

Colossians Chapter 3 v 1 - 4

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Preacher: Peter Robinson

[0 : 00] And we're going to read the first 17 verses of chapter 3. We're not going to look at all of them tonight, but just the first four. But we're going to read from Colossians 3, beginning at verse 1 through to verse 17.

Here is God's faithful word. It is to us the living word of the living God. Since then you have been raised with Christ.

Set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.

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

Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature. Sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.

[1 : 03] Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. You used to walk in these ways in the life you once lived. But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these.

Anger, rage, malice, slander and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its creator.

Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free. But Christ is all and is in all.

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

[2 : 13] Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.

And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. We thank God that he...

Yes, I have got my notes. This one this morning. Well, Colossians 3, and those first four verses in particular, let's read them once more together.

Since then you have been raised with Christ. Set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.

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

[3 : 27] At this very moment in time around the world, scientists, doctors, biologists are fervently at work to find a vaccine, an antidote for Ebola.

But not just for that illness, but for the multitude of other diseases that afflict and kill and maim millions of people every year.

Over the last hundred years or so, there have been incredible breakthroughs to the labors of those working in these fields. Cures and vaccines for polio, tuberculosis, diphtheria, whooping cough, typhoid, yellow fever, and many more besides.

All that are fatal have been found a cure for, and many millions of lives saved. But there is always going to be one fatal disease which evades us at every turn.

A disease so universally fatal that it infects every single person and inevitably leads to death. Of course, that is sin.

[4 : 38] The very problem that humanity has grappled with since leaving the Garden of Eden. Wonderfully, in the Lord Jesus Christ, every Christian has been delivered and healed of the deadliest consequences of this illness.

The consequences which we call eternal death in hell. 1 Corinthians and chapter 15, Paul writes to believers there of that great truth where he concludes at the end of chapter 15, The sting of death is sin, the power of sin is the law.

Thanks be to God, he gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. The Christian has been delivered, rescued from sin's ultimate curse, eternal damnation and separation from the living God.

But, as Christians living in this world today and living in these bodies, we still have the remnants, the hangover, as it were, of sin still at work within us.

Weakening our bodies, polluting us as long as we live. Paul is able to cry out concerning that disease, that affliction.

[5 : 53] In Romans 7, as he's been speaking about the ongoing wrestle, he cries out, What a wretched man I am, who will rescue me from this body of death.

So, is there an answer? Is there an answer to sin in the Christian life? Is there an answer to the continuing poison which flows through our bloodstream?

How can we counter its effects? How can we live lives pleasing to God? How can we live holy lives?

Now, as we've been going through the letter of Paul to the Colossians, it's been apparent to us, and we've seen that these believers were bombarded by preachers and teachers who were proclaiming that they had the answer.

They had the miracle cure. They had the elixir of holiness, as it were, which would set these people, these Christians, free from sin and cause them to live holy and godly lives.

[7 : 00] And we saw that really their message, which is in the majority of chapter 2, is nothing more than a self-help message, a do-it-yourself sort of sanctification.

And their message, as we've gleaned it from Paul's words, went something like this. Keep the law of the Old Testament and the regulations that we've added to it. Top this up with the occasional experience, and you'll have no problem being holy just as we are holy.

But as we saw in chapter 2, particularly last week, Paul rips these teachers' doctrines to pieces and shows them to be the worthless twaddle that they really are.

As he says in verse 8, They are hollow and deceptive philosophy, depending on human tradition and the basic principles of the world. Fine-sounding arguments, he says, but those that have an appearance of wisdom, but they have no value.

All hot air. All outward and all useless in dealing with sin. They were legalism, empty experiences, false asceticism, beating the body as it were, depriving the body, trying to change the inner person, but as Paul concluded, lacking any value in restraining sensual indulgence.

[8 : 26] You see, Paul doesn't leave us hanging in the air now. He doesn't just dismiss and rubbish the claims of these teachers and preachers. He doesn't just say, well, they're all rubbish and you've got to work it out for yourself.

Rather, he moves immediately on to the answer. He begins to provide us with the appropriate cure, the unique provision for every believer in the struggle with sin.

And of course, with Paul, unsurprisingly, the answer, as we've seen throughout Colossians, and the answer throughout the New Testament is the Lord Jesus Christ. Back in that Romans 7 verse, I'm sure many of you will have noticed that I cut it short.

Where Paul says, wretched man that I am, who will rescue me from this body of death, we all know that it goes on to say, thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord. He's the answer.

