PREPARING FOR ETERNITY WHILE LIVING IN THE PRESENT

(Colossians 3:1-2)

by Charles Itseghosimhe

WHAT ARE WE REALLY PREPARING FOR?

I want to invite every one of us to consider something very personal.

We are all preparing for something in life.



- Our children are preparing for their future.
- Students are preparing for examinations.
- Young people are pursuing opportunities.
- Parents are working to provide for their families.
- Others are building careers, businesses, and planning for retirement.

These are legitimate and important responsibilities.

But brethren, while we are busy preparing for the future we hope to experience on earth, how much attention are we giving to the eternity for which we must also prepare?

Sometimes, eternity seems so distant from our immediate concerns that we hardly give it serious thought.

We believe in it, speak about it, and hear lessons concerning it, yet we may rarely pause to reflect deeply on how our eternal hope should influence the way we live today.

But brethren, must we wait until life confronts us with such painful realities before we begin to take eternity seriously?

And this brings us to three questions I would like every one of us, including myself, to consider sincerely.

Is it possible to be making progress in life while gradually losing sight of the One who gives our lives their ultimate meaning?



A person may be successful in business, respected in society, and admired for many achievements.

Another may be struggling with unemployment, financial difficulties, or disappointment.

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Yet neither earthly success nor earthly hardship tells the complete story of that person's standing before God.

Now let us bring this closer to ourselves.

Is it possible to attend worship regularly, know the Scriptures, participate in church activities, and still allow our private decisions, attitudes, and priorities to be governed by something other than Christ?

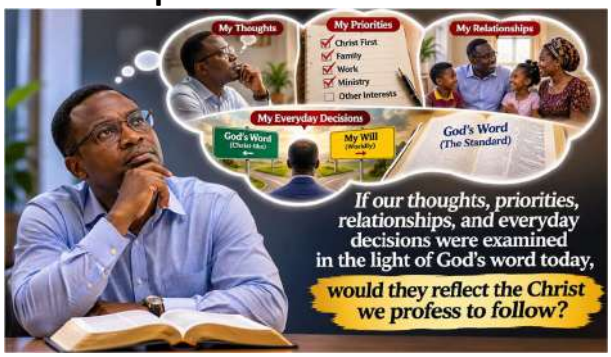


Brethren, these questions are not intended to condemn anyone. They are an invitation to sincere self-examination.

Because being busy is not necessarily the same as being spiritually purposeful.

And being religiously active is not automatically the same as becoming more like Christ.

If our thoughts, priorities, relationships, and everyday decisions were examined in the light of God's word today, would they reflect the Christ we profess to follow?



We are not here because we have become perfect. We are here to learn from God's word and allow it to continue transforming our lives.

Whether life is presently going well or we are facing difficult circumstances, this truth concerns every one of us.

Our greatest preparation is not merely for what we hope to achieve on earth, but for the eternal future God has promised in Christ.

Let us not think primarily about who else needs this message.

Let each of us ask: ***"What does my life reveal about the place Christ truly occupies in my heart?"***

With that thought, let us consider our topic: **PREPARING FOR ETERNITY WHILE LIVING IN THE PRESENT.**

Our main text is ***Colossians 3:1–2.*** And to understand Paul's message properly, let us read through ***verse 4.***

OUR NEW LIFE IN CHRIST

[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. *[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.

Brethren, notice something important. Paul does not begin by telling these Christians to abandon their earthly responsibilities. He begins by reminding them of who they are in Christ.

"If then you were raised with Christ " — Our new identity.

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In ***Colossians 2***, Paul warns against teachings and human regulations that could distract believers from Christ.

Then in ***Colossians 3***, Paul directs their attention to the foundation of genuine Christian living.

They have been raised with Christ. ***Colossians 2:12*** connects this reality with baptism through faith in the working of God.

Romans 6:3–4 likewise teaches that those baptized into Christ are called to walk in newness of life.

Brethren, Christianity is not merely changing our religious association or becoming familiar with church activities.

It is entering a new relationship with Christ and learning to live under His authority. And we must preserve the proper order.

Through God's grace, we respond to the gospel in faith and obedience; having entered into Christ, we are called to live consistently with that new relationship.

Our good conduct does not purchase God's grace. Rather, God's grace teaches us to live differently.

This is important for the Christian who recognizes personal weaknesses.

Perhaps you are struggling with impatience, supposed sufficiency without God, discouragement, temptation, or a failure you deeply regret.

