

“Your Members on the Earth”

“If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth” (Col. 3:1–5).

With this text read also the following, so as to have both in mind at the same time: “But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 2:4–6).

Here we have death and resurrection. If you read the Ephesians 1, you will see that Christians are expected to have the same experience that Christ had. We are to know the exceeding greatness of the power of God in us who believe, “according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places” (vv. 19, 20); and we know this power only by being made alive, and raised up with Christ, and made to sit with Him in the heavenly places.

Note the exact parallel: Christ says, “I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen” (Rev. 1:18); we should say, “I have been crucified (died) with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me” (Gal. 2:20), and since He is our life, and He says, “Because I live, you will live also” (John 14:19), it follows that we also have “life forevermore” (Ps. 133:3). That is the blessing that God commanded.

Then if we are really in Christ, where are we?—Where He is, of course, in heaven. All the life the Christian has is there; “For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God” (Col. 3:3). So we are to live as being in heaven.

But someone will say, “I am on this earth, nevertheless.”

The Spirit of the Lord has anticipated this objection, by saying, “Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth” (v. 5). Do not try to live in two places at once, to keep up two establishments, as it were. Why put your members on earth to death?—For the reason just given, because we are risen with Christ and have been seated with Him in the heavenly places. We are to have our individual life in heaven.

We have members on this earth, it is true, but they are to have no more voice in our control than if they were buried. “The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me,” and who spoke of Himself

while on earth talking with Nicodemus as "the Son of man who is in heaven" (John 3:13). Even so it is to be with us. The body is flesh; but it is the Spirit that is to have supreme control. God will demonstrate with us, as He did in Christ, that the flesh cannot control Him, but that He has "power over all flesh."

Who has not felt the flesh, the nature of his members which are on earth, to be a hindrance in the Christian life? We could not do the things that we would. God's purpose for us is that the flesh shall be so deadened that it will have no more affect to hinder us from living as we ought, than it will when it is changed from corruption to incorruption. Thus He gets glory.

"The carnal mind"—"the mind of the flesh"—"is enmity¹ against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be" (Rom. 8:7). The carnal mind is the mind dominated by the flesh. It is enmity against God, because the flesh is opposed to the Spirit. And the flesh will control the mind as long as it has any power. The flesh cannot be converted, for "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. 15:50). Therefore it is the mind of Christ, that must take possession, for it alone is able to subdue the flesh and put it to death. The dead members then become simply passive instruments of righteousness. The mind of Christ can do this, because it led Him to humble Himself unto death (Phil. 2:6-8), and He literally put Himself to death, that is, He laid down His own life. (John 2:17, 18). When Christ is given unreserved right to dwell in us in His fulness, the power of His death and resurrection will crucify our flesh (Gal. 5:24) so that our members on the earth will be "dead indeed to sin" yet alive to righteousness as though already changed from corruption to incorruption. "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift!"

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¹ Enmity: the state of being actively opposed or hostile to God. An enemy.