

Colossians 3:1-11 // You Can Change!

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Preacher: Martin Ayers

[0 : 00] Today's reading is from Colossians chapter 3 verses 1 to 11 and you can find that on page 1184 of your Bible.

Living as those made alive in Christ. 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 mind 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.

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 also rid yourselves of all such things as these.

[1 : 10] Anger, rage, malice, slander and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other since you have taken off your old self and its practices.

And have put on a new self which is being renewed in the knowledge and the image of its creator. Here there is no Gentile or Jew. Circumcised or uncircumcised.

Barbarian, Scythian, slave or free. But Christ is all and is in all. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks Matt very much for reading.

If we've not met I'm Martin. I'm the lead pastor here. It's great to see you. I think Yvonne Mildred is here. I think I saw it there waving. Yvonne Mildred, mission partner. Long time mission partner of St. Silas in Ghana.

Is now back for good from Ghana. So not retired I don't think. But retired from Ghana. So do greet Yvonne. And good to know that she's here.

[2 : 13] Quite a few Christmas jumpers on already. Not sure about that. Got served coffee on the 1st of November. By a guy in a Christmas jumper. I said what's going on here?

He said Halloween's done. Time for. So maybe it's fine. We're a month on from that. See what you think. But let's. If you could keep your Bibles open. That would be a great help.

Page 1184. In the church Bibles. And you can find an outline in the notice sheet. To follow as we go along. I think you found that helpful. So let's ask for God's help.

As we turn to his word. Let's pray. Heavenly Father. We pray. That you would give us ears ready to hear your word today. That you will give us minds set on your truth.

And you will enlarge our hearts and fill our hearts as we see Jesus. And the life you offer us in him. We ask this for Jesus name's sake.

[3 : 15] Amen. This time of year you find out words of the year. I don't know if you've seen that. It's often reported what's been a new or a refreshed word of the year.

And the Cambridge Dictionary word of the year this year is manifest. Being used in a new way. Which is when. As lots of you will know. When you fill your mind with something that you dream of.

And you long for. And believing that by filling your mind with it. You will increase the chances of it happening. That is manifesting. And Dua Lipa claims to have manifested performing at Glastonbury.

She dreamed of it for years. She wanted it. She filled her mind with it. And then she was invited to play at Glastonbury. Could happen to you. Could happen to any of us. So it's a very popular idea.

It's a trending idea. And if you think about it. What we're learning from the way that is being used. Is that we kind of believe as a culture. That what you fill your mind with is very important.

[4 : 16] And this morning. God calls us to a different kind of manifesting. So not filling your mind with what you really wish was true. As if that would change reality.

And the situations you're in. But rather to fill your mind with what is really true. Spiritual reality. Because doing that will change you.

It's a key moment. Because at this moment in Colossians. We could be wondering. Can we really change? Is progress in the Christian life possible? The Apostle Paul we've been hearing in recent weeks.

He wrote this letter to a church he'd never met in Colossians. They're a young church. And it's a letter of deep reassurance. For anyone who has heard the news about Jesus.

The gospel. The news about who Jesus is and what he's done. And has put their faith in that message. Because Paul has written to reassure. This group of people in Colossae. This young church.

[5 : 16] That they have all that they need in Christ. The gospel has done so much for them. Because it has planted them in Christ. Where they are safe and saved.

And they have hope for the future. And he said to them. Don't be misled away from Jesus. Chapter 2 verses 6 and 7. The key verses in the letter.

About how just as you've received Christ. As Lord. Continue. To live in Christ. Get rooted. Put your roots down. In him. That's the place to grow.

But then he's talked to them. And we've seen last week and the week before. There's this long warning in chapter 2. About not being misled. Into a sideways move.

Away from Jesus. And his particular concern there. Was human religion. That might draw us away. From Jesus. Or divert us. Distract us.

[6 : 09] From Jesus. And he talked about visionary experiences. That might be a sideways move. Or religious ceremonies. Or restrictive man-made rules.

On you. And he's been clear to say. That restrictive rules. Don't change you. They don't actually stop you from sinning. You can add all the restrictions you want in your life.

If you want to sin. In your heart. You'll still find a way. And so it would be natural. At the end of chapter 2. To be thinking. So what hope is there. For me to change.

