

# THE BASIS OF THE BELIEVER'S NEW LIFE

## COLOSSIANS 03:01–04

### *Introduction*

This is one of the great passages of Scripture, a passage that believers often turn to in seeking a deeper and more committed walk with the Lord. It is the basis of the believer's new life.

- I. The believer's new life is a life that has been raised with Christ (v. 1).
- II. The believer's new life is a life that seeks the things above — in heaven, where Christ is (vv. 1-4).

### **I. *Colossians 03:01 Believer's New Life — Identification with Christ — Resurrected with Christ***

The believer's life is a life that has been raised with Christ. God loves His Son, Jesus Christ — loves Him with an eternal and perfect love. Therefore, when a person believes, really surrenders his life to Christ, God forgives the person's sins and accepts Him *in Christ*. God actually *identifies the person* with Christ in His death and resurrection. God begins to *consider the person* as having died and risen with Christ. The new believer was not bodily present when Christ died and arose, but God considers the believer to have been there. God reckons, credits and counts it so.

Remember: God does this for us because He loves His Son, Jesus Christ, so much. He loves Him so much that when we believe in Christ, God does *exactly what we believe*. He does this because our belief *focuses upon and honours Christ*. And because it honours God's Son, God counts our belief as the real thing. He counts us as having actually died and risen with Christ.

This means a most wonderful thing. It means that we are in union with Christ; we are identified with Christ. Our faith *in Christ* has placed us *in Christ*. Therefore, whatever Christ experienced we experienced. When He arose from the dead, we arose with Him. His resurrection means...

- that we have risen with Him.
- that we have conquered death.
- that we are raised to a new life.
- that our old life in this sinful world is over; it no longer has a claim upon us. We are, as stated, raised to a *newness of life*.
- that we are walking in newness of life, living a life that is dead to sin, but alive to God — alive to righteousness and holiness.

**Rom 8:11** *And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.*

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**Eph 2:1, 6** *As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus.*

**Col 2:13** *When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins.*

**Col 3:1** *Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.*

## **II. Colossians 03:01–04 New Life Seeks the Things Above**

The believer's life is a life that seeks the things above, that is, the things that are in heaven where Christ is. Note three significant points.

1. Note the meaning of the charge: "set your hearts on things above." The meaning is clearly and pointedly explained in two statements:
  - => First, set your hearts on things above, where Christ sits on the right hand of God. That is, seek heavenly things, the things of heaven.
  - => Second, set your *minds* (phromente) on things above and not on things on the earth. Set and focus your mind constantly upon heavenly things, not upon earthly things.

Very simply, the things of Christ and of heaven are to consume the believer's life and mind. But for the believer to keep his mind upon the things of Christ he must know what those things are. Therefore, the question naturally arises: What are the things of Christ and the things of heaven which are to consume our thoughts?

**Rom 8:5-6** *Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace.*

**Rom 12:2** *Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

**2 Cor 10:3-5** *For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.*

**Eph 4:22-24** *You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.*

The resurrection of Christ tells us what the things of Christ and of heaven are. It is His resurrection that allows us to be “*raised with Christ.*” Remember: we actually take part and participate in the resurrection of Christ. This is a *positional relationship* to God. As stated in the former note, when we accept Christ, God places us in Christ positionally. He begins to see us *in Christ, already seated in the heavenly realms and perfected forever* (see Eph. 2:4-7). It is because of this glorious position which God has given us that we should seek the things of Christ and of heaven. The resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ has done at least seven wonderful things for us. These seven things should consume the thoughts of our minds and the praise and prayer of our lips.

- a. The resurrection of Christ shows and guarantees that Christ is the Son of God. Our thoughts should focus upon this glorious fact: that God has sent His Son into the world to save us.

**Rom 1:3-4** *Regarding his Son, who as to his human nature was a descendant of David, and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.*

Jesus Christ claimed that He was the Son of God, that He possessed God's very own nature, that He was One with the Father (Jn. 10:30-33, 36, 5:19.) He claimed time and again that God was His Father (Jn. 5:17-30, 36-37, 43, 45; 6:29, 32-34, 37-40, 44-46, 57, 65; 8:16, 19, 25-29, 38, 42, 49, 54-55. See *Jesus Christ, Son of God*, Jn. 1:34.) When God raised Jesus Christ from the dead, He set His seal to Christ's claim. And by the resurrection God declares that Christ is His own dear Son.

- b. The resurrection of Christ saves and justifies us. The glorious truth of salvation and justification should consume our thoughts and praise all through the day.

**Rom 4:25** *He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.*

- c. The resurrection of Christ gives us or raises us up to a new life — a life that is abundant and eternal. It is the only way we can keep from walking after the flesh (sinful nature).

**Rom 6:4** *We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.*

**Rom 6:5-13** *We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin — because anyone who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. For we know that since Christ*

*was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness.*

**2 Cor 10:3-5** *For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.*

**Col 3:1-4** *Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.*

- d. The resurrection of Christ gives us power to live victoriously over the sins and trials of this world and to bear the fruit of God's Spirit as we walk throughout this world.

**Rom 7:4** *So, my brothers, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God.*

**Rom 8:11-13** *And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you. Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation – but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.*

**Gal 5:22-23** *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.*

**Eph 1:19-20** *And [that you may know] his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms.*

**Phil 2:8-9, 12-13** *And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed – not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence – continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.*

**Col 1:10-11** *And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might [resurrection power] so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully.*

Imagine living a life of power bearing the fruit of God's Spirit as we walk day by day — conquering the sins and walking through the trials of life victoriously. It is through our union with Christ that we *receive the power* [energy] to triumphantly walk day by day (cp. Jn. 15:1-5 for an excellent description of our union with Christ),

- e. The resurrection gives us a living hope, the hope of glory. Our minds and praise should focus upon the glory of heaven which will be ours when either God takes us home or Christ returns.

