

Colossians Chapter 2 v 6 - 19

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Preacher: Barry Davies

[0 : 00] Well, goodbye.

Good morning, everybody. It's good to see you here this morning and to see visitors. We do welcome you. And I realize now just how scary I am. It's empty at the front. I'm really not going to hurt people, honestly.

But anyway, let's just calm our minds and think about this verse that's behind us on the wall. It's taken from Colossians chapter 3, verse 15.

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace and be thankful. So we come this morning, let's remember that it is the peace of God that rules in our hearts, the peace of Christ.

And we are to be thankful. We are to come and praise his name and worship him this morning, knowing that when we do that, he will be with us. And we long to bring our songs of praise, our prayers and our concerns about the things of this world before him and learn from his word.

[1 : 30] So there's nowhere better than to start with our first hymn, it's number 35, where we are encouraged to tell out my soul the greatness of the Lord.

And notice it's not just to sing with the mouth, tell out my soul. It's an inward thing. Let's sing from the heart. Number 35. Now let's come before the Lord in prayer. Let's pray together.

Dear Lord, we do thank you and praise you that as we come this morning together to worship you, we can indeed praise you and thank you for the glories of your word, the glories of the great gospel proclamation that reminds us that you are our savior.

And that when you came to this earth, you came because the father loved his people, those he had made. And Lord, as we come this morning, we come to worship your name and to thank you and praise you that each day we can look back and think of all the many things that you've given to us and the grace that you've showered upon us.

And so we come with thankful hearts indeed to just bring our concerns before you, Lord, to just take this time away from our busy schedules to contemplate the things of God, the things that are important to us that you want us to learn.

[3 : 10] And Lord, we thank you that when we do these things, we can have a real sense of your presence with us, that wherever we've come from and whatever situation, we know, Lord, that you are there in the midst with us, willing to help us and not just willing, but able.

And that you've made promises to us as that hymn that we just sang mentioned, promises that you will fulfill to keep us, to do good for us. And Lord, to keep us in the center of your work as you intercede with the Father on our behalf.

So Lord, we thank you and praise you for these things. And we come before you this morning in great expectation, knowing that you will give us all those things which are needful for us to know. And so we pray that indeed we'll have that real sense of having been able to worship you in truth, that will be challenged, that will be lifted up, that will be exhorted to go on in the way to which you've called us.

And we ask all these things in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen. Amen. Amen. Now going to have our scripture reading.

[4 : 28] It's from Colossians chapter 2. I'm going to read in two sections, the first one now and the other part later.

So I'm going to read now from Colossians 2, verse 6 down to the end of verse 15. It's entitled in the version I'm using, Spiritual Fullness in Christ.

Paul has just spoken beforehand about various things, and now he comes to the point he's trying to make. So then, just as you receive Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted

and built up in him, strengthening the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness. See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world, rather than on Christ.

For in Christ, all the fullness of the deity lives in bodily form, and in Christ you've been brought to fullness. He's the head over every power and authority.

[5 : 49] In him, you were also circumcised with a circumcision not performed by human hands. Your whole self, ruled by the flesh, was put off when you were circumcised by Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead.

When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave all our sins, having cancelled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us.

He's taken it away, nailing it to the cross, and having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

Amen. Passage in Colossians, and I'm just going to read on now from verse 16 through to the end of the chapter. Having spoken of Christ, he now comes to, as it were, more of the things of this world.

Verse 16. Therefore, do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to religious festival, a new moon celebration, or a Sabbath day.

[7 : 11] These are a shadow of the things that were to come. The reality, however, is found in Christ. Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and in the worship of angels disqualify you.

Such a person also goes into great detail about what they've seen. They're puffed up with idle notions by their unspiritual mind. They've lost connection with the head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow.

Since you died with Christ to the elemental spiritual forces of this world, why, as though you still belong to the world, do you submit to its rules? Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch.

These rules, which have to do with things that are all destined to perish with use, are based on merely human commands and teachings. Such regulations, indeed, have an appearance of wisdom with their self-imposed worship, their false humility, and their harsh treatment of the body.

But they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence. Amen. And may the Lord bless his word to us. As we come to the word, let's take the injunction of that hymn, and let's just spend some time in silence, just pray, indeed, that the Lord's power will be in this place today, just for a few moments.

[8 : 39] Lord, we do thank you and praise you for your word, and we ask now that you would open it to us, not just in our minds, but also in our hearts and souls.

