YOU HAVE BEEN RAISED WITH CHRIST

Colossians 3:1-17 (Key verse 1,2)

*“*Since, then, **you have been raised with Christ**, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.”

Where we set our minds and hearts determines the direction and quality of our lives. Too often, fear, worry, and earthly concerns take that place and quietly steer us. So we must ask ourselves: *Where is my heart set? Where is my mind fixed, on things above, or on earthly things?* Last week we learned about what it means to continue to live in Christ Jesus. Today we will learn of another reason it is important to continue to live in Christ Jesus. It is because we have been raised with Jesus Christ from the dead. Paul opens this passage with a powerful reminder: “Since, then, you have been raised with Christ…” Through this message we want to firstly learn what that means. We will quickly learn that in Jesus we have a unique identity in the lord and in this world. Based on this truth Paul gives us a clear command: set your hearts and minds on things above, where Christ reigns. A risen life cannot cling to earthly patterns, it must pursue what belongs to Christ. We will secondly learn that, our old life has died, and our new life is hidden with Christ in God. Christ is now our life, and our future glory is secure in him. Therefore, we must lift our desires, thoughts, and priorities toward him. To be raised with Christ Jesus is a daily choice to seek what pleases him and to live out the reality of the resurrection in every part of our lives. The result is Christ peace will rule our hearts and minds, peace with fellow believers and peace within us. It is my prayer that we will be encouraged to reclaim our identity as those who have been raised with Christ Jesus. Amen!

Look at verse 1-2, “Since, then, **you have been raised with Christ**, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.” This verse begins by saying, **since then, you have been raised with Christ,** it means an imperative statement is about to follow. Some expected actions as a result of the fact that we have been raised with Christ Jesus. Meaning that, we cannot claim to be raised with Christ Jesus and then left to be or left to live the way we want. Here is now the imperative on verse 1b that says, “…set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.” The phrase “set your hearts” comes from the Greek word “zēteō,” which means seek, look for, and desire. It is an imperative verb. As new people in Christ, we need to decide to set our hearts on things above. To any person, the most important thing is what we set our hearts on. This determines the trajectory of our lives and the kind of people we will become.

Everyone’s heart is set on something. What is your heart set on? What can be worthy of our whole heart devotion? It is Christ who died for our sins and rose again to bring us into glory. And so because we are raised with Christ Jesus we are commanded to set our minds on things above not on earthly things. We will later explore what it means to set our minds on things above. However, take note of the importance of the mind here. It is no wonder that even in Romans 12:2 says, “2 Do not conform 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.” And so to set our minds on things above is to renew our minds and be transformed.

This means that by becoming saved through faith and God’s grace, we still need to work on our minds and hearts. It is not automatic that once we are saved naturally our minds and hearts will be set on things above where Christ sits. That is why it is not easy life, we have our struggles to live a holy life because we still live in the unregenerate body, body of sin.

**Let us now look at what it means that we have been raised with Christ.** Why Paul uses this as the basis for us to set our hearts and minds on things above. It is because when Paul says you have been raised with Christ Jesus, he means the following, look at verses 3-4 it reads, “3For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. **4When Christ, who is your life**, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.” To be raised with Christ Jesus, means that our lives are now hidden with Christ in God. This means that Jesus is our life. Our life is no longer our own but belongs to Jesus Christ. We should now live for what pleases God. And we can achieve this by setting our hearts and minds above. So as we can see, to have been raised with Jesus does not leave us idle. On the contrary is a calling to strive towards setting our minds and hearts on things above not on earthly things. This is how we can maintain a life hidden in Christ Jesus.

Now what does it mean to practically set our mind and hearts above instead of on earthly things? Look at verse 5, “5Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.” Setting our minds and hearts above is to put to death earthly things. Sexual immorality here refers to indulgence in things that belong to married people while you not married, it also refers to behavior of indulging is sexual content entertainment such as pornographic content.

Paul also mentions greed. This is the internal, sinful desire to satiate ourselves with more, more, more. Paul defines it as idolatry. It is to live as if everything exists for us, rather than for God. What should we do about our sinful desires? Paul tells us to “put them to death.” We cannot have a tolerant attitude toward sin, or compromise with sin; we must put to death whatever belongs to the earthly nature.

Setting our hearts and minds on things above does not mean that we ignore our basic human obligations, or as someone has said, being so heavenly minded that we are no earthly good. Rather, it means that we are not bound by earthly life. We pursue a higher quality of life. C.S. Lewis said, “If you seek heaven, you will gain earth as a bonus. But if you seek earth, you will lose both.” Jesus said, “But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well” (Mt 6:33). Put to death the earthly nature (5-11) As we set our hearts and minds on things above, we need to struggle against our sinful nature.

What do you think about most? Someone’s list include what other people think about me, what I don’t have, my fears, past mistakes, old wounds, rejections, broken dreams, unfinished tasks, and the like. The Bible says that the mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace (Ro 8:6). We should not let ungodly thoughts occupy our brain space rent-free. Our minds should be a holy space. As human beings, we need to set our minds on things above. What we read, watch and listen to is extremely important. Paul said in Philippians 4:8, “Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable if anything is excellent or praiseworthy think about such things.”

Though it may be painful, our sinful nature must be put to death. As this happens, we experience glorious new life. What becomes of those who live according to the earthly nature with its lusts and greed? Verse 6 says, “Because of these the wrath of God is coming.” People generally take the wrath of God lightly. But when we see the flood of Noah’s day, and the fire and brimstone rained down on Sodom and Gomorrah, we should realize God’s wrath is serious. God is holy. God punishes sin and no one can escape his judgment. Many people think that they can repent “later.” But God’s judgment is imminent and ongoing. So, we must put our sinful nature to death now, not later. We must rid ourselves of anger, rage, malice, slander and filthy language from our lips (8).

