

Guest Preacher- Mr Stuart King (North Harris)

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Preacher: Mr. Stuart King

[0:00] If you could just turn back in your Bibles to the chapter that we read, Colossians chapter 3. And we're just going to spend our time, as I mentioned to the younger ones, just focusing on that earlier part of the passage.

So we've tended just to have it open as we go forward. Now we're speaking just at the back, just as we were praying before coming through here.

I was asked what I did, what my work was at the moment before finishing up. In September, and I work in HR for the Health Board. And I wanted, what I often find in my current role, especially within the world of HR.

And if you've worked with HR, you can probably sympathise with some of this. But a lot of the time, when I'm giving advice to individuals or to managers, whoever it may be, it's often theory-based. So I might have the right answer. I might tell you what ought to be done, or what good advice would be, what best practice would be. But sometimes that theory is not always welcomed. And it's often because it's easier to say something, this is what you should do.

[1:04] And it's a heck of a lot harder to then go and actually do it. So the theory doesn't always match up with what we're being asked to then go out and do. And we can talk endlessly about systems or strategies or ideas.

But really until that, the rubber meets the road. It remains merely an intellectual exercise. And the Christian life can often suffer from a similar disconnect if we're not careful.

And if you've ever felt a tension between the person you know God has called you to be and the person you actually are. Maybe when you lose patience. Maybe when you've got a stressful day. Maybe a stressful weekday morning. Maybe the kids on a holiday have got multiple activities you need to get to. And the washing pile is continuing to grow. Then I'm hopeful that this early part of Colossians chapter 3 will be a helpful reminder to us.

And it's maybe something that will specifically, something that you may be able to take away today. So we're really just going to explore a text that bridges that theology down to really the gritty reality of our daily habits.

[2:12] What is it that we're doing? Our tempers, our conversations, maybe our frustrations, our quietness even at the dinner table. It could be our temper on the fishing boat, on the croft, wherever it may be.

That's where that rubber meets the road and our daily Christian life comes to life. So in order for us to really grasp things a little bit better about this passage that Paul has written to the church in Colossae, it's always helpful just to consider for a brief moment the context that we're in.

And I'm often minded that I provide pulpits of ply, so it's not as if we've been working our way through Colossians and we know exactly where we are. So it's helpful just if we spend a few minutes just very briefly looking at where we are, who this was written to, the purpose of this writing, who it was that wrote it.

So we'll just travel back really to the first century, to this city of Colossae, this bustling city of Colossae. Where was it? Well, it was located in modern Turkey on the southern banks of the Lycus River.

And it was about 110 miles east of Ephesus. At one time it was a notable city. But really during Paul's time and during Paul's day of writing this letter, there were two other neighbouring cities.

[3:28] Laodicea, which was 11 miles northwest, and Hierapolis, which was 12 miles northwest on the opposite side of the river, had outstripped Colossae in terms of its importance within that region.

And by the time Paul writes this letter, likely from his Roman prison cell around AD 60, 62, Colossae was a melting pot of Greek philosophy.

There was Roman civic religion. There was Jewish traditions. There was local pagan mysticism. And the young church in Colossae there was under immense cultural and spiritual pressure. There were false teachers that were infiltrating the ranks, which really then created a bit of a toxic cocktail of, well, really a toxic spiritual cocktail, that effectively suggested that Jesus wasn't quite enough on his own.

There were a few things that we ought to be doing. These false teachers insisted that there had to be an additional few steps that had to be done. Don't do this. Don't touch that. Don't taste this.

[4:33] Along with worship of angels and pursuit of hidden mystical visions. This was what was being added on to the gospel. They were effectively trying to achieve holiness from the outside in, rather than relying on Christ and on Christ alone.

They felt human effort in addition to the gospel is what was required. And what Paul does here with the letter is he effectively divides it into the indicative and the imperative.

First explaining the reality of what God has done. And then he follows it with the command of how we must then live that life out. How do we then respond to that? So chapters one and two, we won't focus on them in any great detail.

What they did was they established the supremacy and sufficiency of Christ. Paul argued that Jesus is the image of the invisible God. And in him, all the fullness of God lives in bodily form. And then we find ourselves here at the beginning of chapter three. What Paul then does is he makes a really important pivot away. And he starts to share this mandate on how we actually then live our lives.

[5:47] He brings those theological truths that he's planted that seed early on in the letter. He brings those truths in chapters one and two right down into the soil of our footsteps to the people in Colossae and to us here in Barvis today.

