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HOLINESS

A Divine Way of Living

THE SECRET TO VICTORY OVER THE OLD NATURE

Paul reminded the saints at Colosse that victory over sin and self was not possible through willpower and fleshly struggle. True victory could only come through **understanding and consciously believing** what it really meant that Christ had died for their sins and been resurrected for their justification. Paul declared that this was the secret of his own complete transformation—and so it must be with us. This understanding also results in a true love for God and our Lord Jesus.

But how could Christ's death, burial and resurrection be as real to them as it was to Paul—so real that their very lives would be totally transformed? Paul explained: They must believe **that Christ was coming at any moment** to take them to heaven, where they would thereafter appear with Him in glory! It was the hope of Christ's imminent return that would make the difference between victory and defeat in the Christian life! Like as if Christ could come today.

That this hope is the key to victorious living is clear. Notice again Paul's staggering declaration:

*Col 3:4-6 When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. Therefore, put to death your members which are on the earth..... Because of these things the **wrath of God** is coming upon the sons of disobedience...*

That was the vibrant hope of such certain accomplishment that Paul began this letter with the statement, "Faith and love springs from the hope stored in Heaven," **Colossians 1:4-5.**

Herein lay the secret to the godly life that Paul himself lived and expected of the Colossians as well. They were to be so heavenly minded that the things of this earth would have no appeal and thus no power over them.

Col 3:1-2: "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things _____, not on things on the earth"

More than a Mental Attitude.

Nor was this orientation away from earth toward heaven to be merely a "mental attitude" they had adopted without any basis in reality. It was not wishful "positive thinking," but **truth** that would change their lives. Through Christ's cross Christians have been crucified to the world and the world has been crucified to them, as Paul had firmly declared in **Gal 6:14**. A man who has just been taken down, dead, from a cross has no interest in this world nor does it have any claims upon him. The person crucified and those who crucified him have nothing further to do with each other. So, it is with the Christian and the world through the cross of Christ. **The vicious hatred this world has for Christ**, and its irreconcilable animosity against all that He stands for, have been fully exposed in its rejection and crucifixion of our Lord. Christ declared that the world would hate and persecute believers as it had Him (Jn 15:18-20;16:2;17:14). By His cross we have been cut off from this world just as surely as He has been.

Resurrection Life – His Return

Death, however, did not end it all. Christ rose triumphant from the grave and ascended to the right hand of the Father in heaven. Moreover, He is coming again in power and glory to judge and take vengeance upon those who have rejected Him (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9) —and we, who have identified ourselves with Him in His rejection and death, will participate in His triumph and glory. Nor is that Second Coming so far in the future that it has no practical meaning for us now. On the contrary, **it could occur today**. The glorious fulfilment of the hope that the gospel has instilled within our hearts could burst upon us at any moment! This fact causes **eternity to invade the present** and makes the Christian no longer of this world!

Paul says it again: "For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." Consenting to be dead and willing for Christ to be their life was not only the Colossians' basis for victory, but the essential meaning of the gospel they must embrace. Otherwise, ***there could be no salvation***. Without that they were mere **Barabbas's**, ***grateful that Christ had died in their place, but mistakenly assuming that they had been "saved" in order to live for self.***

If they were not willing to acknowledge Christ's death as their very own and to give up life as they would have lived it so that Christ could become their life, then they could not experience the victory over sin and self that Paul preached.

John 12:25: He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

Remember, the **exchanged life**? (Lesson 11). Indeed, they had **failed to consent** to the message of the gospel at all!

Dynamic Power

And what made the fact of their death, burial and resurrection with Christ the dynamic power that transformed their lives? It was this promise: "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." Once that truth had gripped their hearts so that His "appearing" had become their daily expectation and hope, Christ's death and resurrection would be so real to them in the present, that they would be changed into new persons. As such, Paul told them, they were to "seek those things which are above, where Christ sits on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col 3: 1-2). May we each pursue that challenge wholeheartedly and consciously!

Rapture Purifies Living.

The "Pretribulation Rapture" is thus no mere hair-splitting thesis for theologians to discuss, or a theory without practical effect. It is the **overlooked secret to victory in the Christian's life**. John said,

1 Jn 3:3 Every man that hath this hope in him _____ himself, even as he [Christ] is pure"

Paul indicated that it had been his love of Christ's appearing that had motivated him to holiness and faithfulness and had made him victorious—and that the same "crown of righteousness" was for "all them also that love his [Christ's] appearing" (2 Tim 4:8). What a tragedy to barter eternal life for the enjoyments of this brief world. The pleasure of sin can only be enjoyed "for a season". (Heb11:25) (A very short season compared to the endless age of eternity!)

"He is no fool who gives up that which he cannot keep, in order to gain that which he cannot lose".

Jim Elliot, martyred in Ecuador.

Be Enthusiastic

Let us diligently and enthusiastically "seek those things that are above, where Christ sits on the right hand of God." Let us "set [our] affection on things above, not on things on the earth."

Why?

Philippians 3:20-21. "For our conversation [citizenship] is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself"

DISCUSSION:

1. Do you understand the true Gospel as revealed by our Lord to the Apostle Paul and are you confident that you are truly “saved” and a child of God through Christ? Romans 10:9.
2. The Bible says God wants us to be in Heaven with Him. Why does He leave us on earth in the meantime? Why not just take us home, the moment we accept Christ?
2Corinthians 5:18-20
3. Re-read all the lessons in this study on Holiness. Make a summary of the most important points that have challenged your life.
4. Daily identify your new nature as a Christian and live a life of victory over the past masters of your old nature. Galatians 5:22-26.
5. In Christ alone God accepts us as He accepts Christ – Holy and Pure. Colossians 1:21-22.

**Holiness is not what we wear or do
it's based on our Position in Christ.**