

Key:

Purple – Introduction, Conclusion, Main Points, and Sermon Thread

Blue – Explanation/Exposition

Red – Application

Green – Illustration

Brown – Quotation

Yellow – Sermon Notes

Getting Your Mind Right

Colossians 3:1–4

Let’s take our Bibles together and turn to the book of Colossians. We are continuing our verse-by-verse study of this book in our series “Preeminence.” And we come today to the third chapter of this book—Colossians 3:1–4.

There’s an old chestnut that circulates in the world about Christians. It goes like this. Tell me if you’ve heard this before: “That person is so heavenly minded, they are no earthly good.” “That man... that woman... that boy... that girl... that Christian is so heavenly minded, they are no earthly good.”

Okay, I want to argue today that a Christian should in fact be heavenly minded. I don’t know any other way to make sense of Paul’s statements in Colossians 3:1–4.¹ And I want to argue today as well that being properly heavenly minded actually results in the greatest earthly good.² And the counter to that is true as well. Being earthly minded instead of heavenly minded actually doesn’t result in earthly good.³

Today I want to talk about getting your mind right as a Christian. What I’m advocating for today is a kind of mind warfare. Every day... every hour... every minute of every hour of every day, you have to fight as a follower of Christ to fix your mind on things that are above not things that are below.⁴

Why should we do that? How do we do that? What does that look like? That’s what I want to answer for you today.

Go ahead and write this down as a first point in your outline. Colossians 3:1–4 teaches us to think rightly about our past, present, and future.⁵ Let’s start with the past. In Christ, you have been raised!

Think rightly about your:

1) PAST — In Christ, you have been raised (3:1)

Paul says in verse 1.

¹ CHRYSOSTOM: “By his teaching [Paul] has persuaded those who walk the earth to sever the bonds of the body, to take flight and to stand in spirit by the side of him who is the Lord of all.” Quoted in Gorday, ed. *Colossians, 1–2 Thessalonians, 1–2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, ACCS, 45.

² Timothy J. Keller, “Christ Our Life,” sermon preached January 15, 1995, on Colossians 3:1–4, in *The Timothy Keller Sermon Archive* (New York City: Redeemer Presbyterian Church, 2013): “‘Those who are *most* heavenly minded (truly understood now), those who are *most* heavenly minded are the *most* earthly good.’ They’re the people who are able to live life with the most freedom. They don’t get bitter even though things happen to them. They don’t get worried even though things happen to them. They move about in the world with freedom and power.”

³ CHRYSOSTOM: “We see the objects of bodily sight more clearly with the eyes of the spirit.” Quoted in Gorday, ed. *Colossians, 1–2 Thessalonians, 1–2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, ACCS, 46.

⁴ JOHN CALVIN: “We seek those things which are above while in our minds we are truly sojourners in this world but are not bound to it.” Quoted in Graybill, *Philippians, Colossians: New Testament*, RCS, 207.

⁵ Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, PNTC, 244: “The *past* experience of dying with him and being raised with him is the basis for our *present* status as people whose heavenly identity is real and secure, yet hidden, an identity that will be gloriously manifested in the *future*.”

¹ If then⁶ you have been raised with Christ,⁷ seek⁸ the things⁹ that are above,¹⁰ where Christ is,

This “if-then statement” is very important to Paul’s argument. That’s a big “if” in **verse 1**. So let me say something technical about this if-then statement and then let me say something theological about it.

First, the technical. This if-then statement is what’s called in Greek a first-class conditional statement. Which means that the author assumes the statement to be true. Some English translations draw this out by translating the Greek word here as “since” instead of “if.”¹¹ For example the NIV has, “Since...you have been raised with Christ...” Paul is assuming here that his readers, the Colossians, have been raised with Christ.¹²

Which leads to the theological statement—what does it mean to be raised with Christ? Are you raised with Christ?¹³ What does that mean?

Well, this is shorthand for saying that someone is born again.¹⁴ He or she is saved. “You have been raised” means that you have been redeemed, you have been adopted, you have been justified, you have been Spirit baptized (regenerated), you have put your faith in Christ and your sins have been forgiven. Paul assumes that the people in the church of Colossae have done that. He assumes that this is a fact. They’re saved.

And just as a parallel, I assume that same thing every week here at Messiah Bible Church too, because I know you. This is my flock. But just in case this isn’t true of you, let me stop right now and say, “If you have not been raised with Christ... if you do not know Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, you need to put your faith in Christ right now. This sermon is over for you. There’s nothing else for me to say to you until you get that part down.”

“Does that mean that Pastor Tony is finishing his sermon now?”

