

Colossians: It's All About Jesus!

Lesson 5

Jesus Unites Us With Him!

Colossians 3:1-11

What does it mean to be united with Jesus? In the first half of the book of Colossians, Paul has given special focus on the person and work of Jesus to unite us with Him. Now he turns his attention to the implications and practical outworking of this Christological foundation. Paul has made it clear that we are either dead in our sin or dead to our sin (Romans 6:1-14).

When we think of being united to Jesus in His death and resurrection, it's easy to think of the future implications, that we will one day be joined with Him forever. But Paul begins addressing what this uniting means holistically: both as a present reality and a future hope. When we believe in the death and resurrection power of Jesus, we are united with Christ in these three ways:

Jesus' Death & Resurrection:

Unites Us in Jesus' LIFE: Revives Our HEARTS AND MINDS

Colossians 3:1a, *Since, then, you have been raised with Christ...*

Paul is writing to these believers and assuming that they too have already been raised with Jesus. When we believe in Jesus, He immediately gives us life. This new life in Jesus is a prerequisite to being able to do everything that follows. In other words, the only way we can do what we are about to read is to first be given life in Jesus!

Colossians 3:1b-2, ... *Set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.* ²*Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.*

As we have been raised, Jesus changes both our heart and mind onto "things that are above." In the Old Testament, it is clear that when left up to our abilities, our hearts and minds do not naturally draw themselves to the Lord. Jeremiah says that our hearts are deceptive and dead above all things (Jeremiah 17:9). Deuteronomy describes us as ones who have no eyes to see the Lord, no ears to hear the Lord, and no mind to understand the Lord (Deuteronomy 29:4).

This is why we need the resurrection because it gives us a heart and mind to love Him (Ezekiel 36:26–27)! The only way that we can love the Lord our God with all of our heart and mind is if Jesus transforms both of them through His resurrection power (Deuteronomy 6:4–8; Matthew 22:37–40). We needed a heart and brain transplant and Jesus does both.

What does it look like to then set our hearts and minds on Him? It means we are called to seek Him and His ways above every other way. We choose to deliberately live out the transplants that we have been given.

Discussion Questions:

- How can the resurrection of Jesus impact your daily life?
- List some examples of setting your heart and mind on things above.

Unites Us in Jesus' DEATH: Commands Us to KILL OUR SINFULNESS

Colossians 3:3–4, *For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.*

In verses 2–4, the past, present, and future aspects of being united in the death and resurrection of Jesus are in view. In the past, we were given a new heart and mind. In the present, our life is hidden and secure with Christ. And in the future, we will appear with Him in glory. In light of our new life in Jesus, we are called to put to death our sinful nature:

Colossians 3:5–9, *Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. ⁶ Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. ⁷ You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. ⁸ But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. ⁹ Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices...*

Though Jesus' work has transformed us, sin is still a reality in the life of a believer. In other words, Jesus has already saved us and allows us to live in him, but we must fight our flesh (through his power) until all things are made new. If we carry the heart and mind analogy a little further: the new heart and mind we receive in Jesus is still sitting next to the old heart and mind. Part of our failings in loving God with our heart and mind is we fail to see the decrepit and decaying nature of our own hearts and minds and we continue to listen to them. But those dead organs only lead to a dead life, which is why Scripture calls us to be killing those fleshly desires in us.

John Owen famously said, “Be killing sin or it will be killing you.” This is true! Paul argues that our sin is why the wrath of God was on us and why we needed Jesus to take our place. The question for us: why would we keep listening to our old selves? There is no denying the captivating nature of sin. It’s appealing. It’s attractive. But we have to remind ourselves that sin is a liar always set to destroy. Jesus has given us a new heart and a new mind. In him we are called to “keep on killing” what will always lead to death.

Discussion Questions:

- If sin brings death, why do we let sin linger?
- How can this group encourage one another and hold one another accountable to “put to death the earthly nature?”

Unites Us in Jesus’ LIKENESS: Both INDIVIDUALLY AND COLLECTIVELY

Colossians 3:10–11, ... *And [you] have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. "Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.*

We are called to strip off the old self, but in the process, we are also told to clothe ourselves with the new self that we have been given in Jesus. Rather than conform to the image of Adam, we conform to the image of our Creator (Second Adam). The text then reads that our new self “is being renewed” in this life, meaning that the Christian life is a work in progress! Our call is to look more like Jesus every day.

The Christian life is one of patience, diligence, and steadfast faithfulness. Each day we must kill the dead heart and mind inside of us and seek the things above. We allow the Lord to change us, shape us, and mold us back into His image. And this process takes time. But the beauty of the Gospel is that God’s act of grace to us is not a one-time event. The entire time he is working on us, He is forgiving us and redirecting our hearts and our minds. Being united in His death and resurrection means that we can share in the likeness of Jesus.

But this isn’t only on an individual scale, it’s also on a collective one. When we are united in Jesus, we see that no matter who we are, what status we have, or what race we identify with, Jesus unites us with Him together. In Christ, there is no dividing lines of racial hostility. In Christ, there are no socioeconomic separations. In Christ, we have more in common with our believing brothers and sisters around the world than we do with our unbelieving next-door neighbors. Jesus unites us under His Lordship, and we are His Kingdom people called to do His work together.

This means that we are unified in a love and care for one another. This also means that we are unified in purpose and mission. We are all working together to make much of Jesus. We are called to labor and strive together as we love one another the way Christ has loved us. Jesus' death and resurrection unites us with Him and with fellow believers.

Discussion Questions:

- What are some areas in your life that don't look very Jesus-like?
- What are the practical implications of being united with your brothers and sisters in Christ?