For we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, perhaps you could have that passage before you in Colossians. I don't know about you, but when you read the Bible, don't you find that nothing much has changed in 2,000 years?

The world is still in the mess that it was. It's interesting that a lot of the New Testament is taken up with Paul writing letters to churches, and all those churches are in trouble.

And yet this was the time when the church was thriving. New converts were being made all the time, and yet very soon, churches fell into errors of all sorts.

And usually, as in the case of the Colossians, it was because some individuals thought that they knew better. Not only better than the apostles, but better than God, better than Christ, and they wanted to do their own thing.

[10 : 03] And it's against this background that we have this letter written to these Christians at Colossae. And this church was formed when Epaphras went to hear Paul, and probably along with Epaphras went Philemon, because eventually the church at Colossae was at his house, as we read when we read the book of Philemon.

And it was written, as I say, very shortly in 62 AD, after the Lord had gone to heaven. And Paul was writing to this church because various heresies had begun to spring up.

Just to mention two, one was the worship of angels, which was mentioned in our passage, but also the fact that, again in our passage, the Jews, who we were just thinking about them through the stories and the talks that we've had on the midweek meeting, they were also trying to get into the churches and claiming to be, as it were, true Jews, Christians, but in fact, what they were doing was distorting the truth.

And in particular, they were trying to make sure in Colossae that the people didn't think that it was just as easy as trusting in Christ, but you also had to be circumcised.

You also had to follow certain celebrations and sacrifices, et cetera. And all of this, Paul is writing to them in order to correct, as I say, in the very early days of the church.

[11 : 42] Well, in management terms, one of the writers, a man called Stephen Covey, in his book, he said lots of things which are rubbish, as most management books do, but one of the things he said was start with the end in view.

So I want us to start before we look at this whole passage by looking at the end point which is in Colossians 2 verses 18 to 23.

Having gone through all these things that Paul is talking to them about, this is what he comes to. Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you from getting to heaven.

Such a person also goes into great detail about what they've seen. They're puffed up with idle notions by their unspiritual mind. They've lost connection with the head for whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow.

Since you died with Christ in the elemental spiritual forces of this world, why, as though you still belong to the world, do you submit to its rules? Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch.

[12 : 55] These rules, which have to do with things that are all destined to perish with use, are based on merely human commands and teachings. Such regulations, indeed, have an appearance of wisdom with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment to the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.

And I've got four questions this morning, which I'll bring up at different points. And here's the first one. And it's where we start, right at the end, because by the time we get to the end, not just of this passage, but this letter that Paul's writing to the Colossians, the significant question he's asking every single person in that church, some of whom would have been Christians, and as we've just heard, some of them weren't, here's a question.

Do you still belong to this world? Do you still belong to this world? Is this world so important that everything else, including Christ and his sacrifice, have got to be pushed into the background? Why? Because this world is better. That's a hard question, isn't it? Because there are certain things that we all enjoy about this world, but basically, if we still belong to this world in any sense, in our hearts, not physically in what we do, but in our hearts, then we cannot be Christians.

we cannot be the sort of people that Paul is talking to these people here in Colossae about, the ones who are truly following Christ, because if we still belong to the world, then clearly, we don't belong to Christ.

[14 : 48] You can only belong to one of these things. And so, that's an important question. And this passage that we're reading gives us some pointers to how we can get the answer to this question in the sense of turning it into a positive.

Because if we're honest with ourselves, if we look out at the world and what goes on in the world, what on earth is there to attract us to it? There doesn't appear to be anything that you would say it would be good to belong to this world.

And yet, throughout history, there are people, and no doubt there are some amongst us this morning, who don't actually believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is their saviour.

they don't believe that he is God, they don't believe that he died on the cross for their sins, they don't believe that he rose from the dead, and more importantly, they don't believe that he cares for them.

I don't know whether you've watched a programme on television, it's a sign of retirement I suppose, that you catch things during the day which you never saw before, and one of them is long lost family.

[16 : 02] And it's always the same pattern for those who have watched it. Somebody has lost touch with a relative, it's usually a parent, sometimes it's a brother, sometimes it's a sister, and they're trying to find them desperately.

They're usually older, and they realise one thing that maybe Paul was hinting to these people about, and that is when you realise that the world and all that it stands for is not worth belonging to, then you start to look and it becomes more important to find your main family.

And usually it ends with a tearful reunion. And it's also a sign of age that a few tears come to my eyes as well when it comes to that point.

