaw at a park, and he was quite a bit heavier than me.

So without coordination or any of us doing something, he'd end up on the ground, and I wouldn't end up in the air, hoping he didn't decide to jump off. We had to get the balance right.

We had to work together. We had to get the fulcrum in the right spot so that both of us could use that. We need to get this balance right in this book, in theology in general.

We need to get the balance right between what is true of us, what has happened, what has God done, and what do we are called to do? What do we need to do as a result of that? As we talked in Sunday school today, we can't just start people in the last half of the epistle.

We can't start them in Romans 12. We can't start them in Colossians 3 or 4. We can't start them in Ephesians 5 and 6. Those are all good things that we need to be doing, good things that we're called to do.

[3 : 28] But those things that have happened in the first 11 chapters of Romans and the first two chapters of Colossians have not happened to those who have not come to Christ.

We need to consider what role the doctrine plays before we point people to duty. Otherwise, we risk going down the trail of legalism.

We'll focus on the law of God and what we need to do, and we'll make it all about making God happy or to make us more righteous. And if we're happy, to stay on the doctrine side. We just never call out what God calls his children to do.

We just talk about how good God is and how he loves everybody. And we risk going down the path of antinomianism, which is a focus on the good news and the goodness of God, but at best, an ignorance, or at worst, a rejection of the law of God.

We'll see as we work down this chapter in this sermon and subsequent ones that Paul keeps reaching back into the gospel. Paul keeps referring over and over again to what Christ has done.

[4 : 37] He talks and pulls back what has been done for us and to us. Specifically, we're going to see he talks about our union with Christ. How does our union with Christ mean?

How does it apply to how we should live and act differently? Paul lays out how we're to think, act, and live differently than the false teachers in Colossae, differently than the unbelieving family members or friends or the culture around us.

It's Paul's intention that you understand what has happened to you as a believer so you understand what you need to do as a believer. Another way you may hear this referred to is the indicative and the imperative.

Those are big words, but indicative is what is true. An easy way to remember it is indicative passages indicate realities.

Imperative is what we're called to do. An easy way to remember this is it is imperative that we follow the imperatives. And Paul's relying on the indicative, the what has happened, what is true about you, to drive the imperative.

[5 : 48] God has accomplished all this, so now go live out of that. Now go do these things. And we're going to see the rest of this chapter and the next, all those ways that God's called us to live. But Paul begins his chapter in chapter 3 with an indicative.

He says, If then, you've been raised with Christ. If then, you've been raised with Christ. Paul uses this phrase and we might stumble over it initially thinking, what does he mean if then?

Is there some sort of condition I need to do? Is there something I need to fulfill? What do I need to do? But it's not a condition. There's no act that we need to accomplish. Paul isn't saying, go do this and this is going to happen.

Remember, Paul's point here in this passage is, here's what was done by Christ. And if you're united to him, if you're united to Christ, then this is true of you.

This is what you need to do because this is true. It's closely connected to Colossians 2, verse 20, which we saw before. Here's Colossians 2, 20, and 3, 1, side by side.

[6 : 51] If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations? So really, Paul's saying, since this is true of you, Paul's assumption in, is that this church, for this church, it is true.

He's not saying if Christ was raised or even if you've said the right prayer or done the right things, he's really saying, if something like Christ has been raised and if you've been raised with Christ, then all the stuff I'm going to talk about applies to you.

He's really making the point that if all I just told you about Christ and your union with him and what God has done to you through him is true. If that's all true, if you've been raised with Christ, then you need to live like, you need to think and act like somebody who has died with Christ and been raised with him.

So part of that is thinking and acting differently than we did before. So we're called to think differently. Paul says, if you've 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. And this is where doctrine and duty, the theology and the practice, the indicative and the imperative come into that balancing act.

[8 : 13] Only those who are united to Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection are called to set their mind on heavenly things, things that are above. Only those that Christ has died for, that God has seated with Christ in heavenly places, Ephesians 2, are called and are even able to set their mind on heavenly things.

So Paul's point in this passage is that we're to think and act differently because we've been united to Christ and raised with him.

We're to think like somebody that's been raised into heavenly places. We should be concerned with the glory of God and his kingdom just like Christ is. It's easy, probably too easy, to seek the things besides Christ.

It's easy to let the things that are here take our attention. In my job, my title is a director of data management at Geisinger and I work to make sure data gets to different places and on the right time so that people can make the right decisions.

That consumes a lot of my mental energy. Eight hours or more of meetings, phone calls, emails, more meetings, more emails. And it becomes, easy of that to become part of my identity, part of who I am.

[9 : 27] I am a leader at Geisinger. I make sure that things get moving. I make sure that things work and that just can be who I am. It shapes the way I see the world. I see how data and information can be used for good and bad.

And when I meet somebody for the first time, I find their occupation out, I often ask them, how does your occupation shape how you see the world? I asked an audiologist this one time.

He told me that he's very well aware of loud noises in a room. He's very well aware of how a room is built acoustically. He notices everybody's hearing aids. What we observe and what we think about is often driven by what we see as our primary identity.

The homeschooling mom will mull over curriculum. The student will mull over their subjects and their grades. Contractors think about the deck they're sitting on that their friend built. What we see and set our minds on, what we meditate on, is largely driven by what we feel is integral to our identity.

All too often, those are earthly things. It's not that those things aren't important. Kids do need to be educated and students need to study and contractors need to build safe structures. But Paul doesn't want the Christians to forget their new identity.

[10 : 44] Our union with Christ provides us a new identity, which is a redeemed sinner that's been shown God's mercy, a person that God has united so absolutely to Christ that it can't be undone.

A person that has been in and will be seated with Christ in heaven, has been seated and will be seated with Christ in heaven. So Paul is telling us really think differently.

What does it look like for a Christian to think differently? Paul says, if you've 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. So we're called to two distinct things. We're called to seek the things that are above and called to set our mind on things that are above.

When we're called to seek the things that are above, it's really a reference to Psalm 110, verse 1. You may be familiar with this verse. It says, the Lord says to my Lord, sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool.

[11 : 58] So Christ is seated in the heavenly places. And I want you to understand this logic that Paul is trying to make us see. Christ is a sinner to heaven. He's seated at the right hand of the Father.

God has also raised us up with Christ in his resurrection and in his ascension. Ephesians 2, 5 and 6 says, even when we were dead in our trespasses, God made us alive together with Christ.

By grace, you've been saved and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. So Christ is seated at the right hand of the Father. And because of our union with Christ, we too, spiritually and one day physically, we too are at the right hand of the Father, seated with Christ in the heavenly places.

Because we are already, for all intents and purposes, citizens of heaven by our union with Christ, we're then called to seek heavenly things. What are heavenly things that we can be seeking?

Number one, we can seek fellowship with God. And that takes place in our corporate worship, in our private worship, prayer, times of prayer, together and individually, ordinances like we have tonight, the Lord's Supper.

[13 : 14] We can also seek fellowship with other believers, other Christians. We can share hospitality. We can show love to one another. We can disciple one another. We can have a heart of evangelism and growth for the church.

But the most important thing that I want us to catch is that what is above that we set our minds on? It's not just our life in heaven. It's not just that one day we'll be healed healed from our infirmities.

Christ is above. We're called to seek Christ, to set our minds on Christ, to pursue Christ. These false teachers in Colossae went on and on about all their spiritual visions, all the things they were pursuing.

And Paul says, forget all that stuff. Seek after and pursue Christ. We're to seek after the heavenly things. Pursue the heavenly things. The next verse calls us to set our minds firm by our thoughts.

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