6 I’m not sure why the ESV has “If then” at the beginning of 3:1. It confuses the syntax. The word translated “then” in Greek is οὐν (*oun*), which is never put at the beginning of a Greek sentence (the technical term is “postpositive conjunction”). Perhaps the ESV was matching the word order of the Greek. A better translation of this verse would be as follows: “Therefore, if you have been...” See NASB95.

7 Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, NIGTC, 203: “As in 2:12, the language is metaphorical and not literal. The resurrection with Christ in a resurrection like Christ’s still lay as much in the future as it had in the earlier treatment in Romans 6 (see on 2:12, and note the prominence of ‘hope’ in 1:5, 23, and 27). The very fact that an exhortation to ‘seek what is above’ was required and needed to be repeated (‘set your minds on what is above,’ 3:2) is sufficient indication that what was in mind was a change of perspective, not (yet) a (complete) ontological change.”

8 Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, PNTC, 243: “The positive tone of the commands in these verses contrasts with the negative focus in 2:8–23. From what the believer is not supposed to do—allow false teachers to impress their agenda on them (cf. esp. vv. 8, 16, 18)—Paul now turns to what believers are to do—focus on the new, heavenly dimension of reality that has dawned with the coming of Christ.”

9 Pao, *Colossians and Philemon*, ZECNT, 206: “These ‘things above’ are not lofty heavenly visions, however, but ‘Christ,’ whose body exists in the earthly realm (cf. 3:5–4:1). To ‘seek the things above’ is, therefore, to live a life worthy of Christ, who died on the cross and was raised from the dead (vv. 2–3a).”

10 Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, NIGTC, 205: “τὰ ἄνω (‘the things above’) is a shorthand way of referring to heaven (as in John 8:23; in Paul cf. Gal. 4:26 and Phil. 3:14).”

11 Pao, *Colossians and Philemon*, ZECNT, 210: “As with 2:20, it is justifiable to translate this protasis as an assumed fact: ‘since ... you have been raised with Christ’ (NIV, TNIV).” Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, PNTC, 245: “TNIV, along with NJB and NLT, translates the Greek *ei* of this apodosis with “since,” reflecting the obvious fact that Paul assumes the protasis to be true.”

12 MacArthur, *Colossians*, MNTC, 125–6: “Christians are of Christ’s kingdom, which is not of this world (John 18:36). We have overcome the world through faith in Christ (1 John 5:4–5). Although we exist in this world physically, spiritually we are already citizens of heaven (Eph. 2:6).”

13 Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, PNTC, 246: “Without denying the reality of a future resurrection with Christ, Paul, following his typical ‘already/not yet’ paradigm, asserts that those who belong to Christ have already experienced a ‘spiritual’ resurrection with Christ. Because they are ‘in him’ and Christ has himself been raised to sit at the right hand of the Father, so believers can be said to have been ‘raised with’ him.”

14 MacArthur, *Colossians*, MNTC, 127: “Believers spiritually are entered into Christ’s death and resurrection at the moment of their salvation. Galatians 2:20 says, ‘I have been crucified with Christ; and 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 delivered Himself up for me.’”

Nope, I've got lots more to say. **But for the person who doesn't know Christ, your objective this morning is very simple—get saved. And salvation is very simply repentance and faith. You repent of your sins and you put your faith in Christ. You believe in his death as punishment for your sin. And you believe that he is raised from the dead as victor over sin and death.**

And for those of you who have put your faith in Christ, what Paul is saying here is that when Christ was resurrected from the dead two thousand years ago, you were also mysteriously raised with him. You have new life in him. You are dead to sin in him.¹⁵

And not only is Jesus Christ raised from the dead, but he is also raised to his proper place of glory. Look at the end of **verse 1**.

¹ *If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above,¹⁶ where Christ is,¹⁷*

*Christ is above. He is heavenly.¹⁸
seated at the right hand of God.*

So Christ was raised from the dead, but he was also raised to the right hand of God the Father. Not only was he *resurrected*, but he also *ascended* to the Father. This is what theologians refer to as Christ's session. He sits at the right hand of God interceding on our behalf.

Psalm 110:1 says this, "The LORD says to my Lord: 'Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.'" That is one of the most quoted and most alluded OT passages in the NT.¹⁹ And it describes Christ's natural place of authority and power. He is heavenly. He is enthroned. He is seated at God's right hand, and he is entrusted with all authority and power. If the false teachers in Colossae were trying to get the church to worship or venerate angels (see **2:18**), this is an indirect refutation of that view. No angel sits at the right hand of God the Father. Only Christ does!²⁰

Now all of that is amazing. But I buried the lead in that verse. I took you through every important part of that verse and all the theological heights. But I skipped right over the main command that Paul gives in this verse. What command is that? Seek!

Let's take another stab at this.

