

## CROSSING THE BORDER

An Expositional Study of Colossians

by GUY H. KING

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### CHAPTER SIX

#### HIS ENCOURAGEMENT OF AMBITION (3:1-4)

IT IS very evident that life for the Christian is intended to be very different from that of the worldling - different in nature, different in outlook, different in interests, different in aim. His rightful ambition is indicated in our present passage. It is described here as a resurrection life - **"If ye then be risen with Christ,"** 1; and in Philippians 3:10 it is perfected in **"the power of His resurrection"**. See first -

#### THE CERTAINTY OF IT

**"If ye then be risen with CHRIST,"** just as truly, "Since, then, you have been raised with CHRIST". There is no doubt about it. The apostle is writing to these people as Christians; and of all such it is indubitably true that these two basic certitudes abide. in view of their union with CHRIST, thank GOD, they are dead men; and, praise GOD, they are risen men. There is no **"if"** about either case, in the sense that it is in question, but the consequential **"as,"** and **"since"**.

But what is this "union with CHRIST" that we speak of?

It results from an exercise of Identification by Faith. We go, for elucidation, away back to Leviticus 1:4, **"He shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt offering, and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him"**.

The same transaction is in 4:24. Under the Old Covenant to which we have already referred in these Studies, GOD made special arrangements for the temporary dealing with men's sins until the time came when it would be possible to deal with them permanently and eternally. **"For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins,"** Hebrews 10:4 - those sacrifices were ordained to cover sins, hence, **"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered,"** Psalm 32:1.

That is as far as the Psalmist could go, until **"now once in the end of the age hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself,"** Hebrews 9:26.

Those oft-repeated offerings of the Old Testament pointed on to, and drew their significance from, the once-for-all Sacrifice of CHRIST in the New Testament. We shall meet those Old

Testament believers on exactly the same ground. We believers will be there - the Cross of Calvary. **"That by means of [His] death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament,"** as Hebrews 9:15 has it. Or, as in Romans 3:25, **"Whom GOD hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His Blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God"**.

Well now, to come back to Leviticus.

By Divine appointment the transgressor brought his animal victim as his offering for sin. The priest will have most carefully scrutinised the beast, to make sure that there was no spot or blemish. The offerer would now stand, and, placing his hand upon its head, confess his sin. **In that moment the Great Transference would take place. GOD reckoned as if the sin of the man were laid on the beast, and the spotlessness of the animal accounted to him.**

The victim is then put to death as bearing the man's sin, and suffering in his stead. He left the scene a forgiven man. It was all a GOD-given, GOD-ordained, prophetic picture of what was afterwards to be; and old Isaac Watts has captured its significance for us in his great hymn -

"My faith would lay her hand  
On that dear head of Thine,  
While like a penitent I stand,  
And there confess my sin."

Thus, by this heavenly Identification by Faith, we are joined to Him as ourselves dead to sin, and, moreover, as being alive in resurrection to **"newness of life,"** Romans 6:4, 11. This, be it ever remembered, not for any merit of ours, and quite independently of our understanding.

Christian, as a matter of complete certainty, you are risen with CHRIST. The only question - for you and me - is whether we are living up to our high privilege, whether walking after **"the power of His resurrection"**. Let us go on to another aspect of this truth.

### THE CENTRE OF IT

Notice these phrases in our brief verses. **"With Christ,"** (1); **"where Christ,"** (1); **"with Christ,"** (3); **"when Christ,"** (4).

It is pretty evident, isn't it, where the centre of the resurrection life lies. When all our life revolves around Him as our Living Centre, then we know resurrection life in happy truth. This indeed is Full Salvation.

Mark here three statements that have an intimate bearing upon our relationship with Him.

**"Christ sitteth on the right hand of God,"** (1).

The Epistle to the Hebrews shews us that three things are implied in this posture of the Master.

(1) Rest - **"when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the**

**Majesty on high,**" Hebrews 1:3. In amazing grace, He undertook the plan of our salvation, till, on its completion, He was able to say, "**It is finished,**" John 19:30.

He undertook to pay in full the enormous debt of our sin, till, on its complete cancellation, He was free to say, "**It is finished**". The Cross was the payment in full; the Resurrection was GOD's receipt. He undertook, at the Father's will, to drink our cup of woe, till, on His drinking to the last bitter dregs, He handed back the cup to the Father, and said "**It is finished**".

The plan that He came to earth to accomplish is now fully carried out, and He has gone back to Heaven to take His seat of rest at GOD's right hand.

(2) Intercession - "**seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them,**" Hebrews 7:25. Can we ever assess what we owe to our Saviour's prayers? Why, after his base denial, did not Peter fall away entirely? Listen: "**I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not** [utterly]," Luke 22:32. If anyone be so ill and weak that they cannot pray for themselves; or, if anyone be so lonely that there is no one they can ask to pray for them, what a deep comfort, in each case, to know that JESUS is there to pray for them. We say again that down here we shall never be able to estimate what we owe to His prayers for us.

