

Title: What Does a True Believer Look Like? Part 1

Text: Colossians 3:1-11

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INTRO. The metaphor/comparison may sound archaic for the secular mind of today's time – but Solomon's advice here is still very insightful:

Prov 11:22, *Like a gold ring in a pig's snout, is a beautiful woman without discretion.*

- You can put a ring on a pig...but it's still a pig.
- If a beautiful woman has no character...her beauty is only skin deep.

Background. In the first half of Colossians, Paul has been combatting the false doctrine (bad theology) that is trying to creep into the young Colossian church.

One of those false doctrines being advocated was severe asceticism, or secret knowledge. This was the view that one could only learn spiritual truth from angels, or a deeper knowledge that came through self-discipline, self-torture, or avoiding any form of self-indulgence.

- In other words, this was a false gospel!
- According to asceticism, you can change your ways and learn deeper knowledge by your own self-effort...by human strength.

But Paul is seeking to be clear: we are not into temporary, human reform...or behavior modification. No! → We are into total heart transformation.

- We are not people that sin has injured...and we need personal rehabilitation.
- We are people that sin has killed...and we need divine resurrection.

And for Paul – the assurance of this hope...*that I can change and live as a true believer...*is none other than the glorious Gospel of Jesus.

First, believers have a new reality → my Christian life should be marked by the power of Jesus Christ (3:1-4).

I shared with you two weeks ago: one of the great glories of Christianity is that my entire life, my entire existence, all that I have ever done, is hidden beneath the blood of Jesus.

- My past life hide. My future life guide. My present life abide.
- There is such freedom and hope in this theological truth.

And this reality is imbedded in Col 3:1-4.

- We have been raised “with Christ” in the *past* (3:1).
- We are hidden “with Christ” in the *present* (3:3).
- We will be revealed “with Christ” in the *future* (3:4).

This little paragraph (vv 1-4) is a bridge from →

Paul's focus on doctrinal teaching (Ch. 1-2) – get away from the false teaching... TO...
 Paul's focus on practical living (Ch. 3-4) – start living in a manner that pleases the Lord.

Notice this conditional clause in 3:1 → *“If you've been raised with Christ.”*

- This is the point of Paul's lesson here: if Jesus was raised...and you wear His name...then you'll be changed.

Paul begins his argument by citing this fact: *“Christ was raised”* (raised with Christ).

- Resurrection = the reason Paul wrote this letter.
- Resurrection = the reason Epaphras got saved and started a church in his hometown.
- Resurrection = the reason all new Colossian Christians are drawn to hope!
- Resurrection = the whole reason for the Christian movement.

“Christ was raised” → I want to reiterate this again. If Jesus was NOT raised:

- This CHR movement will all go away at some point...it will fizzle.
- It's all for nothing.

But IF Christ was raised...then glory is guaranteed! And His promises are true!

There are two implied truths here in Col 3:1 –

1. Jesus was raised (historical lesson).
2. Through union with Him by faith, His resurrection guarantees my resurrection (personal).

The cross means = Jesus came to us, to take away our sin. (He came to me).

The resurrection means = I'll be raised like Him, to go with Him! (I go with Him).

2:20, *“We died with Jesus”* and now in 3:1, *“We're raised with Jesus.”*

LESSON. For Christians, this means union with Jesus...oneness with Jesus...intermingling of my life in Christ's life, and His life in me.

ILLUS: It's hard to describe but easy to feel: if you love someone, their sorrow = your sorrow.
 And their joy = your joy.

- A man waiting while spouse is in surgery...a mom waiting for math test results...a parent sitting in the stands while their kid is in the batter's box.
- OR...when they score the run...get accepted to school...receive an award!

Now here is where it gets practical:

V1, *“Seek the things above”* → Whatever is on Jesus's heart, needs to be on my heart.

- Phil 2:5, *Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.*

V2, *“Set your mind”*

- Muttering...memorization...repeated meditation to yourself.

ILLUS: Put a guard at the door – many things knock – but not everything has to be let in.

Ask yourself, about whatever is dominating your thoughts:

Will this matter in eternity? ... Will this glorify the Lord? ... Will this help my testimony?
Will this be an encouragement to other believers?

V3, “*For you died...and your life is hidden with Christ in God.*”

- Dying with Christ symbolizes the drastic split with our old, former, pre-Christian life.

Dying = language of surrender...it means we yield our future to God...God has control, not me.

- Death to what? –
- My illusion of control...my rights...my sinful urges...my need to be right, etc.

But here’s the key → because of CHRIST and the power His presence in me brings...through death to self, I am never more alive!!!

“*I’m hidden with Christ in God*” – God can’t view me without looking through the lens of Jesus.

- My new identity is NOT Jeremy in charge of His life...but rather
- Jesus is now changing Jeremy’s life!

Hidden = God fully completed the action with permanent results...I’m God’s forever child because of Jesus’ action on my behalf.