He's the one who alone is able to give us the victory over sin. And there were two major flaws that we saw, of course, in the teaching of the self-help gurus.

[9 : 36] The same two major flaws which are found in every type of religion, every time of philosophy or thought process which does not include and depend on Christ.

The first of these problems is this. They thought that they could change the inside from the outside. They thought that by doing things on the outside, by affecting the body or afflicting the body or by something that they did in keeping commandments and laws, that that would change their hearts.

But that is completely false. And of course, the other problem was that they thought that they could accomplish this change by their own power, by their own self-will, by their own positive thinking or whatever it may be.

And they were wrong on that second count as well. And so as Paul begins to teach us here in chapter 3 and verse 1 and following, we see that the change that must take place in our lives externally has to begin with the internal organs of the heart and the mind.

Notice what he says there in verse 1. 1. Set your hearts on things above. Verse 2. Set your minds on things above. And so in these first four verses, we have instruction for the mind and the heart.

[11 : 03] Well, the heart and the mind. Well, what is it that Paul is going to be pointing us to? What is he going to be teaching us? How is he going to help us in our struggle with sin that we may live godly lives in this evil age?

He begins with the heart. I've heard the saying, of course, home is where your heart is. And for the Christian, that is certainly the case.

Jesus taught us in Matthew 6 not to build up for ourselves treasures in earth, but treasures in heaven. He went on to say, where your treasure is, there your heart is. Christian is someone whose heart is set upon different things.

Now, in the NIV, we have here the use of the word set your hearts on things above. That's helpful because the NIV is giving us a breakdown, as it were.

It's giving us an understanding of the original thought here. But the word heart isn't actually in the Greek, in the original. Really what is being said is this. Keep on seeking things above.

[12 : 11] Keep on seeking things above. But we use that phrase, don't we, to set your heart upon something. To mean just that. To be determined to have something.

To be resolute about a certain course of action or a decision. We might say of a young man, he set his heart on getting into this university. Or we may say, forgive this, of a young lady, she set her heart on buying those new shoes.

It's not meant to be a sexist remark. Just to, oh, shut up, I'll stop digging. So, when we're told here to set our hearts on something, it means just that, to seek earnestly.

And there's a sense in which the words are meaning an ongoing activity. We're to set our hearts on where Christ is.

In other words, we're to be so caught up with Jesus Christ that we have no room for the desires of sin in our lives.

[13 : 14] We're to be so caught up. Again, using the illustration of a young man or a young woman who set his heart upon a girl. And he's got no room for any, he's blind to every other young lady in the room or in the place.

It's that one that his heart is set upon. And so it is with Jesus, as we set our hearts continually upon him, as we pursue him, as we long for him and think on him in that sense, then there is no room for sin.

Remember Paul's words in Philippians 3 where he expresses his own attitude to the Lord Jesus? He says, not that I've already obtained all of this or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that which Christ Jesus took hold of me.

So what do we mean? What are we talking about here when Paul begins by talking about the hearts? Especially when he says, set your heart on things above where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.

He isn't saying, and doesn't say, set your heart on Christ. Now that's the sense. But set your heart on things above where Christ is seated.

[14 : 28] It seems to me that Paul is encouraging us that one of the ways in which we deal with sin in our own lives is to find within our hearts that our delight is in what Christ has done for us.

Our delight, our joy, our source of pleasure, if I put it that way, is in what Christ has accomplished for us. There's a reason why Paul says what he says, where Christ has been raised and where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.

He doesn't just say, set your hearts on things above where Christ is, full stop, but where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. And the reason Paul pictures Jesus as seated at the right hand of the Father is something of great significance.

In Hebrews in chapter 1, at the very start of the chapter, we're told the Son, that's Christ, is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word.

Great, but then he says, after he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the majesty in heaven.

[15 : 40] Paul pictures Jesus as seated because he wants us to recognize that his work of salvation is finished.

That his work of our redemption is completed. Just as we sit down when we have finished an exhausting physical job or been for a long walk, when we have finished and completed, that's when we sit down and not before.

Christ in his life, his death, his resurrection has accomplished for us everything necessary for our salvation. He's done it all. There's nothing for us to add.

And that's why he is seated there at the Father's right hand. Now notice as well that it's that place which is the Father's right hand and that is the place of power and authority.

Paul, when he writes to the Christians in Ephesus, reminds them of that reality as well. Ephesians chapter 1. The power he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms.