¹ *If then you have been raised with Christ, **seek** the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.*

15 AMBROSE: "This is the meaning of flight from here—to die to the elements of this world, to hide one's life in God, to turn aside from corruptions, not to defile oneself with the objects of desire and to be ignorant of the things of this world." Quoted in Gorday, ed. *Colossians, 1–2 Thessalonians, 1–2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, ACCS, 46.

16 PHILIPP MELANCHTHON: "A figure of speech occurs in the sacred text. For *those things which are above* signifies heavenly or spiritual goods, such as faith, peace, a patient heart, love, chastity, and such things. *Those things which are beneath* means carnal goods, such as pleasures, riches, the glory of the world. Solomon says, 'The way of life is above' to teach us to avoid hell beneath. For he calls carnal goods hell, just as Paul calls them death: 'To set the mind on the flesh is death.'" Quoted in Graybill, *Philippians, Colossians: New Testament*, RCS, 210.

17 Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, NIGTC, 207: "The main thrust, however, is again not toward some visionary or mystical preoccupation with what human eyes may or may not see on a journey to heaven. The concern is wholly practical and everyday-lifeish and focuses on their 'life.'"

18 MacArthur, *Colossians*, MNTC, 128: "Paul is not advocating a form of mysticism. Rather, he desires that the Colossians' preoccupation with heaven govern their earthly responses."

19 Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, NIGTC, 203–4: "The language is formulaic, clearly echoing Ps. 110:1: 'The Lord said to my Lord, 'Sit on my right' (Κάθου ἐκ δεξιῶν μου), till I make your enemies a stool for your feet.' This was a passage which featured greatly in earliest Christian apologetic, since it provided such a good explanation of what had become of the resurrected Jesus. It is explicitly cited in Mark 12:36 pars.; Acts 2:34–35; and Heb. 1:13 and clearly alluded to elsewhere (Mark 14:62 pars.; Rom. 8:34; 1 Cor. 15:25; Eph. 1:20; Heb. 1:3; 8:1; 10:12–13; 12:2; 1 Pet. 3:22). That makes it the Old Testament text most often alluded to in the New Testament."

20 Pao, *Colossians and Philemon*, ZECNT, 211: "In Jewish traditions, God alone sits in the heavens, while the other subordinating angelic beings stand beside him. Christ's being seated at the right hand of God, therefore, points to his sharing of God's sovereign rule."

If you have been raised with Christ, now you can seek the things that are above. And you have to be raised in order to seek. You can't seek these things if you don't have access to them. You can't seek the things of Christ, if you haven't been saved by him.

One pastor-theologian put it this way: **“Christians should live as if they had died and gone to heaven and come back.”**²¹ Another pastor-theologian said it this way: **“Paradoxically, before Christians can reach the world, they must first leave it.”**²² We are raised with Christ Jesus into the heavenlies, so now we can seek him there!

Now what does it mean to “seek” the things that are above?²³ What does that look like?

It means, I think, you seek Christ in all that you do.²⁴ **It means that you focus on spiritual things not earthly things. You focus on spiritual things even in your earthly things. You work for eternal rewards not earthly treasures. You put to death the things of your flesh, because you are dead to sin and alive in Christ Jesus.**²⁵ **You acknowledge Jesus's sovereign rule over the universe.**²⁶

And so, let's get practical... every time Satan whispers something in your ear and tempts you to sin, you say, “No! I'm dead to that. I have been raised with Christ Jesus. He is at the right hand of God the Father interceding for me. Get away from me, Satan.” You seek the things above!

And when you fail in that... because you will... You will fail on this side of eternity to seek the things that are above. Your sin nature sometimes gets the best of your Spirit-empowered new life in Christ... When you fail to seek the things that are above, you fall on the grace that God gives. You remember that Christ is interceding for you. And you get back in the fight. You reset your mind on the things that are above.

Here's a second way that this passage teaches us to think rightly. We've talked about our past; let's talk about our present.

Right now, at this very moment, your life is hidden in Christ.²⁷

2) **PRESENT** — In Christ, your life is **hidden** (3:2–3)

Remember the past tense language. This is a settled fact—you have been raised with Christ. What does that mean for the present? What does that mean for right now? It means that Christ has you. He has you! He has your life. Your life is in him.²⁸

21 Keller, “Christ Our Life.”

22 MacArthur, *Colossians*, MNTC, 125.

23 Hughes, *Colossians and Philemon*, 90: “This heavenly seeking is to be foremost through prayer, as we ask, seek, and knock for the things above (Matthew 7:7; cf. Luke 18:1–5). This seeking ought to pervade our conversations, friendships, studies, work—even our play. And when it does, it will enhance our fullness in Christ.”

24 MacArthur, *Colossians*, MNTC, 133: “The key to living the risen life is to have a life centered on Christ. The Son, not this present world, is the center of the believer's universe.”