What does all this mean? For Christians, this means our lives, really, are all about Christ!!

- Died with Christ...raised with Christ...hidden with Christ.
- My mind is set on Christ...Christ is my life!

Q: Where is Jesus Christ right now?

- Gospels – He died, was buried, and rose.
- Acts 1 – He is our ascended Lord.
- New Testament –
 - He’s preparing a place for us (John 14).
 - He’s making intercession for us (Romans, Hebrews).
 - He’s at God’s right hand, reigning and ruling.

Yes! But also...through the Holy Spirit that becomes my down payment (deposit) the moment I trust in Jesus (Ephesians 1) – Jesus, through the Spirit, therefore is also:

- He is living in me. He’s changing me.
- He’s actively building His church.
- He’s calling, saving, and changing people from every nation, tribe, and tongue.

Therefore, for Christians – YES, Christ deserves all my praise! YES, Christ is “my life” until we die and go to heaven (ILLUS: oxygen, food, shelter, companion, hope.)

Second, believers have new results → as a Christian, the life Jesus gives me will demonstrate the undeniable attributes of holiness, Christlikeness (3:5-11).

- There is a noticeable difference in our habits and behaviors when Christ comes in!

V5, “Put these behaviors to death” (reminiscent of Jesus in Matt 5 with eye/hand language).

Sexual immorality and impurity. Let us remember God’s ideal and God’s desire for each of us.

- A pure, holy boy...a pure, holy girl...coming together in marriage, and remaining committed to one another in a monogamous marriage for a lifetime.

Which means, immorality = fornication, adultery, homosexuality, bestiality, etc.

- You’re crazy! You’re a prude! You’re a caveman! I know, I know. But the Holy Spirit can help.
- There is a holiness, sweetness, and honor to lifetime commitment to marriage.

Note, when it comes to sexuality...if anyone can do it...and everyone is doing it...and our dysfunctional culture is glamorizing it...then CHRs should be wise to ask – am I different?

Lust.

- Letting your eyes feast.
- Linger in a bad place.
- Pornography...often social media.

Evil desire.

- “I’ll take this man or woman...for myself” (we objectify a human being!!!)
- It’s someone’s wife/mom/dad/sister/son → why would you do that to a family?

Greed.

- Love of money is the root of all evil (1 Tim 6:10).
- Insatiable desire to have more? → Johnny Hunt, “*How much is enough?*”
- Enough? Keep? Give?
- Whatever happened to holy contentment?
- Rich = more...but it’s also more of a burden (the rich have more problems!)
- Kids may need less devices, trips, and travel ball...and more...camp, Bible, missions, etc.

VV6-7 → He’s calling them to focus on their present life, right now.

- In the past, you once lived in foolishness and sin.
- In the future, if you refuse God’s grace, you can be assured that His wrath is coming.
- So, what are you doing now?

V8 – “Put away now”

- It’s the picture of dirty clothes, dirty dishes, or a full trash can.

Q: Am I holy today? Am I open to God's Spirit right now? What do I want God to do right now? No excuses! → (personality...that's how I am...that's how I was raised...oh hush!)

- Take responsibility!
- Believe by faith that God's Word/Spirit can change you!

Anger.

- Always ill, bad mood constantly.
- Deep, smoldering bitterness.
- Had heart attitude.

Wrath.

- Sudden outbursts of anger.
- You're moody...you erupt...it's scary to everyone.

Malice.

- It means to plan evil. It means you premeditated it.
- You hurt someone else on purpose.

Slander and bad language.

- Gossip!
- Speaking ill of a child of God.
- ILLUS: Can God correct someone? YES! Then Let God do it! You hush!
 - Who do you think you are correcting another of the children?
- Of all the words you could choose...why choose the dirty/vile ones?

Lying.

- Intentional misleading/deception for your own advantage.
- Not telling the truth to save-face.
- I tell my kids: if you're honest, I can always help you. If you lie, I can never help!

VV10-11, When you put away the old self, and put on the new self in Christ...it also does the following:

- You are renewed in the knowledge of God according to His image!
 - You are brought back into alignment with God's original, divine purpose for you!
- You see the beautiful unity within relationships in the body of Christ.
 - Christ is Lord over every relationship/class/order!
 - No more division...Christ brings unity!

Bottom Line. Paul taught the Colossians that if they were in Christ, then their old, sinful practices must stop.

Big Idea. A true believer must remain focused on Christ and seek to put away all sinful behaviors.

Application #1 – Keep looking to Jesus Christ, keep thinking of His resurrection from the grave.

- If he could do *that, then* (historical resurrection)?
- What could he not do in *you, now* (personal transformation)?

Application #2 – What “heavenly things” are perpetually filling my thoughts and habits?

- Christian worship music? Podcasts? Scripture?
- Do I welcome the good thoughts?
- Do I push back against the bad thoughts?
- What are my first and final thoughts each day?