The passage effectively bridges between the what of our salvation and the how of our daily growth. One of the theologians, William Hendrickson, beautifully notes that Paul's letter consistently follows this pattern.

All of his letters. Whether doctrine always precedes duty. And duty always rests upon doctrine. You cannot have the fruit of Christian living without the root of Christian truth.

So effectively the bottom line here of the passage in our message today. Is that because you have been unified with Christ, your earthly conduct must then reflect that standing.

As Christians, we aren't just improved versions of our old self. We're not just simply engaging in a moral reformation or trying to be a little bit more polite, a little bit kinder here.

[6:57] We ought to be radically different and made alive by the Spirit. So to understand that transformation and that bit where we're talking about that rubber really meeting the road and how we live our lives.

I want us to consider effectively three points today in the brief time that we have remaining. I know your previous minister was a fan of alliteration so I made sure I stuck to it.

So three points. The first one is the position. The second point is the priority. And the third point is the presence. So the first one, the position. And that's the position of the believer. The second one is the priority, which is the priority of our minds.

And in the presence, which is the presence of the King. Now Paul begins our passage here with a conditional sentence that is assumed to be an absolute fact. He says, if then you have been raised with Christ.

I think some translations say since then. It's not if as in maybe you are, maybe you're not. It's since then you have been raised with Christ. So he's speaking to Christians. Before you can ever hope to live a holy life, you have to stand on the rock of your identity being in Christ and in Christ alone.

[8:05] Not in yourself, not in the church, but in Christ alone. And the identity that Paul alludes to here is really that starting point for real change in your life.

We don't live right in order to become children of God. We live right because we are already his children. Our sanctification or our growth in our holiness is the inevitable outflow of our justification. So why is it that God does this? Why is it that he sees us as righteous? Just think of those amazing words in 2 Corinthians 5 verse 21.

For our sake he made him to be sin, who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. It's simple. Because the Father loves his Son with an eternal perfect love,

when your faith honours his Son, the Father then counts your belief as the real thing. He credits your account in his righteousness. And this is the glorious truth of that imputation that we read of in that passage. Our sin was laid upon Christ on the cross, and his perfect righteousness is credited to our account by faith alone.

[9 : 22] Not based on your works, not based on the number of times you've sat here and heard his word, not based on the number of prayer meetings you've been to, but it's on his finished work. You might not have been bodily present at Calvary 2,000 years ago, but you were there.

Just as humanity fell on Adam, the elect are raised in Christ. And God the Father sees your old life ended at the cross, and your new life beginning at the tomb.

Being raised with Christ, which we see of in verse 1, changes everything. It means that death has lost its sting and its dominion over your soul. It means the transgressions of your old life are entirely dealt with.

It means that you've been made alive to walk in true holiness. And it means that the very same spirit that raised Jesus from the dead now lives inside of you. I want to give you a wee bit of a visual.

Our youngest daughter, Anna, is a big fan of drawing. She doesn't use enough of the paper. She goes through too much paper, but she likes drawing. And one of her favourite things to draw is around her own hand, or other people's hands.

[10 : 33] If she's beside you with a bit of paper, you will probably lose your hand at some point. And I remember her drawing my own hand, and then she drew her hand on the inside of it. And she commented on how much my hands were bigger than hers.

And then she asked to put her hand into my hand, and I did. And when I wrapped my hand around hers, the first thing she said is, I can't see my hand anymore. It's hidden. And it's a reminder to us that that's our reality if we are in Christ.

Apostle Paul declares in verse 3, When God looks at you, he doesn't see your old failures. He doesn't see your past mistakes.

He doesn't see your sinful nature. He sees a life that's enveloped, covered, and hidden in the perfect righteousness of Christ. And there is unparalleled security here.

If your life is hidden with Christ in God, then the enemy first must overcome God the Father and God the Son before he can come anywhere near your soul.

[11 : 39] And we know that that's not possible. This secure position in heaven must become the basis of how we then live out our lives here on earth. Which takes us to that second point, which is the priority.

And it's the priority of the mind. And this is that we ought to pursue things that are above. The mind, all of our minds, really is the primary battlefield for the Christian life.

Paul issues this command that sees no compromise. There's no ifs, there's no buts, there's no suggestion that you maybe do this. We are told there, seek the things that are above.

Set your mind on the things that are above. This isn't a polite suggestion that we might want to consider. No, it's an active, ongoing command for those of us that know the Lord.