25 Pao, *Colossians and Philemon*, ZECNT, 212: “The contrast is comparable to that of the ‘flesh’ and the ‘spirit’ elsewhere. If so, to reject the ‘things on the earth’ is to reject the earthly desires. This reading is supported by the note on ‘earthly parts’ in v. 5, which introduces the vice lists that follow.”

26 Hughes, *Colossians and Philemon*, 90: “‘Things above’ were not material, but rather have to do with Christ's sovereign reign over the universe as he fills the universe with his power. They include his character, his presence, his heavenly joys. We are not to be seeking heavenly geography, but the One who dwells there.”

27 JOHN CALVIN: “It is worth noting that our life is said to be hidden, lest we murmur or complain if our life, being buried under the disgrace of the cross and under other afflictions, is no different than death. Instead we should patiently wait for the day of revelation. And in order that our waiting may not be painful, let us pay attention to those phrases, ‘in God’ and ‘with Christ.’ These phrases show that our life is not in danger, although this is not visible. For God is faithful, and therefore will not reject what has been entrusted to him, nor will he neglect what he has taken into safe-keeping.” Quoted in Graybill, *Philippians, Colossians: New Testament*, RCS, 213–4.

28 Keller, “Christ Our Life.”: “The essence of being a Christian is not that I'm emulating Christ, though I am as a Christian, but that's not the main thing. The essence of being a Christian is not that I'm listening to Christ or that I'm obeying Christ or that I'm admiring Christ or even that I'm loving Christ, even though all those things would be true of a Christian. That's not the main thing. The essence

Whatever happens to Christ, happens to you. **He is like a safety deposit box at the greatest, most secure bank in the world. And your life is hidden in him with absolutely no chance of ever being lost.**

Paul says in **verse 2**,

² *Set your minds on things that are above,*

I don't want to bury the lead this time. Paul starts **verse 2** with a command again. "Set your minds on things that are above." This is a recapitulation of **verse 1**, but it takes things a step further. Paul is saying, **"Don't just seek heaven. You must also think heaven."**²⁹

Think about things that are above. Fix your mind on heavenly things. Don't fixate on the world. **Don't get lost in the sauce of this world.** You've got to think heavenly. You've got to *turn off* the distractions, and *turn away* from the temptations, and *turn upward* towards Christ and towards the things that Christ is calling you to.³⁰

The Greek word here for "set your mind" is one word—**φρονέω (phroneō)**.³¹ Paul uses this word in **1 Corinthians 13:11**, "When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought (φρονέω) like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways."³² Paul is saying here in **Colossians**, **"Don't think like an earth-dweller. Don't think like everyone else in the world. You're not like everyone else in the world. Think like someone who has been redeemed by Christ. Set your mind on Christ and what Christ has made you."**³³

This word φρονέω is connected to the word φρόνημα (*phronēma*) which means "mind" or the "facility of thoughtful planning."³⁴ And Paul uses that cognate word in a parallel text. Paul says in **Romans 8:6**, "For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace."

What does it mean to set your mind on things that are above? What does it mean to think heavenly things? I think it means the same as Romans 8:6. You set your mind on the Spirit not on the flesh. You think things that please God. You do things that please Christ. When your mind gets obsessed or fixated on things that are earthly or sinful, you take your mind and move it back to Christ and say to your mind, "Stop thinking about that stuff. I'm raised with Christ. Think heavenly. Think upwardly. Think rightly."³⁵

By the way, this gives me a chance to address one of my hobby horses right now. Your mind is not some unstoppable, untrainable force.³⁶ You are not just a helpless victim to your own thinking. Your

of being a Christian is that I'm *in* Christ. My life is *in* Christ."

²⁹ This is a paraphrase of a quote by Greek scholar J.B. Lightfoot found in MacArthur, *Colossians*, MNTC, 129.

³⁰ Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, PNTC, 246: "Paul is not saying so much that believers should seek to possess 'the things above' as that they are to seek to orient themselves totally to these heavenly realities. We are not to strive for a 'heavenly' status, since that has already been freely given us in Christ. Rather, we are to make that heavenly status the guidepost for all our thinking and acting. And, by using the present tense, Paul indicates that believers should be constantly occupied in striving for this orientation."

³¹ Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, PNTC, 248: "Paul likes this verb [*phroneō*]: twenty-three of the twenty-six New Testament occurrences are his. It refers not to a purely mental or intellectual process, but to a more fundamental orientation of the will."

³² Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, NIGTC, 205: "Φρονέω means not merely to think but to have a settled way of understanding, to hold an opinion, to maintain an attitude (Rom. 8:5; 14:6; 1 Cor. 13:11; 2 Cor. 13:11; Phil. 2:2, 5; 3:19)."

