

## **Title: A Consequence of a Resurrected Life**

Text: Colossians 3:1-4

Date: May 5, 2024

Good morning! It's a privilege for my wife and I to be here, be with you here this weekend, and especially this morning. We enjoyed our time at the conference for the last couple of days. There were many brave souls who held out for the many hours that we were together, and I'm thankful for them, thankful for the conversations that we enjoyed, and thankful for this opportunity to share God's Word with you. This church is a blessing to us and an encouragement to us. You've supported us for many years as missionaries, and we have fond memories of our visits here, so praise God for his work in your lives and through you and your community and beyond that. Will you pray with me before we look into God's Word?

Father, thank you so much for the privilege we have to be able to join together as brothers and sisters and to worship you and to fellowship with one another and then to hear you speak. Lord, that's why we've come this morning, we haven't come because I'm here. We haven't come because anyone else is here. We've come because you are present and our longing, our desire, is to hear from you. And so, I pray that in spite of my sinfulness, in spite of my limitations, in spite of my weakness, in spite of all my hypocrisy, I pray that it would be you speaking this morning; that you'd give me words that you would empower me and fill me with your Spirit.

I pray that you would open every heart and every mind, that all of us might receive what you want to say to us, that we might be receptive and open and humble, and that you might change us. We want to be more like Christ. And so, we pray that this time together would somehow, in some way, abound in that fruit; lives that are transformed by your Spirit, for your glory. We give you thanks for whatever you do at this time, together. We lift up your name and exalt you in the name of Jesus. Amen.

So, there are a lot of people who, today in the world, are giving testimonies of having experienced a near-death experience. Something happened, maybe they had an accident. Maybe they had a sickness. Something happened in their lives, and they died, and they were pronounced dead, but somehow, they came back to life. And many of these people who've had these near-death experiences talk about what they saw and what they experienced while they were dead. Some of them say that as a result of the near-death experience, they have a whole new perspective on life. They have a new motivation. They have a new lens through which they see everything that happens in life. All of life has been changed because they died, and then they saw something, and they came back to life. Now, I understand that this is kind of a complex, controversial subject, and I have no idea even what to think about it. But when I think about someone who gives testimony of this near-death experience, it raises a question in my heart. A question that for some might seem a little bit odd, maybe a little too philosophical, but for me, I think it's a biblical question. I think it's a question that all of us really need to consider. And the question is, "How would my life be different if I were to experience death and then come back to life?"

If today, on my way home, I were to die (I'm not asking for that by the way), but if I were to die and then suddenly come back to life, how would that change my relationship with my family? How would it change my relationship with my neighbors? How would it change my view of life itself? How would I be different if I died and came back to life?

Now, this question is the kind of question that stands behind the passage that I want us to look at this morning in Colossians 3:1-4. Because really what's going on here is that Paul is talking about what is, what is one consequence of a resurrected life? The fact that we, as Christians, have died and been raised, how should that influence everything in our lives? That's the question that's behind the particular passage that I want to unfold for us today. Just to review, the first four verses that I'm only going to touch on, Verses 1-4, Paul says, *"If then you have been raised with Christ,"* What's the

consequence? He says, *"Seek the things that are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on the 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."* Two things I want to share this morning, very simply. Number one, what is one consequence of a resurrected life of our resurrection with Christ? One consequence. And then secondly, so what? Why is that important? Why is that something that should impact our lives in such a profound way? Okay, so what is the consequence, and why is that important?