And the original language implies a constant, intentional exercise of the mind to focus itself in that direction. The Greek dictates a lifestyle of relentless, habitual seeking.

[12 : 48] Matthew Henry, the great commentator, notes that Our affections are the feet of the soul. They carry us towards whatever we love most. Therefore, to set our minds on the things above means that we must consciously divorce our affections from the fleeting treasures of this world.

Another commentator says, Very simply, the things of Christ and of heaven are to consume the believer's life and their mind. To pursue higher living, you have to consciously draw a battle line between the things of the world and the things of the heaven.

We're called to be heavenly minded. Just think of that contrast. On the one hand, you have the things of the earth, the sinful mind that leads to death, deceit, lust, lies, fleshly desires, material desires, even desires of things that can be good for us, our hobbies.

These things that have been given to us by the Lord are good for us, but when they become deadly substitutes for him, they become things of the earth. Yet on the other hand, we have the things that are above, with the perfect will of God, the life of the spirit, true worship, spiritual joy, and Christ himself interceding for us.

Thomas Chalmers once preached a famous sermon where he argued that the only way to get rid of the heart, to get rid, sorry, the only way to rid the heart of its love for the world is to introduce a greater, more glorious love, which is a love for Christ.

[14 : 25] So how is it that we do this? How do we practically renew our minds? How do we live that out here in Barvis here in 2026? Well, it requires an intentionality.

We have to be intentional in our daily actions. We need to try our best to eliminate distractions. There's just three things I want to maybe suggest. Firstly is to eliminate distractions. Maybe turning off the screens in the morning, setting aside those worldly influences that crowd out the things of God.

Now, you'll know yourself, I could pick out my own phone just now and go onto the settings and see how much screen time I've spent over the last week. Each and every one of you could do the same, but sometimes it's really helpful for us to just take stock and say, what is it that's consuming my time?

We've all here got 24 hours in the day. How much of it are you giving to the Lord? And how much of it are you giving to the things of this world? And it may be good things.

It may be things that are beneficial. It may even sometimes be things within the church that busy us, but they don't always seek the things that are above. So we need to be careful about the distractions in our life.

[15 : 33] You know your distractions better than I, so it would be helpful to prayerfully consider what they may be. The second thing that we can do in order to have that intentional daily action is to immerse yourself in God's Word.

We sang there in Psalm 1 at the beginning that we ought to meditate upon the Word until it becomes a very fabric of your thought life. It's not something that we should just turn to. It's not just a quick notification in the morning, what's verse for the day?

Okay, that's me done, tick, I'll read another verse tomorrow. But actually coming down and sitting in the Word. What is taking up that time? Is it sitting in God's Word?

Is it even listening to God's Word, listening to a sermon? But it should be the sort of thing that then becomes a fabric of your very life. The conversations that you're having with others, should be sprinkled with the Gospel.

And then finally, the third option, the third thing we can do, sorry, is to pray. You gather here every week, see it on your intimations, for that very purpose, to gather to pray.

[16 : 36] But we don't just pray in the morning and at night. We ought to learn to silently whisper prayers to God throughout the day. We see that in Thessalonians, that we ought to pray without ceasing.

And that's not that we are 24 hours on our knees, but even driving from here to home, giving thanks to the Lord that we've made it home safely. Giving thanks to the Lord for all that's been given to us, for the lovely weather, for everything that's around us.

What is it that we take for granted that we ought to be continually bringing to the Lord in prayer? So that kind of leads us on to the next question. Why ought we seek the things that are above? We're told here, seek them.

Set your minds on the things that are above. But why? Why ought we do that? And we do not do it to simply escape the world or to engage with some mystical thing that we're being told to do here. No, we seek them because the Supreme King is seated there. That takes us down to our final and third point, which we'll spend a little bit more time on. Look at the end of that first verse there.

[17 : 40] If then you've been raised with Christ, which is the position, seek the things that are above, which ought to be our priority, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.

We see at the end of the verse here that that is where Christ is. The reason we look upward, the reason we don't focus on the things of this world, the reason that we're put to death that which is earthly in us is because upwardly we look and we see where Christ is.

Christ is seated at the right hand of God. That is the seat of ultimate supremacy, total authority and perpetual intercession.

We recognize that Christ did not just rise from the dead and disappear. He ascended and he is seated at the right hand of God. The work of atonement is complete.

Furthermore, seated at the right hand also implies and shows us Jesus' sovereign rule. He is reigning as king. Even today, as we speak and as we hear and as we praise his name, he is

reigning over us.

