

Col 3: 1-4

The Correct Answer – Union with Christ

This a transitional section – conclusion of all that Paul has been saying before & introduces the rest of the letter

Conclusion to first half of letter

The false teachers were seeking answers in all the wrong places – what they could do what they could experience – that is the way the world thinks.

Don't seek the things that are on earth – empty deceptive philosophy of man

- Key phrase to describe this way of thinking
 - Elementary principles of the world that are according to the traditions, commandments, and teachings of men
 - The false teachers' thought process was of the earth – it was worldly and not according to Christ – not from above
- Review of what Paul says about the false philosophy
 - Knowledge & wisdom – Don't seek to gain a deeper knowledge of the truth and wisdom of through mystical experiences
 - They relied on visions and the worship of lower spiritual beings such as angels
 - They relied on things they could do and experience
 - Justification - Don't seek to be made right with God by a legalist observance of OT ceremonies, rituals, and regulations
 - They relied on things they could do.
 - Sanctification - Don't seek to control the desire of the sinful flesh by subjecting yourself to ascetic man-made rules and harsh treatment of the body
 - They relied on things they could do and impose on themselves.
 - These all fail – they relied on the wrong things.

So what is the correct answer to each of these?

Seek the things that are above - the heavenly truth found in Christ

- A philosophy that is made in heaven by God, not on earth by fallen man
- Seek the means that God has ordained
 - Knowledge & wisdom of God – Seek these from Christ in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (2:3)
 - Rely on Christ – heaven's way
 - Justification – Seek to be justified fully before God from Christ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sin (1:14) and through whom the Father reconciles all things to Himself (1:20).
 - Rely on Christ – heaven's way
 - Sanctification – Seek the power to serve God with a holy life from Christ in whom every man is made complete (1:28, 2:10) and in whom we receive the

inward circumcision of the heart made without hands that removes the body of the flesh (2:11).

- Rely on Christ – heaven’s way

- God’s answer for all of this is Christ and our union with Him.
 - We have been united to Him in his death, burial and resurrection
 - 2:12 – we were buried with Him, 2:20 – we died with Him, 3:3 – we have died with Him
 - 2:12 – we were raised up with Him, 2:13 – we were made alive together with Him, 3:1 – we have been raised with Him
 - These are true mysteries!

Union with Christ

- Legal union – results in justification – being made right with God
 - 1:14 – in Christ we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins
 - 1:20 – the Father reconciles all things to himself through Christ
 - 1:22 – we have been reconciled to God in Christ’s fleshly body through death
 - 2:13-14 – in Christ we have died and been raised with Him resulting in the forgiveness of sins because the certificate of death consisting of decrees against us was taken out the way having been nailed to the cross
 - God in a judicial sense places us in Christ – the effects of his death, burial and resurrection are legally ours.
 - He looks at us through the filter of Christ and sees us cleansed by his blood and clothed with his righteousness - consequently He declares us to be righteous; to be reconciled with Him
 - Eph 1:6 – “...he has made us accepted in the Beloved”
 - *Legal union with Christ is the answer to being made right with God – He is our Great High Priest who completely reconciles us to God.*
- Spiritual union – “mystical union”
 - Not mystical in the sense that it is past finding out
 - But mystical in the sense that it is hidden to the visible eye - our life is hidden with Christ in God (3:3)
 - Made alive spiritually (regeneration)
 - 2:13 – When we were dead in our transgressions and the uncircumcision of our flesh, He made us alive together with Him
 - We are united to Christ by his indwelling Spirit who takes our spiritually dead heart and makes it alive
 - Result - now we can see, hear, receive and understand all the spiritual knowledge and wisdom God has for us.
 - 1 Cor. 2:12-16 READ
 - *Spiritual union with Christ is the answer to receiving the full knowledge and wisdom of God – He is our Prophet who completely reveals to us the will of God for our salvation.*

- Made holy in life (sanctification)
 - The resurrection power of Christ dwelling in our new heart works mightily to change us into His own image (3:10) so that we live a life that pleases God.
 - Through the resurrection power of Christ dwelling in our hearts we are enabled to say no to sinful fleshly desires and temptations.
 - The power to live a holy life comes from the resurrected Christ who we are united with.
 - 2:11 – In Christ we have been circumcised with a circumcision made without hands resulting in the removal of the body of the flesh.
 - This change of heart made by the Holy Spirit causes us to want to obey God – we grow to desire this more and more.
 - Jesus gave us this promise, “Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they shall be filled.”
 - Jesus’ promise is sure because He is now in the supreme position of authority (seated at the right hand of God) and therefore fully able to give us this power (righteousness) as we seek it from him – 3:1
 - *Spiritual union with Christ is the answer to having victory over sin; over the sinful flesh – He is our King who completely subdues our hearts to himself.*
- Future union - glorification
 - 3:1 – We have been raised up with Christ
 - 3:4 – When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.
 - Being united with Christ in his resurrection guarantees our resurrection to glory when he returns.
 - Being united with Christ in his resurrection guarantees that we will be WITH Him in glory – eternal future union
 - 1 Jn 3:2 – We are now children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.
 - This is part of what hidden in Christ means (Col 3:3-4) – we don’t see it clearly now – but when Christ returns and is revealed, then we also will be revealed with him in glory.
 - 1 Jn 3:3 – This hope of being raised and glorified in the future motives us now to purify ourselves –to fight against sin (sanctification).
 - *Union with Christ is the answer to having eternal hope for the future.*
- Union with Christ makes us complete
 - 1:28 – Proclaiming Christ and admonishing and teaching Him with wisdom is what makes us complete in Christ
 - 2:9-10 – Because in Christ all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, we are made complete in Him.

Introduction to the rest of the letter

The rest of the letter focuses on what the new life in Christ looks like as a result of being united to Him.

- 3:2 – Set your mind on things above
- Now Paul goes into the details of what the new life in Christ looks like
 - He shows in particular what the things are we should stay away from and get out of our life by Christ's indwelling power...(therefore...)
 - He shows in particular that we should be seeking and setting our minds on – the things that the indwelling resurrection power of Christ will enable us to do.
 - Personal character qualities and attitudes; how to relate properly to each other in the Church, at home and at work; how to pray; and how to relate to the lost world around us.