Let's start with, what is the consequence of having been raised with Christ? You'll notice in verse 1 that Paul begins with an assumption. His assumption is namely that we as Christians have been resurrected with Christ. He says, *"If then you've been raised with Christ."* Now, can I get a little grammatical for a couple minutes? The phrase that Paul uses is called a conditional phrase. A conditional phrase is a grammatical structure that has two parts to it. The first part is called the protasis. Who cares right? But it's where the word "if" appears. And what Paul or what authors, when they use a conditional clause and say, "if something," they're planting a condition, right? *"If they serve fish for lunch, I ain't eatin'."* Right, the first part plants, it lays down the condition: If Mike and Diane, if there's fish for lunch, just so you know, I'm not eatin'. What's the condition? That was a question. What's the condition? Fish, right? *If there's going to be fish.*

The second part of the conditional clause is what's called the apodosis. The apodosis gives the consequence. If the first part results, the second part has to come true. If the first part is something that's real, the second part has to occur. And so, if I go to the Eckstein's house and they have fish on the table, what's the result? I'm not eatin', right? Paul says, *"If then you have been resurrected with Christ,"* - that's the condition - there is a result that has to occur. And that's what we want to look at. There's one consequence.

Now, Paul describes this consequence using two commands, but really the two commands that he uses really focus on one reality. Paul says, here's the condition: *"If you've been raised with Christ."* Now, he's not in doubt, there are all kinds of conditional phrases, we won't get into all that, but this kind of a condition, what Paul is saying is, *"If you've been raised with Christ,"* - and I know that you have - then there's a consequence that has to occur. And Paul describes that consequence using two commands. The first, but really I think both commands are saying the same thing, it's kind of like looking at the same object from two different angles, but he's really saying the same thing. Paul says first of all, *"If you've been raised with Christ, I know that you have."* And the first consequence is, *"Seek the things that are above."* And then Paul says, wait, *"If you've been raised with Christ set your minds on things above."* So, there's two commands, but the two commands are really pointing to the same truth. Basically, I would summarize it by saying what Paul is saying is, if it's true that you and I have been raised with Christ, and it is true, then we need a whole new focus for our lives; a whole new focus. Our lives have to be directed towards a whole new reality.

Now let's look separately at each of these commands to understand them a little bit better. Paul begins, he says, *"If it's true that you've been raised with Christ,"* and I know it's true, then first of all, *"Seek the things that are above."* Now, when Paul talks about *seeking*, what does he mean? In what sense are we to seek something? Well, seeking, I think, involves the passion, right, of our life; it focuses on the desires that we have. I think of a hunter. Now I have never in my life hunted. If I went out hunting, I would probably get shot, probably by the deer. The deer would take the gun and shoot me. I would be gone. So, I have never hunted in my life, but I know people who have hunted. I have two brothers-in-law who live to hunt, and they are serious hunters. When they hunt, they dress the part, they smell the part, I mean one of them even puts cameras up out in the woods where he goes to track the patterns of the deer. I mean, this is a serious hunter. So, when he's out there hunting, he's got one focus that he is never losing sight of. He is not distracted by the squirrels or the skunks or the snakes that slither by, he's not saying, "Hey, I might as well just get the skunk." No, he is focused on the deer. He has one passion - to get that deer. That's what he's seeking after.

Now I had a father-in-law who also was a hunter. Sorry dear, but his hunting was a little bit different. He went out to hunt with a camera and a book and a nice chair and there could be a hundred deer passing by, but he's reading the book or he's taking pictures. He didn't have a single focus. He was distracted. There's a difference between those two kinds of hunters, right? Paul is saying that we need to be like the first group of hunters. Our focus needs to be laser-sharp towards one thing: our desire, our passion.

We need to be captivated by something new. Paul says, *"Seek the things that are above;"* have all of your devotion, all of your interest, all of your focus, geared towards that one thing that's up above. And then he says, let me let me say the same thing but from a different angle, *"set your minds on things above."* This time Paul's not talking necessarily about the passions that drive us, he's talking about the thoughts that control us. And he's saying that all of our interests, all of our thoughts, all of our mindset, our attitudes, should be directed toward the things above.

What is it that shapes your thinking? Paul is saying, if you've been raised with Christ, the thing that should shape your mindset, that should shape your attitude, that should shape your perspective, should be *"the things that are above."* One devotion. If you've been raised with Christ, you cannot live the same way that you lived before. You cannot think the same way. You cannot desire the same things. Everything has to change. You need a new devotion, a new focus, and all of it, Paul says, has to go upward, toward the things that are above.