[18:45] And this is the current source of our daily victory. That daily intentional stepping forward in his name, we're encouraged to know that that is where he is. Because Christ is seated at the right hand of God, it secures and it guarantees our sonship and our place in God's family.

It highlights your justification, that your debt is fully paid. It provides that power that we need daily to conquer sin and trials in our lives and to conquer that temptation to drift, temptation to have those distractions lead us off in a way that we ought not go.

And it anchors our soul in a living hope and a future glorious resurrection. Because your life is hidden in Christ, you possess a promise that defies the grave.

The Puritan John Owen wrote extensively on the glory of Christ, reminding believers that fixing our eyes on the enthroned Christ is the only remedy for the trials of this present day in its darkness.

What a wonderful comfort we read of here in this verse. As we depart from this life, we're accepted in his presence because spiritually you're already there if you're in Christ. We have a representative in the very throne room of God.

[20:05] No one in the world, no one else can say that. The things of this world cannot claim that. And that is why the hope that is found in the gospel is the only hope that we ought to be focusing on.

But just as we come to a close, perhaps you're listening to this and it all feels like that distant theory that I mentioned of earlier. Maybe it doesn't feel like a reality to you. Maybe this, if then you've been raised with Christ, doesn't ring true to you at all.

You might well be carrying that exhausting weight of your past mistakes. Or maybe you're tired of chasing the empty things that the world here has to offer. We live in a society that's really running on a treadmill of self-justification, trying to prove our worth through our achievements, our wealth, our status, focus on yourself, build up your own identity.

It's exhausting and ultimately it leads to the grave. If you do not yet know Christ, then I would urge you to hear this, friends. This security, this radical transformation, celebration, and this victory over death, it's not an exclusive club for perfect people.

If I was to ask, I won't do it just now, but if I was to ask each and every one of you, put up your hands if you've never sinned, I guarantee not a single hand would go into the air.

[21:25] What we see at Calvary is that the ground around Calvary is entirely level at the cross.

This church that you come into, it's not a museum for good people, it's a hospital for the broken and there is an open invitation to you if you do not yet know him.

You don't have to clean up your life in advance, you don't have to go through a checklist before you can come to him, you simply have to surrender to your brokenness, to the one whose hands are big enough to hold you.

Remember the words of that hymn, nothing in my hands I bring, simply to thy cross I cling. Christ invites you today to step out of the shadows of your old life and be completely hidden, like my daughter's hand, completely hidden, protected and made alive in his perfect love.

He offers rest for your weary soul. So really what's the ultimate takeaway this afternoon? It's a call to an uncompromising alignment between your heavenly position and your earthly walk.

Paul tells us later on in verse 5 to put to death therefore what is earthly in you. And I mentioned John Owen before, I think it was him that said this, he said, be killing sin or it will be killing you.

[22:47] Be killing sin or it will be killing you. And it requires us that again, intentional daily steps to starve your lusts until they are weak and to feed the spirit until it continues to grow in strength.

Our culture today is completely obsessed with self, whether that's your style, whether it's your image, whether it's your status, whether it's your bank account, your next promotion, but the kingdom of God demands character, a moral worth that's grounded in the virtues of Christ, like compassion, kindness, humility.

And it's a question for all of us to ask, will you prize the shallow fleeting images of this age or will you put on that character of Jesus Christ?

If you are risen with Christ, then you should live like you are truly alive. Don't let the enemy use your life for his wicked ends. Because you have been radically changed and been made complete in him, your objective is clear.

Look at verse 17 of the very last verse that we read. It says, And whatever you do in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

[24:07] Whatever you do in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus. You're his witness. You're his witness to the lost people here in the community here in the West Side.

You're his witness. We often pray, and I even prayed, I think, today, praying for opportunities to share the word. I think we're all given multiple opportunities and we should probably maybe pray for more courage to take the opportunities that do present themselves and that we don't take.

Your life, if you know him, is wrapped up in him. And I want to share something that Charles Simeon wrote. He was an English, he was an Anglican. He was a contemporary of William Wilberforce and individuals.

If you don't know Charles Simeon, he's very much worth looking up. But he wrote this illustration, and I want to leave this with you because I think it's very helpful and it links to a balloon as well. It's called Carnal Chords That Bind the Soul to Earth.

So I'll just read this. I'll maybe read it a couple of times. I'll see how it goes. But Charles Simeon wrote this. He says, One time it was my privilege to watch the ascent of a hot air balloon.