God does not ask us to pretend that we have already become perfect. ***1 John 1:8–9*** reminds Christians to acknowledge their sins and seek forgiveness.

The Christian life involves sincere repentance, spiritual growth, and continued dependence on Christ.

Our calling is not to pretend that we are perfect, but to allow the Lord to whom we belong to transform our lives.

Paul continues: ***Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.***

The instruction to seek calls for continuing pursuit. But notice where Paul directs our attention. To Christ, seated at God's right hand.

Christ is not merely a teacher whose advice we may accept when convenient. He is the risen and exalted Lord.

Therefore, seeking things above means allowing His authority to govern our decisions here on earth.

Imagine a Christian employee offered a promotion. The new position promises better income and greater responsibility. But the employee is expected to approve inaccurate financial records.

The person begins to reason: *"I have worked hard for this opportunity. My family needs the money. If I refuse, someone else will accept."*

Brethren, the desire for advancement is not wrong.

Providing for one's family is a genuine responsibility.

But the question is: *Will the desire for advancement become more important than obedience to Christ?* That is where this Scripture becomes practical.

A Christ-centred life does not eliminate ambition. It places ambition under the authority of Christ.

Set your mind on things above — Our renewed mindset.

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Paul is speaking about more than occasional thoughts about heaven. He is addressing our mindset, values, desires, and outlook.

- What governs our thinking?
- What shapes our understanding of success?
- What determines our sense of worth?

Consider a graduate who has searched for employment for two years. Applications have been submitted. Interviews have been attended. Yet no employment has come. Meanwhile, former classmates are progressing in their careers.

The graduate begins to think: *"Everyone is moving forward except me." "Perhaps I am a failure." "Maybe God has forgotten me."*

Brethren, the disappointment is understandable. But something deeper is happening.

The person's identity is gradually becoming controlled by comparison.

Colossians 3 challenges that way of thinking.

If Christ is our life, our ultimate worth cannot be measured solely by employment, income, possessions, or public recognition.

This does not mean the graduate should stop searching for work. It means the person can continue applying, developing skills, seeking guidance, and pursuing legitimate opportunities without surrendering dignity, integrity, or hope.

A Christ-centred mindset does not deny earthly difficulties. It prevents those difficulties from becoming the final definition of who we are.

Not on things on the earth — Our reordered priorities.

Does Paul mean Christians should neglect education, employment, marriage, or family responsibilities? Certainly not.



We do not have to choose between taking our earthly responsibilities seriously and taking our relationship with God seriously.

The God with whom we hope to spend eternity must never become an afterthought in the life we are living today.

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In ***Colossians 3:18–4:1***, Paul addresses family and working relationships. He cannot be commanding believers to abandon responsibilities he later instructs them to fulfil.

The contrast is between a life governed by Christ and a life dominated by earthly desires and sinful values.

- There is a difference between possessing money and being controlled by money.
- There is a difference between pursuing success and making success our ultimate purpose.
- There is a difference between providing for our families and allowing the pursuit of provision to destroy family relationships.
- ***Colossians 3:5*** identifies covetousness as idolatry.

Something created can gradually take the place that belongs to the Creator.

Heavenly-mindedness is not withdrawal from earthly responsibilities.

It is learning to fulfil those responsibilities under the authority of Christ.

Now consider ***verse 3***. Paul says: ***For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God*** — Our present assurance.

Brethren, our new life is bound up with Christ. Its full significance is not yet visible to the world.

A faithful Christian may experience financial hardship. An elderly believer may no longer have the strength to perform former responsibilities. Someone may serve quietly without receiving public recognition.

Outward circumstances do not reveal the complete reality of such a person's life in Christ.

The world may evaluate us by what we possess, achieve, or display. But our deepest identity and future are found in Christ.

That truth should give us assurance without making us irresponsible. We still work, serve, care, and persevere.

But we do so knowing that earthly circumstances are not the final measure of our lives.

Verse 4 says: ***When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory —*** Our future glory.

Brethren, notice that expression: *"Christ, who is our life."*

Paul does not present Christ as merely one important part of the Christian's life - ***Christ is the Centre.***

Our work matters, but it is not our ultimate identity. Our families are precious, but they cannot replace Christ. Our possessions may be useful, but they cannot provide eternal security. And our present struggles, however painful, do not have the final authority to define our future.

Look at Paul's progression:

- We have been raised with Christ.
- We are called to seek Christ.
- Our lives are hidden with Christ.
- And we await the day when we shall appear with Christ in glory.

Our new life has already begun. But we still await the fullness of what God has promised.