So, what does he mean when he talks about seeking the things that are above and setting our minds on things above? What are these "above" things that Paul has in mind? Well, Paul describes it in two different ways. First of all, he says, *"Seek the things that are above where Christ is seated at the right hand of God."* What image is Paul painting when he says to us that what we need to seek are the things above, and then he describes the things above by, *"Where Christ is seated at the right hand of God."* What's the *image* that should come into our mind? When he says, *"Where Christ is seated,"* what is he pointing us to? – (indistinct murmuring) I hear all kinds of, but I need a definite strong – Okay, the throne. Exactly! Right! It's kind of like Revelation 4 & 5. Do you remember Revelation 4 & 5? There we have a description of the throne room of Heaven with the great God, the Majestic and Glorious One seated on his throne, and at his right hand is the Lamb in all of his glory. And Paul says that's where our mindset has to be set on. That's where our focus, our desire, our passion has to be directed towards. The throne room of God, where the Glorious and Victorious Savior is seated on the right hand of the Father; where the government of God has its seat; where the kingdom of God rules over all. That's the focus of our life – the glory of the Omnipotent God and his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. All of our thinking, all of our desiring, should be directed towards that heavenly place where God rules and his will is done, and his glory is sung by all the beings that surround him.

Then Paul says well, let me describe that *"things above"* in a different way. He says, *"Set your mind on things above,"* now he uses a contrast, he says, *"Not things on the earth."* So, this time, Paul gives sort of a different picture. He says instead of thinking about this glorious throne room of God, let me contrast that scene with this. Right? He says your mindset, your passion, should not be centered in all of this, all of the life that we live on a daily basis, all the experiences that we have from day to day, all the filth and the garbage of this life. That's not where you have your focus. It's not on the earthly things, it's on the heavenly things. If you've been raised with Christ, you don't belong to the earth anymore. You don't belong to this world anymore. You belong to a new reality. You've been raised to a new experience. You're a citizen of heaven, and so your desires and your thoughts should all be directed towards that new reality that is yours. You are a citizen of heaven, and the throne room of God is the focus of your passion and the thing that captivates your mind, not the things on the earth.

Now, I gotta get more concrete because I can see that deer-in-the-headlight look from some of you. What is Paul *not* saying that the things above and the things on the earth mean? What is he *not* saying? Well, he's not saying, for example, that the only thing that matters is churchly things. Right? He's not saying that what you have to do is from now

on you can't have a hobby, you know, you can't play sports, you can't love the arts, you can't listen to music, you can't do things in government, you can't, you know, worry about your job. He's not saying forget everything that you do in your daily life and just focus on being a good Christian by reading your Bible more and praying more. That's not what Paul's saying. Paul's not dividing life into secular and sacred and saying the only thing that really matters is, you know, your quiet time – “Be in church more and stop worrying so much about work.” That's not what he's saying.

What Paul is saying is, in all of life, no matter what you are and what you do, you have to do it with a new perspective. You have to do it with a new passion. You have to do it with a new focus. All of life, if you're just using your hobby, playing a sport, or going to the theater, if you're at work, or whatever you're doing, you have to do it now with a new devotion. The devotion is a heavenly one. The focus is a heavenly one. What governs now, your hobby, is a love for God and a desire to glorify him. Enjoy your hobby! Enjoy to the fullest, but don't let it be the focus of your passion. Don't let it be the thing that controls and captivates you. Love it but love it because God has given it to you as a gift and your desire is to glorify him, not to be enslaved by your hobby. Let me illustrate it just with a couple of everyday life illustrations, maybe this will bring it to earth a little bit more.