³³ For more on this, see John Piper, "Reset Your Mind on Jesus: A Live Lab on Colossians 3:1–4," message delivered at the Coram Deo Preconference, Matthews, NC, May 30, 2026, <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/reset-your-mind-on-jesus>.

³⁴ James Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek (New Testament)* (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997).

³⁵ Hughes, *Colossians and Philemon*, 91: "This mind-set begins with prayer: 'Lord, set my mind on things above.' Jesus said, 'If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you' (John 15:7)."

³⁶ Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, PNTC, 249: "Setting our hearts and minds on 'the things above' and not on 'earthly things' is both necessary and possible. It is necessary because our union with Christ means we no longer belong to the realm of this earth but to the heavenly realm; and it is possible because our union with Christ severs us from the tyranny of the powers of this world and provides us with all the power needed to live a new life (cf. 1:10–14)."

mind, like your dog, can be trained. Not only does God think that you can train it, but he is commanding you to train it.

Verse 2 is a command:

Set your minds on things that are above,

And let me get technical with you for just a second. Not only is this a command, but Paul puts this in the present tense. This is a present active imperative in Greek, which means, we are told to keep doing this. **Keep setting your minds on the things that are above. Keep fixing your minds on things that are above. Keep training your mind. Keep redirecting your mind. Keep fighting the distractions of this world.**³⁷

You might say, “That’s hard, Pastor Tony. You don’t understand! My mind is incredibly uncooperative. I try to set it on things above, but it keeps moving on to other stuff.”

Yeah, I get it. I get it. That’s why I’m calling this mind warfare.³⁸ **It’s a struggle getting your mind right. And the things of the world are incredibly distracting and incredibly interesting.**

When I was a kid, my pediatrician told my mom, “This kid needs Ritalin. He’s ADD. He’s ADHD. He’s OCD--LMNOP... whatever.” And my mom was like, “No thanks! We’ll discipline it out of him.” Thanks, mom.

If what I’m talking about this morning sounds really difficult, I get it. I’ve been involved in mind warfare for 40+ years. My mind is more like a wild stallion than a draft horse. I’ve got to tame it.

I was struggling with this this last week. I told the Lord, “Are you sure you want me to preach this passage? I’m not the best person at training my mind. I haven’t always been great at “setting my mind on the things that are above.”

But I will say this—I’m getting better. By God’s grace, I’ve made some progress. And I’ll tell you what helps. Getting older helps. It’s amazing how much you set your mind on things that are above, when your body starts to wear out here below.

Here’s another thing that helps. Disappointment on earth helps. Watching our world get worse and worse helps. Getting your “worldly hopes and dreams” dashed against the rocks helps. It helps you to realize that nothing in this world can ultimately satisfy. And there’s got to be something better out there. And sure enough there is. Christ is better.

And I would just say that wherever you are in terms of age, stage of life, or spiritual maturity, there is a goodness that comes when you obey my text. Obey verse 2!

² *Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.*³⁹

Get your minds right, Messiah Bible Church. Get your eyes on Christ and what Christ has for you in this world now and in the world to come.

And here’s some incentive for this. Look at verse 3.

³ *For you have died,*⁴⁰ *and your life is hidden*⁴¹ *with Christ in God.*⁴²

“You have died,” says Paul. “You’re already dead to the things on earth,” says Paul.

³⁷ Hughes, *Colossians and Philemon*, 91: “We must also remember that our mind-set is a deliberate act of the will. We set our minds on taking a vacation. We set our minds on buying an object. We set our minds on finishing a project. We can set our minds on ‘things above.’”

³⁸ PHILIPP MELANCHTHON: “The reminder that Christ is above and *sits at the right hand of the Father* is an argument from what is possible. It is as if he were saying, ‘Look! You are having to wrestle against the flesh, the devil and the world; but no human power can stand against such strong enemies. Cast yourselves at once upon Christ, upon him who *sits at the right hand of God.*’ This means that he reigns with the Father, he cares for you, he listens to you, defends you and helps you in every danger. Ask for strength and help from him without hesitation. In this way we can both overcome the wiles of the devil, and vanquish the weakness of the flesh. This is what it is to exercise faith. It is mastering the flesh and overcoming the wiles of the devil like a warrior, by repeatedly asking and expecting help from God.... For through Christ sin is taken away from believers, and through Christ they are given power to resist the devil, and eternal life is given.” Quoted in Graybill, *Philippians, Colossians: New Testament*, RCS, 209.

³⁹ MacArthur, *Colossians*, MNTC, 126: “We are ‘strangers and exiles on the earth’ (Heb. 11:13), because ‘here we do not have a lasting city, but we are seeking the city which is to come’ (Heb. 13:14). ‘Our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ’ (Phil. 3:20). We are ‘aliens and strangers’ on this earth (1 Pet. 2:11). We are in the world, but not of the world.”