[16 : 51] Far above all rule and authority, power and dominion and every title that can be given. Not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church.

The Lord Jesus Christ rules and reigns over the universe. Yes, that's a wonderful truth. But, says Paul, and but, says the New Testament, he rules and reigns for the sake of his people.

He rules and reigns and works for their good. He rules and reigns and exercises authority for their blessing. It's wonderful to have a government in place that's only concern is not being re-elected but for the good of its citizens.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the king of a kingdom where the chief concern of the king is the welfare, the health, the blessing of his people.

And so Paul says, set your minds on, set your hearts on things above. Seek after those things. Make these things a delight. Make these things a source of your joy.

[18 : 04] Make these things a source of your pleasure. The thought that Christ has accomplished all for your salvation. And you are right with God. And that he is seated to rule and to reign for your blessing and to overrule in all things for your good and the good of his church.

Here's the wonderful truth. Since you have been, some of the translation says, if you have been. But it is the same sense. Grasped as reality, we, dear friends, have been raised with Christ.

We are united to him. In his death and resurrection, he has given to us salvation and life.

We also are exalted and share with him in that rule and reign. Again, Ephesians in chapter 2 this time where Paul speaks about what God has done.

God raised us up with Christ, Ephesians 2.6. And seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus. Now we aren't there physically yet.

[19 : 14] But because we are united with Christ, we are as good as there. Not only the guarantee of our salvation that we shall be there. But again, the reality that we are one with Christ.

And that when he is at work, he is at work for us. When he is seeking to bless, he is seeking to bless us. Set your hearts on things above where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.

If our hearts are set upon these things. If we find them to be our joy and delight. The realities of Christ and our being one with him.

And the life we have with him. Then Paul is beginning to teach us that there will be the strength and the help that will guard our hearts against sin.

When we consider what is great and glorious. When we consider what is so amazing and tremendous.

[20 : 15] Then the things of this world, the sin that it has to offer. And the passing pleasures seem to us to be what they really are. Small and demeaning and lacking in value.

And in lasting pleasure. You won't see a man who is fully fed hunting through the bins for something to eat.

Only a starving man will hunt through the bins. If you've been well fed, you can pass by the back entrance of a restaurant with all the cast offs. And not be tempted to take hold of it.

But you see, the Christian is somebody who is well fed when his heart is delighting in and seeking upon the things of Christ.

And who he is and what he's done for him. The things that the world runs after. The squalid things. The things that debase people. The things that pollute people. The things that ruin lives.

[21 : 12] The things that give just a passing pleasure. Have no place in the Christian life. Why? Because the Christian has so much better than that. Something which gives much more lasting satisfaction and contentment.

Set your hearts on things above. Delight in the things of Christ. In where you are. And in what he's done for you. And then he says something which sounds like a bit of a repetition.

For he says, set your minds on things above. Is he repeating himself? Well in one sense, I guess he is. But there is a distinction between the mind and the heart.

They're obviously a close connection. Because we are one person. We have one mind and one heart. They operate together. But they operate in different ways. We recognize this when we say of somebody, his heart's ruling his head.

They operate in different ways. On different platforms, don't they? It means of course that somebody's being led by their feelings rather than what they know.

[22 : 21] So you may walk down the street and you see this fantastic car for sale. It's a beautiful Lamborghini or whatever it may be. Oh, your heart says, oh, I want to have that. I want to drive that down the street.

But your head says, you haven't got enough money in the bank to pay for it. But the head rules the heart. The heart doesn't think of these things in the same way as the mind.

But, says Paul, if we are to, the mind and the heart must work together to keep us clear of sin and to keep us on the right course of living for Christ.

So, what are we to do with our minds? Well, very similarly, in one sense, we're told that our minds are to be set on things above as well. But rather, he says, he qualifies this not on earthly things.

We're to fill our minds with heavenly realities rather than earthly shadows. C.S. Lewis spoke of the world in which we live here as the shadow lands.

[23 : 25] Because though it seems very real to us, the world in which we live, the physical world in which we live, this temporary world in which we live, is not the reality. It's not the here and now.

It's not going to be here forever. What is real and solid is heavenly spiritual reality. We are no longer, in one sense, to live, says Paul, for the earthly.

Why? Because he goes on to say, for you died. And your life is now hidden with Christ in God. We no longer live for the world because when we put our faith in Christ, we died to the world, but we became alive to the things of heaven.

