

Living Now As If It's Then

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Colossians 3:1-4 (New American Standard Version) "Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory."

In 1 Corinthians 3:2, Paul gets frustrated with some of his fellow Believers. He says (paraphrased)

"Ya know, I keep telling you this stuff over and over and over. Okay, we did the thing with the cross, and how you're saved, and you're bought with the Blood of JESUS...", but now he's frustrated because he has seen visions of Heaven and he wants to share with them some of the deeper things he has learned.

He wants them to chew on the steak that he has tasted instead of the baby food he must continually keep refeeding them. As you might have experienced with a baby in a high-chair next to you, you want them to share the "grown up" food that you enjoy but they can't handle it yet.

Paul is frustrated because he wants them to deal with the more difficult things. (And GOD help us that the things that we have struggled with

and the church has battled over for 2,000 years is only "baby food"!)

So let's try a little Spiritual steak today, and chew on some of the deeper things of GOD to get hold of what Paul was talking about.

Paul says something similar to this in Galatians 2:20, "I have been crucified with Christ. Therefore I no longer live, but JESUS Christ lives in me, and the life I now live I live by faith in the Son of GOD Who loved me and gave Himself for me"

Well, "what up" with that?! Which is it? One minute he says "I no longer live", then he immediately says "the life I now live"...Huh? Am I dead or alive or what? It's like when he says "the things I want to do, I don't do,

and the very things I don't want to do, THOSE are the things I do!"

These are the kinds of apparent conflicts and contradictions that we need to chew on and digest to get to the deeper understanding Paul is wanting us to share with him.

You may remember the board game, the game of Life. On the board you travelled over bridges and divergent paths and you ended up at the end of Life, at the end of the game, either in Millionaire Acres or the Poorhouse. Hold that thought.

Now get another image, that of Quantum Physics that says there is no linear time; all of time is happening simultaneously. This theory says that as you are sitting where you are, everything that ever

happened or ever will happen in that spot is happening simultaneously with you now. Native Americans of the past, flying saucers of the future...All of it, so they say, is happening at once, now, on a plane rather than on a line.

As with much of "science" this is a bastardization of the Truth of Scripture, which is that GOD sees everything as if it's happening now, all of time at once. "He sees things that are not as if they are." He sees everything at one time.

Now go back to that thought you were holding about the game board. GOD sees the entire game board of your Life, if you will, of your existence at one time. If you are a Believer, He sees you purified now as

if you were standing before His throne in Glory after what you think of as your death, whenever that will come, perhaps decades from now.

He sees you from when He first had the idea of you before you were born. He sees your entire existence at once. And He sees all of the permutations, all of the possibilities of all of the paths you might choose ...He sees all of that at once. He also sees all of the "boards", lives of others of all time, everywhere, at once simultaneously with yours.

So if you have all of that, here comes the steak. JESUS says, in Matthew 18:10, talking about the "little ones" (children as symbols of Believers), their angels look on the face of GOD. And in Acts, Peter is released by an angel from prison,

just as other Believers had been praying for. He bangs at the door where they are gathered. A woman answers the door, sees it's Peter, and is so shocked she slams the door in his face and runs to tell the others that Peter is there. Though they'd been praying for this, they say "You're crazy, woman! It must be his angel!" (Acts 12:15) So we have a hint here about personal angels (guardian angels some call them) and that they may resemble the people to whom they are assigned.

We don't want to go too far down that road, because it leads to too much conjecture. But let's chew on what we have so far...

...We know that GOD sees us now as if we were standing before Him. We

know that there are personal angels that stand before GOD's throne on behalf of Believers.

What if your personal angel is your placeholder in Glory standing before the throne of GOD waiting for you to take that place? Since JESUS says that "If the Son of GOD sets you free you are free indeed" (John 8:36), there is no reason, since you are crucified with Him and you no longer live, not to live in that freedom.

There is no reason now, if you are a Believer, for you to live for the temptations of the flesh (worries, money, sex, popularity, health, whatever), because you already have a placeholder beyond the flesh. Your life is "hidden with Christ in GOD." When Paul tells us to

consider ourselves dead to the flesh and alive to GOD (Romans 6:11) we can do that by imagining ourselves in the place the placeholder angel is holding for us. We can look past the now of the temptation to the then of Glory and pray as if we are already through it, praising GOD and concentrating on Him instead of whatever is tempting us.

GOD sees you as if you're already Home with Him and, if we choose, we can live in that strength and that Life, if we are willing to do it. But how often we choose not to. The answers to the need for strength that we seek every day can all be found in this passage if we are willing to change our focus to the things that are above instead of the things that are on the earth

distracting us.

"If then you have been raised with Christ (and we know we have, if we are Believers) seek the things that are above, where Christ is, at the right hand of GOD."

We are called to see ourselves not as we are now, but as we are then, to see ourselves standing in the very Presence of GOD. At any time we are tempted, we can picture ourselves standing in the Presence of GOD. And, more than that, we can BE in the Presence of GOD, because (Psalm 22:3) GOD inhabits the praises of His people.

So when we feel the flesh calling us and feel the pull to go our own way, we can if we choose praise GOD

instead and live as if we are standing in His Presence, because in many ways we are. We can try living as if we are that person standing before Him today, already victorious in all the worst our life or circumstances could do to us.

Since we're told to "set our minds", we know that we do have some control over this process. The rest of Colossians 3 talks about that, being willing, with GOD's help, to: clean up, taking off the old, putting on the new, clothing ourselves in Christ. We do have some volition in this.

Yet, we know, because "you have died", that the power to do this does not come from us, but from Christ. That's the "Good News" of

Salvation, that JESUS Christ, GOD Almighty, came as a human being as well as being fully GOD, for you, to keep the law perfectly for you. He already denied all of the sin of the flesh for you, for your sake, in you.

So now you no longer need to do it.

You are dead to that if you choose to accept what He has done. Now you can live free in the life that He gives you.

"When Christ, Who is your Life, appears, then you also will appear with Him, in Glory." The LORD JESUS is coming back. Are you a Believer? When He does, will He be a stranger to you, or will He be the One you've been living with and living for all of your life? Will you take the place He has waiting for you? Will you be coming back with

Him in Glory?

Something to chew on...

Prayer: Thank you, Father, for the cleansing that you offer for the taking, if we only will, in the free gift of the Savior You sent us, JESUS Christ, our only Hope. Amen.

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