

COMPLETE IN CHRIST

COLOSSIANS 3:1-4

# LIVING IN HEAVEN ON EARTH



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**FIRST BYRON CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH**

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# INTRODUCTION

## Problem

Has anyone ever told you, “You need to change?” and you’ve wondered what on earth are they talking about? They see it but you can’t see it. Or perhaps you reply, “I know, but I don’t want to change.” Or, “I know, I want to change, and I’ve tried to change, but I just can’t.” Or, “I’m trying, but it’s just so slow and small.” Personal change is hard. It faces four big obstacles:

- We don’t see the need (lack of insight)
- We don’t want to change (lack of desire)
- We can’t change (lack of ability)
- We change so slowly (lack of hope)

On this Mother's Day we also remember the additional challenge for Christian mothers. You want to be holy and maybe feel you were making progress in holiness. But then the kids came along! You read verses like Colossians 3:1-4, and ask, "How can I set my mind on things above when I'm changing diapers all day?!"

## Solution?

I want to help you see the need for change, strengthen the desire to change, point you to the power for change, and give you hope of change.

## CONTEXT

Colossians 1-2 have had a lot of doctrinal content, especially Christology. In chapter 3:1-4, Paul is transitioning to the more practical part of the Epistle. That’s Paul’s general method in his epistles: he lays a Christ-centered doctrinal foundation and then builds Christian ethics upon that. He never leaves it at doctrine but always goes

on to practice. And he never goes to practice without first laying a strong doctrinal basis for it. He has been focused on the Christian’s death, burial, and resurrection with Christ (Col. 2:11-23). He refers back to that again here in summary fashion and then moves on to practical Christian living. He begins by taking us to heaven to change our viewpoint.



**How does heaven change us?  
It changes our view of change.**



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# 1. HEAVEN CHANGES OUR VIEW OF CHANGE (1-2)

The first obstacle to overcome in personal change is how we see ourselves. Although others can see we need to change, often we can't see it ourselves. That's why the Apostle begins by giving us a different perspective on ourselves. He helps us see ourselves differently.

*(1) If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. (2) Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.*

## You were raised with Christ

Every Christian died and resurrected with Christ before they were even born. Paul already taught this in 2:12-14. But he repeats and underlines it again here because all change begins with this. Everything changes as a result of this. Every Christian was co-crucified with Christ, co-buried with Christ, and co-raised with Christ. But raised to where?

## You were raised to God's right hand

The co-raising is not just from the grave of death, but to "the right hand of God," a phrase which emphasizes the centrality, authority, and supremacy of Christ. Christians are co-reigning with Christ. They are there with him as he reigns over the universe.

## APPLICATION

♥ **See what's changed.** See how your position has dramatically changed. Whatever your earthly position, you also have a heavenly position. You are not just living in America; you are living in heaven while on earth. Christian Mothers, your hands are full with toddlers, but you are also at God's right hand.

When someone wins the Presidency, in their acceptance speech, they often say something like: "Although you can only see me here, my whole family are here with me and beside me. They share in this success with me. This will change all of our lives."

The Christian shares in Christ's success. Like any President, they grow into that position more and more, and change more and more.

♥ **Change what you see.** When you see what's changed, it will change what you see. Try to view yourself and your world from your seat at God's right hand. When you do, you will see your need for change far more clearly, because you will be comparing yourself with Christ not others.

From their new position, the President and his family see things differently. The more they see the honor and dignity of their new position, the more they see things differently and see themselves differently. They see the need to change to reflect the new position they are in.

Live in heaven while on earth and it will change how you view yourself and show you your need of change.

A CHANGE OF WORLD-VIEW  
WILL CHANGE YOUR SELF-VIEW



I see my need for change.  
But how do I increase my desire for change?



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## 2. HEAVEN CHANGES OUR DESIRE FOR CHANGE (1-2)

*(1) If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. (2) Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.*

### Seek the things that are above

When Christians see their heavenly position, they will begin to seek heavenly things. The more Christians see they were raised with Christ to a heavenly position, and reign with Christ on his heavenly throne, the more the Christian longs for a heavenly existence and heavenly experience here on earth.

### Don't set your minds on the earth

This doesn't mean detachment from and disinterest in this earth, as later verses in this chapter make clear. Rather, when the Christian is thinking about this earth, she does so from a heavenly perspective, through the lens of Christ's kingship, from the position of Christ's throne. As this is done, and the contrast between heaven and earth is felt, the desire for change will grow irresistible.

## APPLICATION

♥ **Spiritual multi-tasking is impossible.** Science has shown that the brain cannot multi-task. It can only do one thing at a time. What feels like multi-tasking is simply the brain flipping rapidly from one activity to another and back again. This fast flipping exhausts the brain and explains a lot of modern fatigue and burn-out. It's similar in the spiritual realm. Flipping backwards and forwards from the earth to

heaven and back again runs us down. But living with our minds in heaven will fuel our desire for change on earth.

♥ **Copy the ungodly.** Look at how intensely and passionately pagans run after earthly things (Matt. 6:32), and use that as a model of how much to seek heavenly things. The more we think of heaven the more we will want change.

CHANGING OUR DESIRES  
CHANGES OUR DESIRE FOR CHANGE



OK, I now not only see the need for change, I also desire change.  
But what about the power to change?