And to that you might say, **“I’m not dead yet, Pastor Tony. I might be aging, but don’t call the coroner just yet.”**

In 1897, The New York Journal published an obituary for the famous author, Samuel Clemens, better known as Mark Twain. This came as quite a shock to Mark Twain. So Twain wrote the paper and said the following, “The report of my death was an exaggeration.”

What does Paul mean by saying “you have died” in **verse 3**? How can he say that to a church full of people that are alive in Colossae? The answer to that is, of course, that you have died spiritually. The old self is gone. The new self has been raised. You have been born again. You have, in a sense, died.⁴³ That’s what we symbolize in baptism.

And not only do you have new life in Christ. But now your life is “hidden with Christ in God.” Look at the end of **verse 3**.

your life is hidden with Christ in God.

In other words, he’s got you right now. You are with him. You aren’t going anywhere. Wherever Christ goes, you go. His life is your life. His destiny is your destiny. His future is your future. You are hidden with him, in order to be revealed at a future time.⁴⁴

I read this last week that during WW2, the British crown jewels were actually hidden in a secret chamber beneath Windsor Castle. King George VI ordered them to be hidden to protect them from a possible Nazi invasion. Only a handful of trusted individuals knew the location. Princess Elizabeth, the future Queen Elizabeth II, was not told the details of the hiding place during the war and reportedly did not learn them until many years later.

So as the bombs dropped over London, and the threat of invasion remained ominous, those jewels were held safe and secure beneath Windsor Castle. And when the danger passed, they emerged again in public splendor.

In a similar way, “Your life is hidden with Christ in God.” You are not lost. You are not discarded. You are not forgotten. And as the bombs drop all around you in this volatile world... as you are engaged in mind warfare and spiritual warfare, your soul remains safe in Christ Jesus. It cannot be lost.

Which brings us to the future. “You told us about our past, Pastor Tony. We have been raised with Christ. You told us about our present. ‘Our lives are hidden in Christ. Tell us about our future.’”

Here’s the future. Think rightly about this...

3) **FUTURE** — In Christ, you will appear in **glory** (3:4)

Paul writes in verse 4,

⁴ *When Christ who is your life appears,⁴⁵ then you also will appear with him in glory.*

40 Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, NIGTC, 206: “You died!” “With Christ” (2:20) is not included here, though clearly implied, in order that the point can be made in all its starkness.”

41 Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, NIGTC, 207: “The perfect tense as usual indicates a continuing state which is the result of a past action (parallel in effect to the perfects in Rom. 6:5; Gal. 2:19; 6:14).”

42 AUGUSTINE: “For by this love it comes to pass that, dwelling in this still corruptible body, we die to this world and our life is hidden with Christ in God, nay rather, love itself is our death to the world and our life with God.” Quoted in Gorday, ed. *Colossians, 1–2 Thessalonians, 1–2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, ACCS, 47.

43 MacArthur, *Colossians*, MNTC, 131: “In what sense has the believer died? In the sense that the penalty for sin has been paid. The wages of sin is death, so we must die. By union with Jesus Christ, we die the required death in Him, thus the penalty is paid and sin can never claim us again. We have thus died to sin in the sense of paying its penalty. Its presence and power still affect us—but it cannot condemn us.”

44 Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, PNTC, 250: “Verse 4 affirms that this will one day change. In the meantime, our true status is veiled; and, though we may not look any different than those around us, Paul’s point in this context is that we certainly need to behave differently.”

45 Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, PNTC, 251: “The verb *appear* (the Greek verb is *phaneroō*) is the counterpart to ‘hidden’ in v. 3. At the same time, ‘your life’ in v. 3 is picked up and elaborated in v. 4, as Paul identifies Christ as the

Not “if,” but “when.” That’s a totally different word in Greek as in English from **verse 1**, “If then you have been raised with Christ.”

And the word for “appears” is significant too. It’s the passive form of the verb φανερώω (*phaneroō*), and it could be translated “made known” or “revealed.” And it functions here as the future reality of those who are hidden in Christ. You are hidden now; someday in the future, you will be revealed. Your identity in Christ is not visibly manifest right now. But some day, it’ll be obvious to everyone. Because *we are* with him, *we will appear* with him.