I don't know about you if you've ever watched it, but this is what happens. But somebody has to go and investigate and find out where the rest of that family is, so that they can actually meet together. And the fact is, this is the point that Paul's making here, if we still belong to this world, we're totally unconcerned about that family, or that family member, because we're so bound up with the things of this world that we think that's all there is.

[17 : 31] And many of the people, you can sort of look at this programme time and time again, and it always comes down to the same sort of discussion where they're being interviewed, and they say, well, I knew there was something missing in my life, but I'm not sure what it was.

And sometimes this is a person who had been adopted at birth, birth, and they didn't realise until some later point when perhaps their parents died and they found some documents to realise that they were adopted, and their real father and mother was elsewhere.

And here's the thing, once they realised that their real parents, they had never met as they were growing up in their family, they got this sense of restlessness, they needed to go and find out, what are my roots?

Who are my real parents? Where did I really come from? What's the background to my life? And there's a spiritual equivalent of that, isn't there? Because when the Holy Spirit comes to work in the hearts and minds of people, and in their hearts and souls, they begin to realise that this world that they belong to isn't really their family.

there's something intangible, something they can't put their finger on, and they begin a search. It's the first stirrings maybe, the beginning of faith in their hearts that the Holy Spirit puts there.

[19 : 13] Well, this is what Paul is saying to these people, and he gives them three things which they need to remember if they're Christians that they've been through, and he's reminding them, and if they're not believers, he's showing them what they should have done, and what they need to do, in order to move from the position that they're in, which is clearly part of the world, and with all its issues.

And there was a James Bond film not too long ago, and the title of it was The World is Not Enough. If there's anybody who's in any doubt about what I'm saying this morning, I can tell you categorically as a Christian who trusts in Christ, this world is not enough.

This world is not enough. If it was, then we'd be in a sad state, wouldn't we? The world is not enough. So we need to consider three things which this passage talks about.

It talks about being received by Christ. The passage says in verse 6, so then, just as you receive Christ, Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him.

So there he's talking to these Christians at the Church of Colossae. But if you're not a Christian and you've not received Christ, then you need to be received by Christ.

[20 : 45] You need to be received by him. And again, if you've not been received by Christ, then you cannot be a Christian because by definition, a Christian is one who follows Christ.

And you can only follow him if you've been received by him. So, this passage clearly tells us towards the end, and that's why I read the end of the passage and why we started there, that this world and everything in it is perishing.

It's not just the physical things, it's not just the fact that we're getting older. Some of us were having a discussion at the door about when we were young and healthy and did all sorts of things, and we're all getting older.

But the world is dying. Even the scientists will admit that. It might be a slow death, but it's dying.

And there's nothing in this world that's worth as worshipping or getting involved in to the extent that we forget that we don't belong to the world.

If we've been received by Christ, we belong to him. Why? Because he bought us with the price that none of us could pay.

[22 : 04] The penalty for sin was not only death, it was eternal death and condemnation. and he redeemed us from that.

So the first thing then is that we need to be received by Christ. If there's anybody this morning who hasn't been received by Christ, has never found that stirring and wanting to meet another member of the family, you know in that program, one of the things that always comes up at the point, they contact where this new family member is and they go back to the person who was searching and

they say, we found them.

And then they work towards the day when they're going to meet with this person. And you know, one of the things they always say is the same. When it gets towards the day, they say, I'm really worried.

And they say, why? Because I don't know whether they'll receive me. I don't know whether they'll be friendly towards me. I don't know whether they'll love me.

I don't know whether I like them or they'll like me. But you know, if you're a Christian, that question doesn't come up, does it?

[23 : 20] Because the Bible tells us that Christ will receive us as a brother, as a loving brother, as one who is willing to give his life for us.

There's absolutely no doubt that we will be received by Christ. And as we were thinking about, actually on Wednesday, thinking about the Church of Philadelphia, where the Lord says, he's there, the door is open for salvation, and he will keep it open until all who seek him have gone in.

He will receive us right to the end. But the second thing is, this passage tells us, and this is, as it were, the main thrust of what Paul's saying to this church, because he knows there are Christians there, he knows they're in trouble, he wants to counteract that, so he says in verse 7 what they need to be, rooted and built up in him, talking about Christ, strengthening the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.