On one occasion, He looked into a house, and said of a man there, "**Behold, he prayeth,**" Acts 9:11. When we are in need of comfort and strength, may we not look into Heaven, and say, "**Behold, He prayeth**"?

(3) Sovereignty - "**we see JESUS. . . crowned,**" Hebrews 2:9. One day He is going to return to this earth to assume the Kingdom, which, on His present rejection, is in abeyance, when "**the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever,**" Revelation 11:15. But even now He reigns on high; and by reason of our union with Him, we, too, are entitled to reign with Him - in that one day of His millennial glory, "**they shall reign with Him a thousand years**". Revelation 20:6.

"**We shall reign on the earth,**" Revelation 5:10, yes; but even now He "**hath made us kings and priests,**" Revelation 1:6, in our degree to share in His present Sovereignty. and in His present Intercession. If only we would put into practical daily use our exalted position in Him!

"**Your life is hid with Christ in God,**" (3). Who, then, will say that our life, once hid, can ever be lost? The Son and the Father are pledged to its security - "**I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall anyone pluck them out of My hand. My Father which gave them Me is greater than all, and no one is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand**" John 10:28-9.

"**With Christ, in God**" - what blessed safety: hidden as treasure deposited in a bank, the impregnable vaults of the Bank of Heaven, Matthew 6:20; hidden as a root planted in a fertile soil to bring forth the rich fruit of good seed, Matthew 13:38a.

Incidentally, how important it is that we should cultivate the hidden life. The harvest of the fruit depends so much on the health of the root. Earlier in these Studies, I have told the story of the pear tree from which I got practically nothing for fifteen years - "**nothing but leaves,**" Mark

11:13. The very first year of his occupancy. and ever after my successor had an abundant crop - the simple secret was that he treated the roots of the tree.

Even the old prophet knew that way to the spiritual welfare of a nation, let alone to the life of an individual - "**the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah shall again take root downward, and bear fruit upward**" Isaiah 37:31. So, to be hidden in Him is to be fruitful for Him. as well as to be safe, in His keeping power.

"**Christ who is our life**," (4). Not only brings, or gives, but "**is**," in Himself.

(1) Its Entrance - "**He that hath the Son hath [the] life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not [the] life**," I John 5:12. This latter has a physical life; but he has not "**the**" (Gk.) life, the spiritual life. He is our life.

(2) Its Continuance - "**I give unto them eternal life**" John 10:28. Being eternal it continues: it lasts because He lasts.

(3) Its Abundance - "**I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly**". John 10:10. There is a world of difference between the two qualities. The hospital patient in that bed, only just alive - like some Christians, who, while having life, because they have Him, are only just Christians. they haven't grown. The hospital nurse bustling about the ward, full of life - that is the kind of Christian we are meant to be.

(4) Its Influence - "**By reason of him [Lazarus] many . . . believed on Jesus**," John 12:11. His new life, because of the Saviour, made this man a real advertisement for the Master, and enabled him to wield a powerful influence for Him on others.

(5) Its Fragrance - "**He could not be hid**," Mark 7:24. If He be in our heart and life in any effective degree, the fact is sure to be noticed. A friend of mine speaks of having met one day a lot of girls emerging from a factory for their lunch break. He says that they carried a most attractive aroma. As he then passed the gate he saw that it was a scent factory. Just so is it that if our life is "**hid**" in Him, something of His fragrance will be upon us - "**the savour of life**," II Corinthians 2:16 calls it.

I fancy it is true that fragrance comes from sacrifice. Anyhow, that was so when "**the house was filled with the odour of the ointment**," John 12:3. When the box was broken, the fragrance was released.

Certainly it is true that when the self is broken, the savour of CHRIST is known - "**not I, but Christ**," Galatians 2:20. Well, all this that we have been saying is to emphasize the blessed truth that CHRIST Himself is the Living Centre of the resurrection life. Is He, then, the real centre of our life?

We are all aware of the teachings of old astronomers concerning our planetary universe.

Ptolemy was the first in the field (A.D. 127-51), one of the most eminent of the scientific men of the ancient world. He taught that our earth was the centre of the universe, and that all else

revolved around it. How grand to think of ourselves as the hub of the universe! It took something like thirteen hundred years to dispel the illusion.

Copernicus (A.D. 1473-1543) demonstrated that the sun was the centre, with the earth and all else revolving around it.

I wonder if we have changed our life's centre? Because we begin by giving self that position - everything turns round ourselves: what we wish, we think, we propose. It often takes a long time for us to see the falsity, and futility, of the idea that this self, this bit of earth is the hub. It is a happy moment when we alter the outlook, and recognise "**the Sun of Righteousness**," Malachi 4:2, as our new Centre.

Thenceforward, every aspect of life rotates round Him. Such, then, is the resurrection life of Full Salvation.

Now consider -:

### THE CIRCUMFERENCE OF IT

This resurrection life, centred in Him, not being self-centred, has a magnificent wide sweep. The risen life will never forget that while "**He is the propitiation for our sins**," it is "**not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world**," I John 2:2.

Do you know that story of a great Salvation Army conference that met in America a number of years ago, attended by delegates from all over the world?