⁴ *When Christ who is your life appears,*

Now that statement is amazing right there. Paul doesn’t say your life is *in Christ* in **verse 4**, he says that Christ *is* your life.⁴⁶ He is your life. He is your future. He is your hope. He is your everything.⁴⁷

⁴ *When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him⁴⁸ in glory.⁴⁹*

What does that mean? It means **Revelation 19**... that’s what it means. Let me paint a picture for you. Christ riding to earth on a white horse. Sword coming out of his mouth. Fire in his eyes. Tattoos on his thighs. And we, as part of the armies of heaven, are riding behind him in our new resurrection bodies. His glory is our glory. His appearance will be our appearance. **1 John 3:2** says that when Christ appears (φανερώω), we shall be like him.⁵⁰

Paul says in **Philippians 3:20–21**, “But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.” Paul says in **1 Corinthians 15** that Jesus’s resurrection is the firstfruits of our own resurrection. **We will have new, glorified bodies just like Christ’s glorified body. And we will appear with him in glory.**

One of my favorite words in the Croatian language is the word *buhoslava*. We use this word for our cats all the time. Let me tell you what that word means. Don’t look it up in a Croatian dictionary. You won’t find it there.

The word *buha* means “flea.” And *slava* means “glory.” So when we call our cats *buhoslava*, we are calling them the “glory of the flea.”

one who is *your life*.”

46 Pao, *Colossians and Philemon*, ZECNT, 215: “Paul moves here from association to identification: ‘It is not enough to have said that the life is shared *with* Christ. The apostle declares that the life *is* Christ’ [Lightfoot, *St. Paul’s Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 210].”

47 MARTIN LUTHER: “Christ is called your life, which is not yet manifest in you, but in him it is certain and assured, so that no one can snatch it away from you. Now you through faith in his life also must be sustained, and preserve the victory against the terrors and plagues of sin, death and the devil until that life will be revealed also to you and in you.” Quoted in Graybill, *Philippians, Colossians: New Testament*, RCS, 214.

48 MacArthur, *Colossians*, MNTC, 128: “By using such phrases as with Christ (3:1); where Christ (3:1); with Christ (3:3); when Christ (3:4); and with Him (3:4), he stresses again Christ’s total sufficiency (cf. 2:10).”

49 Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, NIGTC, 209: “Here, then, we can speak of Adam christology. It is implicit in the echo of Ps. 110:1 (3:1), which elsewhere in the New Testament is merged with Ps. 8:6 to give the picture of the exalted Christ as the one who fulfills the original intention in the creation of Adam (particularly 1 Cor. 15:25–27; Eph. 1:20–22; Heb. 1:13–2:8). And it is certainly present in the thought that this becoming like Christ involves a transformation into the heavenly glory (Rom. 5:2; 8:18, 21; 9:23; 1 Cor. 2:7; 1 Thes. 2:12; cf. Mark 12:25; 1 Pet. 5:1, 4), since the glory in view is both the glory Adam lost (Rom. 3:23) and the glory which is now Christ’s (Rom. 8:17, 29–30; 2 Cor. 3:18; Phil. 3:21; 2 Thes. 2:14; Heb. 2:10; see also on 1:11 and 27). The scope of this Adam christology is neatly spanned by the three ‘with Christ’ formulations of 3:1–4, covering as they do the three tenses of salvation: ‘raised with Christ’ (past), ‘hidden with Christ’ (present), ‘revealed with Christ’ (future). This is the confidence which the Colossian believers can cherish despite the ‘hiddenness’ of their present lives: that the work of glorification already begun in them has already been completed in Christ as a guarantee of its completion also in them.”

50 Pao, *Colossians and Philemon*, ZECNT, 216: “This glorious note becomes a significant anchor for the Colossians as they seek to be faithful to the gospel in which they are called. After all, these ‘insignificant ex-pagans from a third-rate country town’ will participate in a glory that encompasses all creation, and it is to this cosmic vision that their identities are to be grounded.”

And why is a cat glorious to a flea. Well, from what I understand fleas don't like humans. We don't have enough fur. We are too unwieldy for them to ride. We bathe too frequently. We wear clothes. And something about our blood just isn't quite right.

But a cat... a nice big juicy cat... with lots of fur, that is glorious to a flea. They have everything they need right on that cat. They have a home where they can hide. They have an endless supply of food. It's glorious.

Let me make now the weirdest analogy that you've ever heard me make here at Messiah Bible Church. As the cat is to the flea, so Christ is to you. **He is your glory. He is your life. He is your sustenance. He is your security. He is your future.**

One of the reasons that Paul says, "Set your minds on things that are above," is because your future is in him. Your future is not in this world. This earth is not your eternal home; it's going to be re-created from scratch.⁵¹ Your future is bound up in him. And he's coming back for you to take you with him to a home that he is even now preparing for you—that where I am, you may also be (**John 14:2**).