So many people, you know, I've been in a church now a lot of years, and so many people have drifted away, they've lost their first love, if they ever had a first love for Christ, and they come up, in many cases, with the reason being, I know better, I've read this book, I've seen that program, somebody said this, and I believe that, not what the Bible says.

Paul is absolutely clear, the minute we go away from Christ, and the words of this gospel, this Bible, this holy book, then we're immediately in trouble, we're bound to be in trouble.

[25 : 18] Now I'm not a gardener, as many people will testify, John's been in my garden, I'm not a gardener, I'm not John, and I know nothing about plants, but what I do know is that when you first get a plant, the most critical time is when you replant it, or you plant it for the first time, then the wind, the rain, the cold, my infamous digging, might destroy it, but once its roots are firmly established, it's far more secure, and can withstand all of those trials, as it were, that come along.

Now imagine, I was digging in the garden just the other day, following on from what John's done for me already, still digging up roots, and you've probably got plants like this in your garden, there's a little thing in the top, a few leaves, and you start to dig, and you pull up a root about this big, and you pull it out, and you think you've got it, and then a few weeks later, it comes back again, so you dig a bit deeper, and the root goes down further, and you dig that up, and it still comes up again, and eventually the little tendrils that reach out, and grip on the soil, and they sort of say, I'm never going to get rooted out, I'm going to stay here, and when you've gone, I'm going to grow again, so there, and John was talking about forgiveness of sin, sin is like that, it's always there, and it can always grow, and we can always succumb to it, we need to be rooted in Christ, but what does that mean?

Well, just before this particular passage that we're reading, and the precursor to it, is what Paul writes in chapter one, let me read you just a little bit of that, because in that passage, this is what he says, I'll just read you now, talking about Christ, the son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation, for in him all things are created, things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities, all things have been created through him and for him, he's before all things, and in him all things hold together, and he is the head of the body, the church, he's the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy, for God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood shed on the cross, we started with peace, peace with God, and here's how it's achieved, you cannot read that passage about the supremacy of the Son of God, and not realize that this particular passage, as the people who were listening to this message would have realized, is exactly following on from there, because he talks about the fullness, the supremacy of Christ, and in this passage that we read, this is what it says, for in Christ all the fullness of the deity lives in bodily form, and in Christ you have been brought to fullness, in other words, if you're a Christian, you've been brought to a spiritual fullness, in Christ, and Christ is the only one who can do this, he's the only one, there's no other men, there's no other religion,

there's no other thing that people can present to you, that can possibly be more than fullness, and Christ is the only one who has it.

So we've asked two questions so far, do you still belong to this world? The second one, have you been received by Christ? And the third one is, are you rooted in Christ?

[29 : 37] Are you rooted in Christ? Every church in the land, every church in the world is full of people who go now and again, when they feel like it. But in every church there are some who are rooted in Christ and they know that if they begin to neglect the word of God, if they begin to neglect meeting together with the people of God, if they neglect prayer, if they neglect the reading of God's word, then they start to deteriorate, they start to think this isn't important and the world becomes more important than the things of God.

If anybody can contradict that, I'd be happy to have a discussion afterwards, but I found that to be true. Well, we may be received, hopefully we're rooted in Christ, but when he says that, he sort of stresses it because the words that he uses in here when he's talking about this, it's in verse seven, rooted and built to be in, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, overflowing with thankfulness and those words that are used talk about establishing, being firm, growing, strengthening, these are all things that come from being rooted in Christ.

Christ. Every missionary who's ever lived will tell you from their experience, if they've, you know, been through a difficult time in a different country, they'll say, I could not have survived without what Christ did for me.

I wouldn't have survived if I'd neglected the word of God. I wouldn't have survived if those other Christians hadn't been with me and given me encouragement from time to time, where I'd had someone to talk about, about spiritual things.

So being rooted in Christ is actually very, very important. And we started with that question, are you still in the world?

[31 : 48] One of the other things that happened in that program is that when they do eventually find this person, and the person who was adopted or whatever when they were younger goes to see them, the first thing they want to know is, where did I come from?

who was my mum and dad? If their dad and mum are dead and it's maybe a sibling that they meet. And if somebody said to you, now, today, in this place, what are your roots?

Where are your roots? Well, everybody says, usually, well, I'm from wherever, and my mum and dad were this. the Bible says, if you're a Christian, your roots are heaven.

That's where you were from, because you were in the plan of God from eternity past, and that's where you're going to. That's your home. And what about your family?

Well, we have a family that consists of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. they're our family. And that's where we're going to.