This is the foundation of preparing for eternity.

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ETERNITY MUST GIVE MEANING TO THE LIFE WE LIVE NOW

Brethren, if our future is bound up with Christ, how should that truth influence our lives today?

First, it should help us recognize the value of time.

James 4:14 reminds us that human life is brief.

Psalm 90:12 teaches us to number our days and apply our hearts to wisdom.

These passages are not intended to make us live in constant fear.

They remind us to use our lives wisely.

In ***Luke 12:16–21***, Jesus tells the parable of a rich man whose land produced abundantly. The problem was not that the man's farm prospered.

The problem was that his plans centred on possessions and personal comfort without proper regard for God.

He had made provision for his goods, but he had neglected what mattered most.

Brethren, there is nothing wrong with planning for retirement, developing a business, or providing for our children. But while pursuing these responsibilities, we must ask:

- "What kind of person am I becoming?"
- Am I becoming more honest?
- More patient?
- More compassionate?
- More faithful?
- Or are my ambitions gradually weakening my relationship with God?

Second, eternity should make us more responsible in the present.

Colossians 3:17 teaches that whatever Christians do in word or deed should be done in the Name of the Lord Jesus.

And ***verses 23–24*** teach believers to work heartily as unto the Lord.

Notice the connection. *The same chapter that directs our minds toward Christ in heaven also directs our attention to everyday conduct.*

- A student should study diligently and honestly.
- A worker should fulfil responsibilities faithfully.
- An employer should treat workers fairly.
- Parents should guide their children patiently.
- Church leaders should serve humbly.
- And brethren should care for one another sincerely.
- The Christ we worship on Sunday must also govern the decisions we make on Monday.

Third, eternity gives us hope when present circumstances are difficult.

Faithful Christians may experience unemployment, illness, financial pressure, family difficulties, or disappointment.

We must never assume that every hardship is evidence of spiritual failure.

Galatians 6:2 calls us to bear one another's burdens.

Philippians 3:20–21 reminds us that our ultimate hope is connected to Christ.

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Brethren, Christian hope does not promise that every earthly difficulty will disappear immediately.

It reminds us that Christ is faithful and that our present circumstances do not exhaust God's promises.

Eternal hope does not remove every burden from our lives. It gives us reason to remain faithful while carrying those burdens.

FIVE AREAS WHERE OUR NEW LIFE IN CHRIST MUST BECOME VISIBLE

Brethren, Paul does not stop at telling Christians to seek things above.

In ***Colossians 3:5–17***, he explains how our new life should affect our conduct.

He tells us to put away sinful behaviours and put on Christlike qualities.

Let us examine five areas.

OUR PRIORITIES — What truly governs our decisions?

Jesus teaches in ***Matthew 6:21*** that where our treasure is, our heart will also be.

Consider a businessperson who gradually becomes so occupied with expansion that spiritual responsibilities are repeatedly neglected.

At first, the explanation is: *"This is only a busy season."*

Later: *"When things stabilize, I will give more attention to God."*

But years pass, and there is always another contract, another project, another financial target.

Brethren, this is how legitimate responsibilities can gradually become controlling priorities.

The problem is not hard work. The problem is allowing work to displace Christ.

A practical response may begin with deliberately reviewing how we use our time, how we make decisions, and whether our spiritual and family responsibilities are receiving appropriate attention.

If our present priorities remain unchanged for the next five years, will they draw us closer to Christ or gradually move us further away from Him?

OUR CHARACTER — Who are we when obedience becomes costly?

Colossians 3:5–14 calls Christians to put away sinful conduct and cultivate compassion, kindness, humility, patience, forgiveness, and love.

Christianity is not merely about avoiding wrongdoing. It is also about becoming more like Christ.

Consider a contractor who discovers that a client has approved payment for work that was not fully completed. Nobody has questioned the discrepancy.

The additional money would solve several pressing financial problems.

The contractor begins to reason: *"I have suffered enough." "This may be my opportunity." "Other people would collect the money."*

Now, brethren, the person is not merely deciding whether to receive money. The person is deciding whether financial pressure justifies dishonesty.

But if Christ is Lord, our conduct must reflect His character even when dishonesty appears profitable.

The practical response is to disclose the discrepancy and ensure that payment reflects legitimate entitlement.

Christian integrity becomes especially visible when honesty is costly.

This applies to business dealings, examinations, employment records, financial transactions, and our private conduct.

OUR RELATIONSHIPS — Are we reflecting the character of Christ?