It's very popular today to say you believe in Jesus and you trust Jesus. You might be a homosexual celebrity and say Jesus is your Savior. You might be a pastor who says Jesus is your Savior, and then people find out you’ve been living in adultery multiple times, and you claim that to God’s grace and mercy on your behalf. You can almost live any kind of life, and if you say you believe in Jesus, that would qualify you as a Christian.

Look at verse 9-10, “9Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices 10and have put on the new self, **which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator**. 11Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.” We are being renewed in knowledge of God. Look at Paul’s prayer in Colossians 1:9, “For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the deep knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding.” And this new transformation makes us one in Christ Jesus, no circumcised, barbarian slave or free because Jesus is in all of us.

And so because we are God’s chosen people, risen with Christ Jesus, we are holy and dearly loved, we should clothe ourselves with God’s kingdom virtues, compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience [12]. We should be able to bear with one another and forgive one another just as Jesus forgave you and me. Look at verse 14, “**14And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.”** Ultimately the biggest virtue is love because love binds all the virtues together in perfect unity. Paul once said in 1 Cor 13:1, “If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal” [ESV].

However, remember this is all not easy because we still live in our sinful body, so it is not easy to love, to forgive and live by these wonderful virtues. Some of us had poor role models while growing up. Either we felt unloved, rejected and in some instances feel like we were the cause of our own misery or family breakdown. And so we grow up with all kinds of traumas and issues in our hearts. Though we become believers, since we still living in our sinful bodies, these things are still with us in our minds. However still because we rose with Christ Jesus from the dead, we can set our hearts and minds on things above. We can decide to be intentional in filling our minds with the knowledge of Jesus. That is why we read in verse 16, “16Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.” As we let the message of Christ dwell among us through teaching and admonishing one another through the Bible, hyms, and singing to God in gratitude in our hearts something even great will begin to happen. Look at verse 15, “15Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.” The peace of Christ Jesus will rule in our hearts, as individuals and as collectively as members of the church.

The peace of Christ is the calm, absolute assurance that comes over us because we are God’s children. It is rooted in God’s unfailing love, his almighty power and his perfect goodness. It is heavenly peace that no one takes away. God pours this peace into our hearts like a gentle river fills a reservoir. He wants us to have this peace all the time. Why is this important? When we do not have Christ’s peace, we become anxious and upset. We spread anxiety to others and disrupt the Christian fellowship. But when we have Christ’s peace in our hearts, we are happy and stable. We can work hard with joy, serve others well, and be a blessing. The question is how we can maintain this peace. Paul said, “Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts….” This word “rule” comes from a Greek word that means to act as a judge or referee. When the referee sees a foul, he blows his whistle and the game stops. A penalty is assessed, and fair play continues. Whenever our peace is disturbed, we need to stop and examine our hearts. We need to listen to God and obey his word. Then our peace is restored.

I have found the importance of identity in this world. I had a master’s student once who became very emotional in one of our meetings. We usually meet in a public area space and so when he started yelling at me everyone around could hear. Such that even after our meeting one of the cleaning ladies ask me if I was alright. Usually with postgraduate supervision of students, it is the supervisors who tend to get annoyed and yell at students. However, in this case the student even pointed fingers at me and was very upset. At that moment my blood also started to boil and I felt the urge of also raising my voice since I really felt disrespected by the student. However, somehow I believe it was the holy spirit, I heard a gentle reminder, that said remember, you are the supervisor he is a student.

Remembering my identity as supervisor calmed me greatly. I could then respond gently to the student until situation became calm. So today’s message reminded me of the importance of my identity. If my identity as supervisor in my secular job could help me be calm in a heated situation. How much more if I could remember daily my identity in Christ, that I have been raised with Jesus Christ. For this is not a self made identity but I was called by the grace of God into repentance such that when Jesus died on the cross, I also died with him and when he rose from the dead I also rose with him. This is the revealed grace and love of God in my life, I am now a child a God, raised with Christ Jesus, I am righteous and holy because I am risen with Jesus, I am dearly loved by God because I was risen with Christ Jesus. This is my God given identify, and because of I am risen with Christ, because of my identity in the lord, I can grow spiritually. If my secular job identity could grant me calmness in my job, how much more my identity in Christ. I should be able to face life challenges with the peace of Christ. I can be determined to set my mind and heart on things above. I can be determined to have Christ peace rule in my heart and mind. It is my prayer that through my identity the lord, God will help me lead His ministry, to have the peace and unity among of Christ Jesus. Struggle to serve bible studies and Sunday messages. Lead my family with God’s wisdom, love and compassion. Please pray with to always remember my identity, that I am risen with Christ Jesus and dearly loved by God. May Christ peace rule in my heart and our ministry. Amen!

**In conclusion,** God by sovereign grace chose you and me to be in Christ, so that when Christ died you and me were spiritually in Christ in the purposes of God. You died in His death, you rose in His resurrection, you are now alive in Christ as a new creation in union with the Son of God. You are empowered to put off the remnants of the old life and put on the elements of the new and righteous life, and this is the process of sanctification. It is putting off and putting on. It is progressively the work of the Word and the power of the Spirit conforming you and me more to the image of Christ. We are called to live as people who belong to him. Letting his peace and his word rule in our hearts. Resurrection life is not theoretical, it is a new way of living shaped by compassion, forgiveness, love, and gratitude. When we set our hearts and minds on things above, Christ becomes our life, our peace, and our purpose. And as we walk in this new life, the world sees the power of the One who raised us with himself. Amen!