[33 : 00] William Henriksen, who wrote many commentaries, wrote this, about this passage that we've been reading. In Christ, you've reached the source whence flows the streams of blessings that supplies whatever you need for this life and for the next.

As I say, all these things that were being spoken to by Paul are to ensure that the church there grows and goes on.

All the things, the spurious things that these people were introducing about regulations, sacrifices, fasts, etc., they had no place and will not earn people a place in heaven.

One thing that angers people about the Christian faith, if they're from another, is it can't be that easy. Surely, you know, I've got to work hard.

Surely I've got to make this sacrifice. The Bible makes it absolutely clear that Christ has made the sacrifice. All we have to do is believe in him, trust in him, and acknowledge his name and ask him to forgive us for our sins.

[34 : 12] God's grace. It says in Colossians 2, verse 12, it says, if you're a Christian, it says, you were raised with him through your faith.

And even that faith was given to us by God. God. And it says that all those who have been received by Christ have been made alive with him.

I asked John what he was going to speak about this morning, this morning, and he said, I'm going to talk about forgiveness. forgiveness. I said, that's good because it will fit in to what I'm going to say. Because Paul uses forgiveness several times in this letter to point out how Christ has forgiven our sins and paid the penalty for them.

But it's interesting, you know, it's one of these cases where if you just read through the passage and you don't do the research or don't read before or what comes after, you might pass over this. But this church, this is why I mentioned at the beginning, this was the church where Philemon was. It was meeting in his house. And if you know the story of the book of Philemon, his servant Onesimus stole from him and left him.

[35 : 30] But then he became a Christian through Paul. And Paul sent him back to Onesimus and said, receive him as a brother and anything he owes you, I will pay.

And Onesimus would have been there. He was in the church of Colossae, as was Epaphras, who'd taken the gospel there originally.

And all of those people would know that when Paul was talking about forgiveness, they would have known about Philemon and Onesimus and the fact that Paul asked him to forgive all that had been done. And that was a pattern of how Christ forgave all of their sins.

This was a really powerful illustration to all of the church there of Christ's love for his people. So the question there is, have we been raised with Christ?

Well, we need to be raised with him. Let's come to a conclusion now. If you talk to young people, I'm sorry young people, this is probably really old fashioned, but at one point, if you were talking to somebody who was younger and you were telling them something that was a bit unbelievable or they didn't want to accept it, they'd say, oh, get real.

[36 : 59] Do they still say that? Get real. Get real. But our passage tells us about this. The words that we read.

Because when we get to the end of this passage, starting at verse 16, which we read second, it talks about all the things which are in this world, all the regulations, all the rules.

And this is what it says in verse 12. These are a shadow of the things that were to come. The reality, however, is found in Christ.

If you're anywhere else but in Christ this morning, you're living a completely unreal life. You're still in the world.

You're still tied down by all its rules and regulations. But the reality, the only reality, is in Christ.

That's the real thing that we should be considering.

[38 : 01] It says it's just a shadow, everything else, of things to come. And remember what we read. In Christ, all the fullness of the deity lives in bodily form and in Christ you've been brought to fullness.

He's the head over every power power and authority. Kath and I went to the World Athletics Championships a couple of weeks ago.

And at the championships, they interviewed people after they won a medal. In almost every case, they always thanked their parents and their coaches for all that they've done for them.

And you know that the parents, and sometimes they tell you, they took me backwards and forwards to all these athletic events all around the country. You know, I saw one once when he said, my mum and dad remortgaged their house to pay for such and such a thing because I needed this training. And you know, they've done this. They point to all that they've done and they say, you know, they made such a sacrifice for me. I did it for them.

[39 : 07] There's no sacrifice that anybody could have paid for our sin but the one that Christ paid on the cross.

When God gave his only son, because he so loved us, that he wanted to make a way of escape for all those who would trust in him.

And if those competitors can turn and talk about the parents in such a way and say, I did this for them. How many of us, when we reach the end of our lives, will be able to say, when I became a Christian, when I turned away from the things of this world, my life, at the end of it, I did it for him. Let's all dedicate our lives to Christ as we seek to serve God. Amen. This was the testimony of the words of one who was a true follower of Christ, Jude, one of his brothers.

This is what he said at the end of his letter. To him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy, to the only God our Saviour, be glory, majesty, power and authority through Jesus Christ our Lord before all ages, now and forevermore.

[40 : 41] Amen.