The church father **Augustine** said, "Now is the time for groaning, then it will be for rejoicing; now for desiring, then for embracing. What we desire now is not present; but let us not falter in desire; let long, continuous desire be our daily exercise, because the one who made the promise doesn't cheat us."⁵²

And here's why being heavenly minded actually results in earthly good. For those people who are strictly speaking earthly minded, there's a flaw in that mindset. If there's nothing beyond this world, then what hope is there for justice? What good is it to pursue goodness and virtue in this world? This earth is going to completely burn up in a few million years. So what you do on earth makes no difference ultimately if God doesn't exist.

And if the logic of that holds, then why not just live selfishly and wickedly as much as you can and as long as you can. If you want something, take it.⁵³ If someone bothers you, kill him. If you have a carnal urge, gratify it. Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die. And the earth's going to die too.

That is the logical outworking of an earthly-mindedness. And those people who say, "Be virtuous just for virtue's sake, because it's better for the world" are fooling themselves. The world is going to die just like the rest of us, and it'll all be utterly meaningless.

51 MARTIN BUCER: "The whole creation, which should have been used only to the praise and glory of its Creator and for the preservation and profit of people, has been disgraced, profaned and depraved by our diabolical misuse and self-seeking. As far as they can, the godless use creation for the destruction of themselves and others, thus insulting and disgracing God. Hence creation laments and lives in anxiety with all the godly, whom the godless, who fill the world, now mistreat and equally abuse. Subjected to vanity against its will, the whole creation thus waits in expectation and looks for the final manifestation of the children of God. Since faithless people are void of God, who alone is good, they are void of all good and are nothing but pure vanity, using all things for a vanity which is itself vain. To them the lower creatures consistently are still subjected because God had set humanity to rule over them. Yet, when the revealing of the children of God shall come—and that shall only happen at the last day—then we shall with Christ be manifested in glory, and we shall be like him. Then shall all the creatures also become free (Paul says) from serving corrupt existence, in order to share the glorious freedom of the children of God. The whole creation shall again contribute to humanity's good and blessedness. Human beings will rule over nature, using it to the glory of God; and God will be all in all. When the created shall again stand in its original order, when each creature shall be directed to the other for its utility, joy and blessedness, then God, with his elect (the condemned shall have no part in it), will again look with favor at his creatures, at the entire creation, which, as in the beginning, shall be very good." Quoted in Graybill, *Philippians, Colossians: New Testament*, RCS, 216–7.

52 Quoted in Gorday, ed., *Colossians, 1–2 Thessalonians, 1–2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, ACCS, 47.

53 Keller, "Christ Our Life.": "A couple of years ago I saw that some local humanist association in New York had a half-hour show on one of the cable stations. I remember the theme of that half-hour was this. They said, 'One of the worst things for society has been the belief in heaven and in afterlife. That's been terrible for us.' They said, 'Until we see that this world is the only world we have, and until we see that this life is the only life we have, we're never going to make this world the place it should be. We're never going to take care of it.' ... What is he talking about? You have to understand and know and believe that you have already been raised with Christ if you're a Christian and you've already died with Christ if you're a Christian. That's what Paul is saying. You have to believe that. You have to see that."

Unless, there is a God. Unless, there is justice. Unless, there is an afterlife. If you believe that, and if you have a heavenly mind, then you do care what happens on this earth. Because you know that what happens on this earth right now affects lives and souls for eternity.

In English, we like to compliment people by saying something like this, “That person is down-to-earth.” “She’s a down-to-earth person.” “He’s a down-to-earth individual.” And we see that as a good thing. When we say that a person is “down-to-earth,” we mean that he or she is humble. That person is sensible. That person is reasonable. That person is practical and realistic.

And I’m not here this morning to change the English language. That’s a fool’s errand. But I would say this. I would say that, “If Jesus is who he says he is... and if Jesus is coming back to do what he said he’s going to do... then what is the most sensible and reasonable thing for us to do as human beings?”

The answer is that we would tell people about him. And we would live like that’s true. And we would set our minds on those things that are eternal, not temporal.

Also, those people who are heavenly minded... you’ve been raised with Christ Jesus... those people are the ones who are forgiven. And because of that, they live with freedom in Christ Jesus.⁵⁴ They don’t get bitter or jealous or anxious. They’ve got their eyes on the future and what Christ has prepared for them. They’re good for the world.

And as we go about in this world, we can warn people about the judgment that is coming. We can tell people that this world is not all there is. There’s something better coming, if they attach themselves to Christ.

And as Christians, we can do that humbly. We can do that sensibly. And we can do that without conveying a “holier than thou” attitude towards unbelievers.

But we cannot set our minds on the things of earth. If that’s what people mean by being “down to earth,” we can’t do it.

Why? Because we have been raised to new life in Christ Jesus. And we are now, even now, hidden with Christ in God. And we will someday, very soon, appear in glory with Christ. Be heavenly minded, Christians. Be heavenly minded! Set your mind on things that are above.

54 Keller, “Christ Our Life.”