Let's suppose, that in Grace Chapel, there is a young person, male or female, who comes from a maybe an impoverished family, okay? You're raised in a situation where you didn't have a lot of money as a family, didn't have a lot of privilege as a family, and by God's grace, you were able to go off to college. And you graduate, you get a degree, and a job opens up for you with an incredible salary. That's a good thing, isn't it? Right? I mean a great thing, to get a good job that pays a whole lot of money. Isn't that a good thing? You can say yes. It's not unspiritual to say yes. Yes, that's a good thing! So, you take the job, and you begin to work the job, and you really enjoy the job, but one of the things you notice is that in order to please your boss, you need to give more and more and more and more of yourself to the job. And so, you do. That's not a bad thing. That can be a really *good* thing. You want to be the best worker you could be, but what happens?

Suddenly, instead of the job just being something that you enjoy, all of a sudden, you're enslaved to trying to please your boss, and now you don't have time for anything else in life. The job has become, instead of something that is a gift from God to enjoy, it has become the goal. It has become the focus, the passion, and everything in life is focused on that job. What's happened? A good gift of God has now become the object of our devotion. *That* is having our mindset on the things of earth, not on heaven. It's not the job. It's not the love for our job. It's that suddenly my passion, and my focus, has shifted from the things above to the things of earth.

Let's suppose that there's a person, male or female, old or young, maybe a single person or a widow or widower, and they have a desire for a relationship. That's a good thing, isn't it? That's a wonderful thing to have a relationship. And so, the person begins to pray and ask God to bring a new partner; a new partner or a partner for the first time maybe. They want to have a relationship - good thing! But what happens? After time, the desire to have the relationship becomes the center of life, becomes my passion. It becomes my focus, all I can think about. I'm captivated by it. A good and gracious gift from God suddenly has become the goal, and all of life is directed towards that. I'm no longer focusing on the things of heaven; all of a sudden, it's an earthly thing. Why? Because it would become the object of my passion. I'm seeking the things that are below. I'm seeking just the relationship.

Final example. Let's say that there's a brother or sister in the church who is passionate about the truth. They love theology; they read all the best theologians; they go to all the conferences; they have all the podcasts. I mean they love the truth. That's a good thing, isn't it? We need more people in our churches who love truth. They commit themselves to the truth, but what happens? After a while, this person is so enamored for the “truth,” that suddenly everybody who disagrees with the “truth” is an enemy. They start looking for every little error, under every little rock. You know, the pastor preaches, “Oh man, did you hear what he said? The pastor said such-and-such a thing.” And you begin to criticize. And the person, what has happened? A good and godly desire has suddenly become the goal, the passion of my heart.

And I forget love, I forget tolerance, I forget grace, and I'm no longer seeking the things that are above. Even though it's a wonderful pursuit - truth - I'm no longer in pursuit of the things of heaven, but rather the things of earth. Paul says, *"Brothers and sisters if you have been raised with Christ,"* and you have, you must have a new focus, and that focus has to be the things that are above, not the things on the earth. You have to have Christ in all of his glory as your goal, and you need to remember that the activities of everyday life are fine, but they must be lived out with a heavenly perspective.

Maybe you're not convinced. Okay, let me try to convince you one more way. Paul's way, because Paul himself talks about this very thing. He gives examples of what are the things above and what are the things on the earth. Look at what Paul says, for example, in Colossians 3:5. Paul says, after he said verses 1-4, you know what the whole thing that I'm talking about, he says, *"Put to death therefore what is earthly in you."* So here Paul, he's gonna tell us what earthly means, right? He says, *"Seek the things that are above not the things on the earth,"* and then you can hear one of the Colossians saying, *"But Paul, what do you mean?"* And Paul says, *"Let me tell you. Let me tell you what are some of the earthly things that I want you to get rid of."* Look what Paul says. He says, *"Sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, covetousness, which is idolatry."*

Now, there's nothing wrong with sexual desires, right? Sexual desires are a good and godly thing when they're focused in the right direction. But what has happened? These people, perhaps, have had perverted sexual desires. The desire to acquire things, to live a good life, is not a bad thing, but when the desire to acquire becomes the focus of my life, now it's idolatry. And Paul says earthly things are things like evil passions, selfishness, pride, covetousness. That's earthly. Get rid of that. When our lives are characterized, as Christians, characterized by those kinds of attitudes, those kinds of perspectives, those kinds of desires. We are focusing on what's earthly and not what's heavenly.