We are now citizens of heaven, says Paul in Ephesians 3.20. And we are hidden with Christ in God. In other words, we are caught up, we are wrapped up, we are united, not with this world, but to the life and the supply of life which is found in Christ and in God.

How do we get into God? By being united with Christ. How are we one with God? Through faith in Christ. Through new life in Christ.

[24 : 42] We are now, therefore, dead to the things of this world. The things that the world runs after. The things that the world lives for. The world around about us seems to be so permanent and real.

But it's, in fact, been turned on its head. The real is the spiritual and the unseen. The seen is the unreal and the shadow. We are to think of ourselves and all around us from a heavenly perspective.

We are to see ourselves as heaven sees us. As God sees us. Well, we might ask, well, how does that help us? How does that help us in the battle with sin? Both in the inner man and the outward life.

If we are heavenly minded. And look at things from a heavenly perspective. Somebody foolishly said, but it's often repeated. Oh, he's more heavenly minded than earthly use.

That is never the case. The more heavenly minded we are, the more earthly use we shall be. So how does this help us? By setting our minds on. Filling our minds with and looking at things from the heavenly perspective.

[25 : 49] Recognizing that we are now dead to the world. Well, the way we think about ourselves. And what we know about ourselves. Affects the way we act and live.

That's true in every circumstance. So if we are now married. We no longer act like a single person. In our relationships with those of the opposite sex.

Or with anybody for that matter. If we are now adults. We should not act like children. Some of us do. From time to time. But when we are.

Then that's how we act. If we're employed and have a job. We don't act like somebody who is retired. And so on. What we know about ourselves.

And how we view ourselves. Affects how we live and act. And therefore if my mind. If in my mind I'm constantly aware of the fact I'm dead to the world.

[26 : 42] And I'm living a new way of life with Christ. It will impact how I react to temptation. It will impact how I react to sin. In my daily living and experience.

If I see myself as I am. Hidden in Christ. In God. If I see myself as alive to him. And living for him. Then I will again. Not have time or room.

Or give opportunity. For sin to rule over me. Or to live in the way that the world lives. So the world lives for the pleasures of now. It lives for money. It lives for prestige.

It lives for popularity. All those things. The Christian says I just. That's not me anymore. That's not. I'm not like that anymore. There's been a change in me. I live for Christ now.

I live to please him. In addition to this. And wonderfully. And that's why Paul goes on. And with this verse four we'll close. Because when Christ who is your life appears.

[27 : 42] Then you also will appear with him in glory. We're not only to keep in mind who we are now. But we're to keep in mind who we will be. We're to keep in mind our destination.

Our ultimate destiny. And our ultimate destiny is not to live in this world. Till we're 110 or whatever it may be. That's the end. Our destiny is not in this world. Our destiny is in glory.

And again it's a pretty simple principle isn't it? The destination to which you are heading controls the journey. My geography of the northeast at the moment is still pretty patchy.

But if I want to drive to Pickering. I know that I don't go down the Scarborough Road. And if I want to go to Scarborough. I don't follow the Gisborough Road.

And if I know I'm going to heaven. Then I don't go down the world's road. It's simple isn't it? It's straightforward. It's common sense.

[28 : 42] If I'm going to share in the glory of Jesus. When he comes again. Why would I go down the road of sin? Why would I go down the world of the world's way of living. And the way of life?

We aren't the people. This is what's going to be the main theme and thrust of all that Paul is going to be saying. We aren't the people we once were. We may look the same on the outside.

But dear friends we've been changed and transformed. And though at the moment it doesn't look all that different. The reality is that when Christ comes again.

We will look very different. And then we shall be amazed. And the world around us too. And I'll close with these verses from 1 John 3. Which again put this truth across to us.

How great is the love of the Father. That he's lavished on us. That we should be called children of God. For that is what we are. The reason the world does not know us.

[29 : 42] Is that it did not know him. Dear friends. Now we are children of God. And what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears.

We shall be like him. For we shall see him as he is. What's the consequence of this. Everyone who has this hope in him. Purifies himself.

Just as he is pure. Well let's pray together. You as a tribute. You is a beautiful. You are a photographers.

You are a als \$100. You are a distinguished spike ■■■. Most must have people. But here you will be on the show. Just as well. To look for the year is as an emergency glove.

Don'tório get Matt Ryan. You have anything to do?str bits here. Be puppies. Beats across your feet.