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## 3. HEAVEN CHANGES OUR POWER TO CHANGE (3-4A)

*(3) For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. (4) When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.*

Where is the power of the Christian life? There are many alternative energy sources that Christians rely on: personality, will-power, drive, inspiration, confidence, personality, etc. But none of these will give power for deep and long-term change. For that we must look outside of ourselves to Christ. We start with Christ's death, but the primary focus is Christ's life.

### You died with Christ

Paul has already expounded this in Colossians 2:9-15, 20. "You died with Christ" is a summary statement of these verses to remind the Colossians that they were united to Christ in his death and therefore died with Christ. "You died." The old life is over, the old order is dead. Just as death is the separation of the body from the soul, so this death is a separation of the old life from the new life.

### You live with Christ

"For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God." Dying with Christ resulted in life from Christ. Their dying with Christ released new life into them. "Hidden" means that they have a secret and private power source that others cannot see and sometimes even they cannot see. But regardless of who sees it, "hidden with Christ" indicates how secure and safe their life is. If Christ cannot be extinguished neither can you.

## APPLICATION

♥ **You died with Christ.** Your death with Christ is a huge source of moral power. I read about the conversion of two sisters who loved to party. When they received the first invitation after they were converted, they wrote back, "We regret that we cannot attend because we recently died." The old you is done, finished, deceased, dead, and buried.

♥ **Christ is your life.** If Christ's death is the power we need to die to sin, our connection to Christ's heavenly life is premium fuel. We live on earth in heavenly power. Remind yourself of this when you think obedience and service is too hard. "Christ is my life. My life is hidden with Christ in God."

WHEN YOU HAVE NO POWER TO CHANGE,  
CHANGE YOUR POWER TO CHANGE



That certainly helps to change my daily life.  
But will I have changed enough by judgment day?



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## 4. HEAVEN CHANGES OUR HOPE OF CHANGE (4B)

However much we change by the power of Christ's death and life, we will still only make small progress in holiness in this life. When discouraged by this, remind yourself of the future heavenly change that lies ahead.

*(4) When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.*

### Christ will appear in glory

Christ, who is our life, will appear in glory. The hidden Christ will be unveiled. But that's not all that will be unveiled.

### You will appear with Christ in glory

The hidden glory of the Christian will be unveiled. The unveiling of the glorious Christ will coincide with the unveiling of glorious Christians. Their new life will be visible for all to see.

## APPLICATION

♥ **Look ahead.** When you are tempted to hang your head over how slow your change is, lift up your head and look to your future glorious self. Just as you might inspire yourself to diet by looking at before and after pictures of someone, so inspire yourself to holiness by seeing (through faith) your before and after pictures.

♥ This is a mother's ultimate hope for herself and for her children. When day after day seems the same, you feel like you are not changing. But you will one day change. When Christ appears in glory, you will appear with him in glory. And those unchanging Christian children will be changed too.

CHANGE IS HOPELESS  
WITHOUT HOPE OF CHANGE.



# CONCLUSION



**PRAYER:** Change-maker, help me to live in heaven while on earth so that I can experience heavenly change on earth.

## FURTHER STUDY

### Online Articles

- [Heavenly Mindedness](#) by Randy Alcorn
- [Is Heavenly-Mindedness for the Privileged?](#) by Michael Allen
- [Be Heavenly-Minded so that you are of Earthly Good](#) by T D Alexander

### Books

- [How do I Develop Heavenly-Mindedness](#) by Maurice Roberts
- [A Treatise on Heavenly-Mindedness](#) by Thomas Jollie
- [Heaven on Earth](#) by Thomas Brooks
- [Risen Motherhood](#) by Emily Jensen and Laura Wifler

### Discussion Questions

1. Which of the four obstacles to change have you faced and are you facing?
2. What doctrines/truths have you found to be the strongest foundation for change?
3. What changes in your view of self when you view yourself from a heavenly perspective?
4. What can you do to increase your seeking of things above and decrease your focus on things below?
5. What alternative energy sources do you rely on for personal change?
6. What makes you come alive?
7. What encouraged you in these verses?

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## COMPLETE IN CHRIST

COLOSSIANS 3:1-4

# LIVING IN HEAVEN ON EARTH

"IT IS SINCE CHRISTIANS HAVE LARGELY CEASED TO  
THINK OF THE OTHER WORLD THAT THEY HAVE  
BECOME SO INEFFECTIVE IN THIS."  
C. S. LEWIS

### Obstacles to change

- Lack of need
- Lack of desire
- Lack of power
- Lack of success

### Biblical answer?

Live in heaven on earth for  
heavenly change on earth

### Heaven changes our view of change

- You were raised with Christ
- Raised to God's right hand

A CHANGE OF WORLD-VIEW  
WILL CHANGE YOUR SELF-VIEW

### Desire for change?

### Heaven changes our desire for change

- Seek things above
- Don't seek things below

CHANGING OUR DESIRES CHANGES  
OUR DESIRE FOR CHANGE

### Power to change?

### Heaven changes our power to change

- You died with Christ
- You live with Christ

WHEN YOU HAVE  
NO POWER TO CHANGE,  
CHANGE YOUR  
POWER TO CHANGE

### Progress of change?

### Heaven changes our hope of change

- Christ will appear in glory
- You will appear in glory

CHANGE IS HOPELESS  
WITHOUT HOPE OF CHANGE

### Action?