Paul continues, he says in verses 8-9, *"But now you must also rid yourselves of all these things: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other since you have taken off your old self with its practices,"* etc, etc. Those are earthly things that we need to get rid of. You see what he's doing? Paul's talking about internal things. Right? He's not talking about, you know, should I wear a tie to church or not? He's not talking about external things; he's talking about internal things. The greatest form of worldliness is not external. The greatest way that worldliness manifests itself is through our inner life, through our attitudes, through our perspectives. That's worldliness. And Paul says, get rid of the earthly in your life. And then he names all these internal things.

But what is a heavenly thing? Notice how Paul adds a few heavenly things, verses 12-13, for example. He says, *"Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another, and if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other."* In verse 14, he talks about love; in verse 15, he talks about peace.

He goes on in chapter 3 all the way to chapter 3:22, and he says, *"wives submitting to their husbands, husbands loving their wives, children obeying their parents, slaves obeying their masters, masters treating their slaves well."* That's what it means as resurrected ones to live a heavenly perspective. It means in all of life, every role that we have, every responsibility that we have, every action that we undertake, all of it is lived with our eyes pointed to the glory of God, to do his will. I think Jesus said it well in Matthew 6:33, *"But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."* When we seek first all the rest to be added to us, hoping that then we can have the righteousness of God fulfilled, we're doing it backwards. He says, *"Seek first my kingdom and my righteousness,"* and all the rest of it, I'll take care of. Why? Because we've been raised with Christ, and our lives cannot be the same. You cannot continue to live as you always lived. You cannot. You cannot continue to work the way you always worked. You cannot continue to have your marriage the way it's always been. You cannot. If you've been raised with Christ, there has to be a change. It has to be a new focus, a new perspective.

That's Paul's point.

All right, let me finish with the second point. Why? Why is this so important? Paul says, *"For,"* - that means, "let me explain," *"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."* Paul says, basically, that a life focused on the things above is based upon three realities: a past reality, a present reality, and a future reality. So, first of all the past reality. Paul says that something has happened to us as Christians, all of us. What does Paul say has happened to us? He says lookit, *"If you've been raised with Christ then seek the things above."* Put your mind on the things above. And they say, "Well, why Paul?" And Paul says, *"for,"* - what does he say? We died. You're dead. Have you come to grips with your death? I'm not talking about your future death. Yeah, we're all gonna die I understand that. No, I'm talking about your past death. Have you recognized that you died and if you've died your life no longer exists. All that you were before you came to Christ is gone. You died. And, Paul says, not only that, but *"you've been raised."* Your former life cannot be used against you. Not in the court of heaven because you're dead and you've been raised to a new life. You've had a past experience that is true of every single Christian. If you're in Christ, you're dead. Your old life is gone and you can live a new life because you've been raised together with Christ.

But Paul says, "I'm sure a lot of you are saying, 'Oh, come on. That sounds great, but really, I mean, look at me. Look at my experience. Look at my life. I just can't believe that I'm truly dead and raised. I feel more alive and enslaved than I do dead and raised.'" Paul says, "Let me let me share with you a present reality that might explain this a little bit better." So, Paul goes on to say, *"For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God."* What on earth is Paul talking about here? I think there's two things going on. One, Paul's saying that our new status, our new reality, as resurrected ones isn't always very obvious. It's hidden. Let me ask you a question. Is Christ reigning over all of creation and all of history right now? But does it seem like it? When you read the news about the war between Israel and Hamas? When you read about the war between Russia and Ukraine? When you travel around Africa, and you see the poverty? Does it look like Christ is really reigning? Does it feel like it when you're in the midst of a relationship that is broken and you have no idea how to resolve it?