All were thrilled when they knew that the Old General himself was to be there. Near the date, however, his doctors forbade him to travel; but he promised to send a cable to open the conference. When the time came, there was anxiety in the assembly, for the message hadn't arrived; but then, just in the nick of time, it was brought. It consisted of one word - "**Others**".

What a start, what a theme, for any Christian conference. How like the Saviour, of whom even His enemies had to acknowledge that "**He saved others, not Himself**," Matthew 27:42. So it is that if He be our Centre, others will be our Circumference - "**the whole world**" of others, whom we may be able, by our prayers, our example, our testimony, to reach, to touch, and to fetch for Him.

To that end - "**Set your affection**" - rightly, for what we love we become like; and it is that likeness to Him that is destined to wield our greatest influence on others. But do you notice that the margin says this "*set your mind*," and it suggests the idea of setting our watch by the sun? Our clock may be fast or slow, or may even have stopped, and so we seek to put it right.

It is not wise to make a guess, nor to follow other people's clocks; but the best way is to regulate it by Greenwich Mean Time, which ultimately means the sun. Yes, again, "**the Sun of Righteousness**," Malachi 4:2.

If we want to keep our lives right, let us regularly regulate them by Him. Thus, if those others

want to know the right time from us, we shall not lead them astray since we ourselves are right with Him - "**ye became followers of us, and of the Lord,**" I Thessalonians 1:6! Paul and his Lord blessedly synchronised, so that to go by him was tantamount to going by Him.

May our behaviour be always so accurately adjusted that "**we have the mind of Christ,**" I Corinthians 2:16. So, then, set your mind - "**Not on things on the earth.**"

There are those "**who mind earthly things,**" Philippians 3:19. Strange as it may seem, some Christians are thus regulated. They just seem unable to rise above their conditions and circumstances - no resurrection life for them. Christians they are, but so low-level Christians, so incongruously dwelling all the time in the earthlies.

One thinks of the occasion when a company of Israelites were forgathered with the Philistines, before a battle, when the princes of the latter asked, in surprise, "**What do these Hebrews here?**" I Samuel 29:3. One is inclined to ask concerning believers who are earthbound, "What do these Christians here?"

Of course, we cannot ignore earthly things. When we became Christians, we were not at once transported to Heaven, but left here:

- to be a "**Salt**" of the earth, to stave off corruption,
- to be a "**Light**" of the world, to illumine the darkness,
- to be a "**City**" set on a hill, to guide people on to the city "**whose builder and maker is God,**" Hebrews 11:10. These three ministries are committed to us as part of the economy of the Kingdom, Matthew 5:13-14.

Yes, indeed, "**in the world,**" but not "**of the world,**" John 17:11, 16. "**On things above.**"

There are the things which are to guide our life below.

We are to accumulate *Possessions in Heaven* - "**lay up for yourselves treasures in Heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal,**" Matthew 6:20. So different from earth's treasures.

We are to value *Popularity with Heaven* - it is said of some that "**they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God,**" John 12:43. How different is Paul's good soldier, "**that he may please Him who hath chosen him to be a soldier,**" II Timothy 2:4.

We are to enjoy even here the *Pleasures of Heaven* - "**in Thy presence is fulness of joy, at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore,**" Psalm 16:2. So different from "**the pleasures of sin for a season,**" Hebrews 11:25.

We are to rejoice in a *Position in Heaven* - "**but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven,**" Luke 10:20. So different from those, however great and famous they may be, who are only "**written in the earth,**" Jeremiah 17:13.

We are to endure and energize for the *Prize of Heaven* - "**forgetting those things which are**

**behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high** ["upward[/b>," Gk.] **calling of God in Christ Jesus,"** Philippians 3:13-14. So different from the "**corruptible crown,**" I Corinthians 9:25, which is the best that earth's striving can attain.

We are to covet the *Power of Heaven* - "**tarry ye . . . until ye be endued with power from on high,**" Luke 24:49. So different from man, who out of much failure has to confess "**How frail I am,**" Psalm 39:4. Assuredly, it is our wisdom to set our minds thus "**on things above**".

Such is the outlook of the resurrection life, always the uplook: to speak metaphorically, their habit is "**Look from the top**" Song of Solomon 4:8. And now, to conclude, look at -:

### THE CIRCLE OF IT

**"When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory."** So the fact of our union with CHRIST, through the Identification by Faith, has now come round full circle:

- we died in Him,
- we were buried with Him,
- we have been raised with Him,
- we are ascended with Him,
- we are seated with Him,
- we now anticipate the time when we shall return and reign with Him.

Such is the glorious teaching of all these Pauline Letters - Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians.

Thus we observe the Resurrection Life - from the root, in the Cross, to the Fruit, in the Coming.

This is Full Salvation.

"Life immortal, heaven descending,  
Lo! my heart the Spirits shrine:  
GOD and man in oneness blending,  
Oh, what fellowship is mine!  
Full salvation!  
Raised in CHRIST to life divine!"

~ end of chapter 6 ~

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