Colossians 3:12–14 calls Christians to compassion, kindness, humility, patience, forgiveness, and love.

Consider a husband and wife who disagree over a financial decision. Both believe their position is reasonable.

- But instead of listening carefully, each becomes determined to prove the other wrong.
- The discussion becomes an argument.
- The argument becomes resentment.
- And resentment begins to affect their communication.

Brethren, the disagreement may have started with money, but it has become a test of humility and love.

The question is no longer simply: *"Who is right?"* It becomes: *"Am I seeking what is right, and am I treating this person in a manner consistent with Christ?"*

The practical response begins with listening, speaking respectfully, acknowledging personal mistakes, and seeking a fair resolution.

Forgiveness and humility do not require anyone to tolerate abuse or ongoing mistreatment.

The same principles apply to parents and children, friends, fellow workers, and brethren.

Now consider our congregational fellowship. A member who normally attends worship has been absent for several Sundays. Some assume the person has become spiritually careless.

But another member makes a respectful enquiry and discovers that the person has been facing serious family difficulties.

Brethren, this teaches us something important. Christian fellowship is not merely knowing who is present or absent. It is caring enough to understand when someone may need encouragement and support.

Our church zones, ministries, and administrative structures are important. But they must serve the spiritual and practical welfare of people.

Galatians 6:2 calls us to bear one another's burdens. Preparing for eternity should make us more loving, not more indifferent.

OUR WORK AND SERVICE — Whom are we really serving?

Colossians 3:23 instructs believers to work heartily as unto the Lord.

Consider a Christian who quietly assists struggling members, encourages younger believers, and faithfully fulfils assigned responsibilities.

Another person receives public appreciation for a more visible contribution.

The first Christian begins to feel overlooked. *"Does anybody appreciate what I do?" "Why should I continue if nobody recognizes my efforts?"*

Brethren, the desire to be appreciated is understandable. Encouragement is good.

But this situation raises a deeper question: *"Am I serving primarily for recognition, or because I belong to Christ?"*

Our faithfulness should not depend entirely on public applause. This does not mean that people should never be appreciated.

It means that the Lord we serve must remain greater than the recognition we receive.

OUR SPIRITUAL READINESS — What are we postponing?

Colossians 3:4 reminds us that Christ will appear in glory.

Matthew 24:42–44 calls for watchfulness.

But spiritual readiness is not about predicting dates or living in constant fear. It is about faithful living before God.

- Perhaps there is a sinful habit we keep excusing.
- Perhaps there is someone we need to approach with humility.
- Perhaps we have become spiritually careless.
- Perhaps we know what God's word requires but keep postponing obedience.

Brethren, let us ask: *"If Christ truly is my life, what evidence of that truth should become visible in the way I live from today?"*

That question is not intended to produce despair. It is intended to encourage sincere self-examination, repentance where necessary, and renewed commitment to Christ.

CONCLUSION: IF CHRIST IS OUR LIFE, WHAT MUST CHANGE TODAY?

Beloved brethren, let us return to ***Colossians 3:1–4.***

Paul presents four connected realities.

- **Our identity:** We have been raised with Christ.
- **Our responsibility:** We must seek and set our minds on things above.
- **Our assurance:** Our lives are hidden with Christ in God.
- **Our hope:** We shall appear with Christ in glory.

- Our new life begins with Christ.
- Our present conduct must be governed by Christ.
- Our security rests in Christ.
- And our future hope is anchored in Christ.

Brethren, the Christian life is not merely about attending worship, avoiding certain behaviours, or fulfilling religious responsibilities.

It is about belonging to Christ and allowing that relationship to transform every area of life.

I want every one of us to consider one question: *"If Christ truly is my life, what*

must change in the way I live from today?"

Whatever the area, we are not being called to earn God's grace through flawless performance.

We are being called to respond faithfully to God's grace through lives increasingly shaped by Christ.

For those who have not yet entered into Christ, the gospel calls for a response of faith and obedience, including baptism into Christ, as taught in ***Romans 6:3–4.***

For those already in Christ, the call is to continue in repentance, growth, and faithful service.

Titus 2:11–13 reminds us that God's grace teaches us to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, while looking for the blessed hope of Christ's appearing.

Brethren, that is the balance.

We live faithfully now. We look forward with hope. And we allow Christ to govern both. We prepare for eternity not by withdrawing from the present, but by surrendering the present to Christ.

May God help us to live each day under the authority of His truth, with the love of Christ, and in the hope of eternal life in Jesus Name, amen.

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