[25:16] It was bound to the earth by many cords. As the process of filling it with gas began, it struggled to get free. The first line was cut and immediately that side was lifted from the earth.

Then the second and third ropes were loosened and finally the others. When the last cord was snapped asunder, the balloon rose majestically toward the heavens.

Showing the high destination for which it struggled to get free. And he goes on to say, I thought to myself, that's a picture of the attitude that I should possess as a Christian.

One whose affection is set on heaven. In proportion as my heart is filled with the Holy Spirit's presence, I will demonstrate my aspiration and earnest longing for an eternal inheritance.

Inheritance. As one by one the carnal cords are cut that bind my soul to earth, it will rise in its affection to heaven where it so greatly desires to be.

[26:20] And it's my prayer for you, friends, that you would let that supremacy of Jesus Christ be the source, be the strength and be the ultimate goal of our existence here on earth. And that like that hot air balloon that Charles Simeon referred to, one by one the carnal cords being cut that bind your soul to earth, you will rise in affection to heaven where you so greatly desire to be.

Amen. And may the Lord bless those very short reflections on his word. We'll close with a word of prayer before we sing. Gracious and ever blessed Father, Lord, we again give you thanks for your word that we have available to us.

We thank you for even these short verses that we considered this morning. We thank you that for those of us that are indeed raised with you, we ought to recognise that position that we have, that we are raised with you and our priority, the priority of our mind ought to be to seek the things that are above, to set our mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are on earth.

Why? Because the position and the presence of you at the right hand of God is one that we ought to be remembering, Lord. So we give you thanks for these words and we give thanks for the illustrations, those illustrations of that hot air balloon where we are tethered to the earth by the things of this world but that we ought to be striving, striving to head upwards to our heavenly destination, that all that we do on this earth would have eternity in mind, we would always have eternity in view for we know that none of us here are guaranteed to enter into tomorrow, let alone to see out the rest of this day.

So remind us to have eternity firmly in our minds and all that we do would be to your glory knowing that you are indeed our heavenly Father and that through you, in and through you and through the death and resurrection of your Son that we are able to know that hope and that when that hope that we have and that understanding that we have in your word, that rubber then meets the road in our daily lives, that it would be reflective of us.

[28:36] People would look upon us and see there's something different about that person, there's something different about the way that person lived their lives. For each and every one of us that knows you, if we were to be, as happens around the world, if we were to be arrested for our Christian faith, the question should be posed to us, would there be enough evidence to charge us from the way that we live our lives, would there be enough evidence that we are living lives as those who are raised with Christ.

So we ask Lord that as we go from this place that you would bless us for the service again this evening, pray for Reverend Calum McLeod Lord and ask that you would be with him as he opens up your word this evening, we give you thanks for him and all that he does across the denomination

and across our islands as well.

We pray for all of our ministers, especially during so many vacancies, we ask Lord that you would be with them, that you would continue to encourage them and to equip them and to allow them to continue to faithfully and diligently share your word across our islands here Lord and that we would be able to see revival, that we would be able to see many more coming into your house, many more coming to hear your word and many more recognising that the things of this world will not satisfy and we ought to have our minds set upon the things that are above Lord.

So be with us just now, forgive us for all of our sins in Christ's name we pray again, Amen. Well just as we close, we'll sing, again sing Psalms, sing Psalms 16 and 16 from verse 8 to 11 of the Psalms, Psalms 16 verses 8 to 11, just the last four stanzas, before me constantly I set the Lord alone because he is at my right hand I'll not be overthrown, therefore my heart is glad, my tongue with joy will sing, my body too will rest secure in hope unwavering, for you will not allow my soul in death to stay, nor will you leave your Holy One to see the tombs decay, you have made known to me the path of life divine, bliss shall I know at your right hand joy from your face will shine, so we'll sing these verses, verses 8 to 11 of Psalm 16 and the sing Psalms to God's praise.

before me constantly I send the Lord alone because he is the fire my hand, I'll not be overthrown, therefore my heart is glad, my tongue with joy will sing, my body too will ransom secure him open with a name, for you will not allow my soul in death to escape, not when you leave your [32 : 33] Holy One to see the home. you have made known to be the path of life divine, Bless shall I know at your right hand Joy from your face will shine We'll conclude with the words at the end of the book of Jude.

Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy to the only God our Father through Jesus Christ our Lord be glory, majesty, dominion and authority before all time and now and forever.
Amen.