



Colossians - Chapter 3 v 1 to 17

Alive in Christ

If you were asked, you'd probably say being 'alive in Christ' is exactly what you want to be. Sometimes that doesn't fit with how we feel – the Christian life can be a struggle. Our faith experience can travel through the whole spectrum of emotions. That's why it's important to know what we are 'in Christ' irrespective of our current emotional state.

Spend some time sharing with each other about times in your experience when you have felt 'alive in Christ' and times when you feel quite the opposite.

Paul starts this chapter with a strong statement about who you are as a Christian. It doesn't depend on how you feel, it depends on the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

'God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins' (2:11)

'You died with Christ to the basic principles of this world (2:20)

You ARE a child of God on good days and bad days.

So that's why Paul uses the facts of chapter 2 to tell us how we live the life in chapter 3. You are a precious child of your heavenly father. Christ is seated in heaven (v1) so **'set your hearts and minds on things above not on earthly things'**.

**Does this have a danger? – maybe we go around in a kind of heavenly dream
What does it mean to 'set your hearts on things above?' (v2) – BE PRACTICAL
A new status (alive in Christ) requires a new way of life – how different should we be?**

Our life is 'hidden with Christ in God' (v3). This implies that our eternal life is totally secure. No menacing powers can ever bring you ultimate harm. You will still face many pressures and temptations but nothing can take away your ultimate security as a child of God. Our ability to live for Christ does not depend on us trying hard. Our strength comes from Jesus Christ walking with us

Does this understanding change how secure we feel in our Christian walk?

But the Christian life is not just about 'let go and let God'. We are told to 'put to death whatever belongs to your earthly nature'. That is a positive step the believer must take. Paul adds strength to the idea when he says 'rid yourself of all such things' (v8). He gives a comprehensive list of things which reveal we are not being obedient. He is not suggesting that we are guilty of all of these behaviours but there may be one or two which are familiar to you.

**Read the list in verses 5, 8 and 9.
Without confessing which one, is there anybody in the group who is without guilt on all counts? (If there is such a person, please write a book and tell us how you've achieved it).**

The list is heavily loaded with sexual sin.

Do we ever make sexual sin appear the worst kind of sin? Should we?

In contrast to the characteristics of the old sinful nature, Paul now reveals the quality of the new humanity we have in Christ. He reminds us again that we must consciously put away the old behaviour (v9b to 11) and put on the new 'you'. Paul adds in the mix that this applies to believers from all parts of the empire. The new faith erases all the old sinful divisions that segregated people of different races?

Does that problem still exist today?

Do we still tend to think of Christianity as a 'western' religion?

(The early church often faced race issues – early believers thought that you had to follow the Jewish religion before you could become a Christian. That wasn't outlawed until the Council of Jerusalem in Acts 15).

The mention of Scythians (v11) is significant. They were a Mongol pastoral nomadic group and considered to be the worst kind of pagan barbarian. The Christian faith was for them.

Are we ever in danger of deciding who we think is fit for the kingdom of heaven?

Paul then returned to his teaching about the new humanity. (v12f). These attributes are in sharp contrast to the things of the sinful nature. This is all about how the new community is created by the people who have the new faith. In the early church this had to be worked out – it was new.

Read verses 12 to 14. Reflect on the things we are quite good at and the things we could improve.

Ask questions like 'how are you doing with gentleness and patience?'

You may like to pray that God will help you to show more ***** whatever that is for you.

The last section (verses 15 to 17) is more about how we behave as 'God's chosen people'. With such a privilege comes responsibility. At the heart of that section is the phrase 'let the word of Christ dwell in you richly'. As we learn how Jesus dealt with people, we should do the same.

Paul's final instruction is '***whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him***'.

Is it hard after 2 years of pandemic to be THANKFUL?

Should we always be thankful? Does that rule out complaining?

THE DOWNLOAD VERSE

At this point Colossians has become very practical. In verses 12 to 14 Paul writes

'Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy (set apart) and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, gentleness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against each other. Forgive as the Lord forgave. And over all these virtues put on love which binds them all together in perfect unity'.

Is it really possible to live like this? God obviously thought it was or he wouldn't have written it. Perhaps you could try to show love to a lonely person in the group or show some gentleness to a person you've been giving a hard time etc.

Take some time this week to ***THANK God for each other and ask God to help us grow closer to each other as we try to serve him day by day***