

Rooted - Part 8

“A New Identity - A New Reality“

Colossians 3:1-4

Here in the hill country, there's not a lot of top soil. It looks pretty, but just underneath the surface, it's all limestone and rock, and it's very difficult to put in foundations here. But, the trees have figured something out. They've learned to go down deep with their roots and find all the cracks and fissures in the limestone and literally wrap their roots around those rocks so that when the winds blow, they may be bent, but they won't be broken. When the strong winds come, the trees manage well. Why? Because the root system stays intact.

In the same way, as followers of Jesus, we're being rooted in God's Word - rooted in the things of the Kingdom of God - understanding who he is. But, another piece we need to understand is, who we are in Christ. We need to know who we are and who he says we are. The big idea is this, we've been raised together with Christ, and now it's time to live like it. It's time to live it out.

It's so easy to slip back into an old version of yourself. Driving on I-10 to San Antonio or Austin, sometimes the flesh just wants to come out. We can be saved and love Jesus, and still catch ourself thinking, reacting, and talking like the “old” us. We call that the “default pattern.” Sometimes, when the stress is on - when things get heated, hot and heavy on us - if we're not careful and if we're not rooted securely, then we will default back to old behaviors, old patterns, and old ways of thinking.

And so, here's some key thoughts as we step into this. Most people try to change their behavior without understanding their identity, especially their identity in Christ. That is literally the lynchpin of the Christian faith. If we don't know who we are and how to relate to a God who really loves us, then we're going to be handicapped as followers of Jesus. We're going to be rendered dysfunctional - being one of the parts of the body of Christ that doesn't function. Why? - because if we don't know who we are, we'll never know what to do.

Here's the deal. Most people try to change their behavior without understanding their *identity*. Paul flips the script in Colossians and says this, "*You don't change to become new. You are new. So now you live differently.*" We're not going to be *someday* justified, *someday* sanctified, *someday* free and delivered. We are that right *now*. This is how he sees us *today*. It's so important to understand this and to activate our faith and *believe* it and by faith, *receive* who he *says* we are.

Colossians chapter three tells us how to live the resurrected life *right now*. Imagine stepping into a church for the first time and saying, "*I just gave my life to Jesus. I need somebody to help me know what to do next. What's the next step?*" Because it's made up of imperfect people, maybe that church doesn't do everything just right, but they accept us with all our imperfections and hopefully disciple and nurture us. But then we understand that we're not *going* to be renewed and *someday* be there, God *already* sees us in that shape and in that condition because we said *Yes* to Jesus as a new creation in Christ.

According to God's Word, everything now is becoming new as old things are passing away. We talk about cultural engagement and how we need to get involved, and "occupy until Jesus returns," but we also need to set our minds on things *above*. We *can* have our mind in two places at one time. We can have this idea of where we're going and who we're going to be with for all eternity, and we can allow that to empower us and encourage us and enlarge us. We can also know that Jesus himself is going to return. He's going to come back, and we can let that energize us for *today*.

But, in the meantime, we're in-between. We are in between being fully sanctified and fully justified in terms of having everything worked out. When we step over the line into heaven, there's perfection - completion - there's the finished work that happens. Right now, it's kind of a *now-and-not-yet* kind of life that we live in Christ. We're clean. We're pure. We're whole. We're perfected. But, stepping into this world and living on terra firma as we do every day, we are a work in progress. *Can we be both at the same time?* According to God's Word, *yes*.

Colossians 3 1-4 ESV

"If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory."

That's where Christ is - and he's also "*in us*." Christ can be in more than one place at a time. He's omnipresent. He can be anywhere he wants to be at the same time. It's a mystery. There's so many mysteries that will one day be revealed, but in the meantime - *in between* - right here where we live, we have to walk by faith and not by sight.

We can set our mind on something, but still be concerned with and engage with something else. We have died and our life is hidden with Christ. When it says we've died, it means we've had a spiritual death and rebirth. When Jesus was talking to Nicodemus, he said, *"You must be born again."* And Nicodemus was just being logical and said, *"Well, how can I enter into my mom's womb a second time?"* He wasn't being sarcastic, he was asking a question. He was a teacher by nature. He was a learner at his heart, and he's like, *"How how do I do that?"* Jesus said, *"You must be born of water"* which is the natural birth, but also *"born from above,"* or *of the spirit.* So, we've died and been buried with Christ.

Colossians is like the highlight reel of the book of Romans. It parallels Romans chapter six where it talks about how we're buried with Christ in baptism and we're raised to walk in newness of life. Paul says, *"You have died - you're buried - and your life is hidden with Christ. We're raised to walk in new life."* But here's the beauty of it, we are "hidden in Christ." When the devil comes after us, he would never tell us this. When he looks at us, he sees Jesus. He sees the blood of Christ over the door post of our life.

The Passover happened back in Egypt, and the angel told the Hebrew children who were enslaved, *"Take the the blood of a pure lamb, a spotless lamb, and paint it over your doorpost, because if you will do that, then the death angel who is going to sweep through this place will pass over your home."* That's what passover means - *"will pass you by."* That way, death won't visit your home. In a very real way, this is what's happening. When we are hidden in Christ - who was the Sacrificial Lamb - then his blood is now painted over the doorpost of our life. Isn't that a powerful picture?

When the enemy, death, comes our way, he has to say, *"Whoa, I can't go in that house. That house is occupied. That house is covered."* That's why we use terms like "covered in the blood." It's literally hearkening back to that Passover and the picture of Jesus shedding his blood for our forgiveness. The Bible calls it *remission of sin* - the removal of sin - because the blood is "over" us, and the enemy cannot come in. Sometimes we give the devil way too much credit, because he has been de-fanged and defeated.

