

## BE RECONCILED TO GOD

In the world today so many religious cultures have given themselves to popular religion. For instance, evangelism has become marketing; worship has become popular entertainment; and preaching has become popular psychology! Friends, when we do not know what God expects, then we will fall for anything "new." Christians need the capacity to say "NO" to the popular culture around us.

The courage to say "No" to popular religious culture comes only from a strong faith in God and His Word, the Bible. You Christians can courageously say "No" when you realize and know for sure that "you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God." That last phrase comes from Colossians 3:3.

Jesus' apostle Paul wrote a letter to Christians in a city called Colossi; to Christians he had never met. Paul wrote about the meaning of being a Christian amidst the popular culture of this world. "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." ([Colossians 3:1-4 NIV](#))

What did Paul mean when he said, "you have been raised with Christ"? Those repentant believers had been buried with Christ in baptism, and raised up to live differently in a new way of life. It was with these Colossians just as Paul described to the Romans. Paul wrote, "Do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised up from *the* dead by the glory of the Father; even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been joined together in the likeness of His death, we shall also be *in the likeness* of His resurrection; knowing this, that our old man is crucified with *Him* in order that the body of sin might be destroyed, that from now on we should not serve sin." ([Romans 6:3-6 MKJV](#))

So you see, when Paul said the Colossians had been "raised with Christ" he was referring to their baptism into Christ's death and their resurrection to a new way of life. Life changes after a person's baptism. The old man of sin, that is, the body of sin is destroyed by forgiveness. The new man, that is, the new body arises from the watery grave and begins a changed life. Here is a life no longer ruled by

popular culture, but by the Lord Jesus Christ. And so, a Christian listens to the Word of Christ, the Word of God. From those words faith arises in our hearts. We believe what God and Christ are telling us. "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ." ([Romans 10:17 ESV](#)) When our faith is changed, our life begins to change. Our desires change.

Suddenly, our future looks completely different! Since we have been raised with Christ we begin to "seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God." New Christians begin to "Set [their] minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth." Christians "have died [to popular religions], and [their] life is hidden with Christ in God." ([Colossians 3:1-3 ESV](#))

Faithful Christians are expected to live this way until they see Jesus. Paul assures us that "When Christ who is [our] life appears, then [we] also will appear with him in glory." ([Colossians 3:4 ESV](#)) A new personal experience awaits us in eternity with Jesus Christ, our Savior.

Since a new experience awaits us in eternity we begin to live daily a different kind of life here and now. For instance, we "put to death" all old sinful practices. And we bring to life Christian virtues. Paul wrote, "Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming. In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator." ([Colossians 3:5-10 ESV](#)) Yes, there are many sinful practices to "put to death." But, there are many positive attributes that the Christian will "put on." "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; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony." ([Colossians 3:12-14 ESV](#))

While the world around us is spinning in turmoil Christians "Let the peace of Christ rule in [their] hearts, to which indeed [they] were called in one body." Christians can truly be thankful for this great peace that surpasses understanding!

While the world around us is ignorant of coming judgment and God's retribution, Christians "Let the word of Christ dwell in [them] richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in [their] hearts to God." And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God." ([Colossians 3:15-16 ESV](#))

The Power of Christ's story is the only power that compels us to stop sin and live for Him! Living for Jesus is what the apostle Paul was writing about in Colossians, chapter 3. The world has a hard time tolerating those who live for Christ. The world cannot see into eternity. It refuses to be informed about the future beyond death. The world does not think there is a future beyond death. But those who follow the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ have this hope burning in their hearts and it makes for a better world in which to live! That's right! Christian living is the best it can be in this world. Christ makes life in this world meaningful!

However, unbelievers and skeptics do not believe in Christ, nor in the future Christ will bring. Jesus' apostle Peter speaks of an "empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors." (1 Peter 1:18) Christians have been redeemed from that way of life! The word "redeemed" means to "buy back." And Peter says it is possible to be "redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors." The purchase was **not** made with perishable things like silver or gold, but the purchase was made with "the precious blood of Christ." (1 Peter 1:19) This imagery of "redemption" goes back to a time when human slavery was practiced. When a person became destitute and could not provide for himself, he could sell his service to a foreigner until such time he could prosper and perhaps redeem himself. However, sometimes a friend or a family member might redeem a person from his slavery. You can read about such arrangements in the Old Testament book of Leviticus, chapter 25. (The word "redemption" is used several times in that chapter.)

Humans are slaves to sin and the author of sin, the Devil. That's right! Every human being suffers from the slavery of sin; every human needs redemption. God has made this very clear that no human being can live in God's presence because of sin. And furthermore, no human being can live perfectly without sin! In the

words of Jesus' apostle Paul, "Jews and Gentiles alike are all under the power of sin." (Romans 3:9) Listen to how Paul describes by quoting the Old Testament scriptures: "As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one." "Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit." "The poison of vipers is on their lips." "Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness." "Their feet are swift to shed blood; ruin and misery mark their ways, and the way of peace they do not know." "There is no fear of God before their eyes." ([Romans 3:10-18 NIV](#))

Since the wages of sin is death, who can redeem us? One thing is clear about our sin, we cannot redeem ourselves? Paul continued, "There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus." ([Romans 3:22-24 NIV](#)) Jesus Christ has redeemed the world from our slavery to sin and Satan! Jesus could do this because He is God's only begotten Son. God sent Jesus on this mission to redeem, buy back, the world from the slavery of sin.

"Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade others. ...If we are "out of our mind," as some say, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again. So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. ...Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, [he is a new creature]... The old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made [Jesus] who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." ([2 Corinthians 5:11-21 NIV](#))

Friends, are you reconciled to God? Visit a church of Christ near you!