**1 Pet 1:3-4** *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade — kept in heaven for you.*

**Rom 8:11, 18** *And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you. I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.*

**1 Pet 1:21** *Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God.*

- f. The resurrection guarantees our resurrection (see Cor. 15:12-58). Our thoughts and praise should centre upon the wonderful praise of the new and glorious body God has promised us.

**Rom 6:5** *If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection.*

**2 Cor 4:14** *Because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you in his presence.*

**1 Th 4:14-18** *We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words.*

- g. The resurrection assures that God will judge the world by Christ. Our minds and prayers should be focused upon evangelism and the terrible fact that judgment is coming. Every person will have to give an account to Christ and all those who have rejected Him will be eternally separated from God.

**Acts 17:31** “For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead.”

**John 5:27-29** “And he [God] has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man. Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out — those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.”

Christ claimed that God had committed all judgment to Him: that He is the One whom God has appointed to judge the world. God stamped His approval to what Christ said by *raising Him* from the dead. Christ Himself will judge the world. Judgment is coming: the resurrection of Christ proves it.

2. Note the two reasons why we are to seek the things of Christ and of heaven: because we are dead, and our lives are *hidden with Christ* in God.
- a. The believer is dead. He is not actually dead; he still lives upon earth. But God *counts the believer dead* in the death of Christ. When Christ died, the believer died — right along with Christ *in God's mind*. God counts it so, and whatever God counts so, it is a fact. Therefore, the believer is actually dead in God's mind. This means a significant fact: a dead man cannot sin, for a dead man no longer lives for this earth. He lives for the next world.

**Thought 1.** Since we are dead, we are to seek and set our hearts upon the things of Christ and of heaven.

- b. The believer is *hidden with Christ*. What does this mean? It means that God counts the believer *hidden* in the resurrection and life of Christ. When Christ arose, He arose to a new life, not to His *old life*. He had just died to the old life once for all. Therefore, when the believer is said to be *hidden* in Christ, it means that God counts the believer risen with Christ. God counts the believer as risen to a new life. God sees the believer *hidden* in Christ day by day. God sees him walking *in* Christ and in Christ's righteousness. And because he is in Christ, the believer sets his mind upon things above, upon the things of Christ and of heaven. He sets his mind and life upon things that please Christ.

An excellent illustration of what it means to be “*hidden with Christ*” is this: take the index finger of your right hand and wrap your left hand around it. Say that the index finger represents you and the left hand represents Christ. Where are you (the index finger)? *In Christ*. You are hidden in Christ. When God looks at you, He sees you *hidden in Christ*. (See *Believer, Position in Christ*, Rom. 8:1.)

**Thought 1.** When you are hidden in Christ...

- Christ is the only life that God sees as living. Christ is your life in the eyes of God, the life in which you live.
- you live and move and have your being and roam around in the life of Christ. You are hidden in the life of Christ. You are not seen living and moving, for you are *hidden in Christ*. Christ is the only life, the only body that is seen by God and that is to be seen by the world.

Just think how surrendered and given over to Christ we are to be — so given over that Christ's life is all that is seen. How is such possible?

=> By seeking those things which are above, where Christ sits.

=> By setting our mind on things above, not on things on earth. By working to cast down imaginations and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, even to the point of captivating every thought for Christ.

In practical day to day living, turn the television off; set aside the magazines and books. Get into the Word of God: meditate and pray through the Word, and memorize and live out the Word. In addition, get alone and pray — at least every morning and evening — and learn to silently whisper a prayer every few minutes. Surrender your life totally to Christ; present your body as a *living* sacrifice to God: to know, believe and understand Him and to make Him known. You are His witness — do it.

**Isa 43:10** “*You are my witnesses,*” declares the Lord, “*and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me.*”

There is no way to know Him apart from setting our minds upon Him. Therefore, let us do it and do it now by getting to our secret place of prayer and seeking His face with a renewed commitment.

=> Our lives are hidden with Christ.

=> We live, yet not us, but Christ lives in us (Gal. 2:20).

=> We are always given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be revealed in our mortal body (2 Cor. 4:11).

=> For us to live is Christ, and to die is gain (Ph. 1:21).

=> We know this: we have passed from death to life — therefore, let us live for Christ (1 Jn. 3:14).

3. Note the reward for being hidden in Christ and for seeking the things of Christ and of heaven: the reward is that of appearing with Christ in glory. Think for a moment: God sees us *hidden with Christ*; therefore, we are risen with Christ. This means that being risen from the dead, we never have to die. Christ already lives in the presence of God.

Since God sees us *hidden with Christ*, God sees us in His presence. He has already accepted us as being in His presence forever and ever — all because we are there “*hidden with Christ.*”

Now, in practical terms we are still on earth. God has left us here to be witnesses for Him. But when He is ready to take us home to heaven, what happens is this: when we confront death — in the last second, in the last moment, right before we are to leave this world for the next — God will fix our minds upon Jesus and immediately transport us into His heavenly kingdom (see *Deliverance from Death*, 2 Tim. 4:18). God will give us a *fixation of mind* and we will never taste or experience death (see Jn. 8:51-52; Heb. 2:9).

Note that the verse has to do with the return of Christ. When Christ returns, we will appear or return with Him *in glory*. There is to be a new heavens and earth and Christ is to reign forever and ever, and we are to reign in glory with Him.

**Mat 13:43** “*Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.*”

**2 Cor 4:17** *For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.*

**Phil 3:21** *Who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.*

**Col 3:4** *When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.*

**2 Tim 2:10** *Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.*

**1 Pet 5:1** *To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed. ■*