Jesus took care of him on the cross - and we've died with *Jesus*. Our life is now hidden with Christ, and what the enemy now sees, and what God himself sees is *Jesus* when he looks at us. That is so powerful and life-changing. Christ isn't just a way of life. He is the Life. Jesus said, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life."* Christ, who is our life, is coming back, and he's coming back for a bride that has been prepared for his arrival. It's the marriage feast of the Lamb. It's Jesus coming to catch up his bride.

According to the Word of God, we're going to meet Jesus in the air. He's coming again. This is telling us that when Christ who is our life appears (literally a reference to the Second Coming), then we also will appear with him in glory. Something good's coming. No matter what happens in this world, this is how we get encouraged in the Scripture. No matter what's happening in this world, there is something *beyond* - there's something coming that's going to be better than anything we can even wrap our mind around. Why? - because we get to appear with him in glory in that place.

This is about focus, attention, and awareness of who we are *now*. We are there *now* *with* him. If we don't intentionally set our mind, the world will set it for us. We're being disciplined by these every day: algorithms, culture, social media - everything. It's all geared towards *us*. When we're having a conversation with somebody about a throw rug, guess what shows up on our newsfeed for the next three days - *throw rugs*. Every time. Why? - because they are programming and discipling us to spend money. Our attention is being disciplined every day.

Paul is grounding present behavior in future reality in these statements. And, he's talking to these Colossians, who were people in a city in decline. They were people who were bringing their baggage from their past into the church. They're bringing their past stuff in and it's wreaking havoc - old, demonic, and pagan teachings. Paul wants them to understand who they are *now* because it's not who they *used* to be. That's really good news. We are not who we *used* to be. We're not even who we were last week. We're being renewed day by day.

Paul's grounding our present behavior in future reality. He's saying, *"If you're already this in Christ, why don't you start acting like it now?"* If we understand who we are in Christ - that we're a son or a daughter of the Most High God - that we're free, delivered, saved, born again, we're powerful, anointed, and empowered to walk a victorious life - if we're already that in the future reality, why don't we go ahead and start living into it right now? It will change the way we walk into a room. It will change the way we drive our car.

Ephesians 2:6

"And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus."

This is one of those verses that sort of gets buried in a beautiful passage. When we stop and think about what this is saying as a present reality, notice that's past tense. We *are* *already* - this *has* *happened*. If we are born again, we are now seated in Christ in the heavenly places - in the heavenly realms. He raised us up. When he raised Christ up from the dead, we now are raised up with him - *in Christ*. This is huge. We're a lot more than we see when we look in the mirror, because we only see our *stuff*, our flaws, or the things we want to get fixed.

Ephesians 1:19-20

“and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might, that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places.”

That’s the place of honor. It’s the place of authority - and it’s the place of favor - and we are seated in Christ in the heavenly realms. That changes our perspective. It’s now about the work of Christ in us and through us. This is where we’re seated - far above all rule and authority and power and dominion. Those are all spiritual wicked forces. And he says Jesus is there, and we’re in Christ - far above. This week, when something bizarre comes up, we should say, *“Wait a minute, I’m far above this. This is where I am - in Christ - far above all rule, authority, and power, and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the one to come. I am hidden in this. This is who I am. My mind is set on things above.”* We want to be *Christo-centric*. We want everything to relate out of the center which is Jesus.

Hebrews 12:2

“looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.”

Philippians 3:20

“But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ”
This is why we set our mind on things above. Now we are here. We participate and we occupy until he comes. But we’ve got to keep both in view. It’s not either-or. It’s both-and.

1 John 2:15

“Do not love the world or the things in the world.” We know what that does. It produces death.

Galatians 2:20

“I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”
Christ who lives in me. That word “in” literally means *through, and because of*. He lives *through us* and *because of Christ in us.*

Hebrews 9:27

“And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment.”

Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time. That needs to be central in our life that Jesus Christ is coming back - not on a donkey, but on a stallion - ready to do some damage against the enemy. He’ll appear a second time, not to deal with sin - he already did that - but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him. There’s a moment coming when what is currently hidden becomes revealed. We will not be hidden forever.

Romans 12:2

“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

We have to let God transform us. We need to change, but we don't do it on our own. It's not by gritting our teeth and trying harder - it's from resting in him. We do what we do out of a posture of rest in him. We let him do that. That's his heart, to transform us into a new person by changing the way we think. Then we will learn to know God's will for us, which is good and pleasing.

2 Corinthians 5:17

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.”

When we woke up today, we hit the lottery, first of all, because we had a heartbeat. But, we also hit the lottery because we are a new creation in Christ - a new creation reality. That is our reality right now in Christ. We're here because of him. That's the only reason we're here. Anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. Every day we wake up, it's new. He makes all things new. The old life is gone. A new life has begun. When we got up this morning - clean slate, clean whiteboard - new day. Christ is not just a *part* of our life ...he is our life!

Prayer

Father, thank You that You are our Life. And Lord, the moment we move off of that, would you flag us?

Throw a flag to remind us that we're drifting, moving away, and looking at other things - that we're

moving our mind off of You to somewhere else. When that happens, Holy Spirit, would You remind us

and throw up a flag inside of us so we would realize that we're drifting - that we're moving off-center?

Jesus, You are our Life. Jesus, You're my Life. Father, give us the grace to go vertical on this

...You are my Life.