Does it feel like Christ is reigning?

Come on, you can say it, no it doesn't! But he is. The fact of the matter is, Jesus Christ is reigning supreme over all things. But, in the present time of history in which we live it doesn't seem like it because his glory is often hidden. And our glory, as believers in Jesus Christ who have been raised from the dead, citizens of heaven, it doesn't always appear to be clear that we also have a new identity. Why? Right now, our identity is veiled just like the sovereignty of Christ is often veiled. It's not easily seen. But the other side of that, is that Paul says we, "are hidden with Christ in God." So, the very thing that veils us, is covering of God, the protection of God. So we're not like out there in the in the in the storms of life unprotected. We are together with Christ, united with Christ, and hidden in the protection of God in this time when we're supposed to be shining gloriously, but it doesn't look like it.

You can't understand that one until you understand the last one which is the future reality. Paul's gonna bring this all home when he says, Colossians 3:4, *"When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory."* There's a play on words here and it's not easy to see in the English, but Paul is playing between two words. The word *hidden*, and what's the word in verse 4 that is the opposite of hidden? *Appear*, exactly. The better word is *revealed*. That's really what the word means. Paul is saying, right now it's hidden. All that you are in Christ is hidden. It's not evident. It's covered over, but he says, *"When Christ who is your life,"* - who is the fountain of life for your being, Christ - when he appears, when he's revealed, what's gonna happen? When he's uncovered, we are gonna be uncovered as well. And what does it say is gonna happen to us? We will appear with him in glory. Glory is not a place. He's not saying we're

gonna appear in this place that's called glory. That's not what he's saying. He's saying the glory of Christ when he returns is a glory that will cover us as well. The splendor of Eternity that Christ will reveal we will participate in that glory. When Christ who is our life, but who's presently hidden, covered over, veiled, when he is exposed in all of his splendor, we will be exposed in our splendor with him. It's like Paul says in Romans 8:21, "That all creation waits for the revelation of the children of God."

Do you understand what this is saying? You've been raised with Christ, says Paul, therefore there's a consequence. The consequence is your life needs a new focus. Your focus needs to be the things above, Heavenly things, because that's your reality. That's your citizenship. That's your identity.

And you say, "But I don't feel it. I don't experience it." He says, "That's okay, because right now it's hidden. It's veiled, but we're waiting on the day when Christ returns, and when he returns in all of his glory, he's not gonna be alone. We're gonna be right there with him, shining with the glory of Christ forever and ever."

Why should you have a new focus to your life? You should have a new focus because you're dead and you've been raised. And you've been raised to a new kind of life, and that new kind of life is a heavenly life. Even though you live here on earth and all of the filth and all of the garbage and all the problems, you are to live a heavenly life. You are to represent heaven on earth. You are to be an agent of the kingdom of God here in the kingdom of this world with the hope that when Christ returns, in all of his glory and splendor, you will be revealed and all the splendor of the future. You will have glory together with Christ forever and ever. That's why you have to live a different kind of life. That's why you can't live the same.

Brothers and sisters, it's an incredible privilege to have died and been raised and be given a whole new object of attention, of focus, of devotion. And to know that, even though we don't appear that way now, Christ is returning and he who is our life will be revealed in all of his glory, and we with him. May that change the way you think. May it change the way you work. May it change the way you play. May it change everything in your life. That's your reality.

Let's pray.

Father, thank you for your Word. Thank you for this text, and I pray that you would burn it into our hearts and create in us a new focus, a new passion, a new perspective, so that we might go after heavenly things as we wait for that glorious day when Christ returns and we, together with him, are revealed in all that glory. Help Grace Chapel, every member, every person present, to shine with the glory of Christ.

I pray this in his name, amen.

Thank you.

Available online at: <https://gracechapelwl.org>