In my life. And make progress. Well what does God say. Our first point this morning. Set your heart and mind. On Christ. So have a look with me again. At verses 1 and 2.

Of chapter 3. Since then. You have been raised with Christ. Set your hearts. On things above. Where Christ is. Seated.

[7 : 04] At the right hand of God. Set your minds. On things above. Not on earthly things. So the first thing to see here. Is there is a new focus.

For your life. And it's where Christ. Is. And he is. Verse 1. As high. As you can be. Seated at the right hand of God.

The place of greatest. Esteem. We heard in chapter 1. Verses 15 to 23. That Jesus is absolutely supreme. Everything was made through him. And it was made for him.

And so after God used him. To bring about this cosmic victory. Through his sin bearing death on the cross. He has ascended. He's risen. He's ascended. And he is seated.

At God's right hand. Far above. Donald Trump. Far above. Joe Biden. Far above. Vladimir Putin. Xi Jinping. Far above.

[7 : 58] Any of the awesome. Spiritual powers. That we don't see. But have dominion. He's above it all. Seated at God's right hand. And God commands us here. Verse 1.

It's striking. Because we haven't had many commands. In Colossians. We've not been told many things to do. But Colossians 3 verse 1. Commands us. Set your hearts. On things above.

Where Christ is. Fill your minds. With knowledge of Christ. And a bit like. When you go to a vending machine. And if you still use coins. At a vending machine. And you put the money in.

To get your drink or whatever. And sometimes the. The coin doesn't drop. Does it? And you have to kind of. Bash it on the side. I don't know if there's a more. Delicate way to do this. But in my experience.

You bash. The machine on the side. And the coin goes down. And you know. You can get your lucasid. And the. A bit like that. Paul wants. That. Our growing.

[8 : 53] We're to seek to grow. In our knowledge of Christ. But that knowledge. Is not to stay. Just in our heads. As a cerebral knowledge. But is to sink. In. It's to go deep.

Into our hearts. The coin has to drop. So that. Our desires. Are redirected. Towards. Christ. Our affections. Are stirred.

And turned. Towards him. Our magnificent. Saviour. And this fits. With what Paul has been. Teaching us so far. In the letter. So. He's already. Disclosed for us. Right at the beginning. That there is. Hope for progress. Because of his great prayer. In chapter 1. Verses 9 to 14. For the Colossians. We thought about. As our KFC prayer. Knowledge. Of God's will. That would bring. A fruitful life. A life worthy of the Lord. A life pleasing to the Lord. And that. That was the. What he actually. He longs for them. [9 : 48] To live a fruitful life. But what he prays for. Is they be filled with a knowledge. Of God's plan in Christ. It's that knowledge. Sinking into our hearts. That changes us.

And so here. We see. When you set your mind. On things above. On Christ. So that your heart. Is set ablaze. By him. And your affections. Are won over by him. And when you do that. Personal transformation. Can happen. A new focus. And there's more here. Paul says. We're to focus on a new reality. For ourselves. Hidden. With Christ. Look at verse two again. Set your minds. On things above. Not on earthly things. For you died. And your life. Is now hidden. With Christ. In God. So what does that mean? Maybe. To us. It just sounds like. Just words. Too abstract. Conceptual. [10 : 42] But let's unpack it. He's saying. When you become a Christian. You are united. To Christ. And so. When he died. On the cross. For your sins. You died.

Spiritually. Your old self. The self that lived for you. Has died. And when he rose. From the dead. When God raised him. You. From the moment. You put your faith in Christ. You were raised. You are spiritually alive. Even while you still wait. For your resurrection body. And that future hope. You're alive now. And when you. Follow that through. To where Jesus is now. After his ascension. And you fix your mind. On where Christ is. At God's right hand. Verse three is saying. You're actually there as well. In Christ. You're in the same place. As him. Spiritually. That is true. And you are to think of yourself. In that reality. And this phrase. [11 : 39] That your life is now hidden. With Christ. In God. Is very special. In the Psalms. In Psalms 27 and 31. When God says he will hide someone.

It's a picture of him. Personally protecting them. Nothing can harm you. If God has hidden you. In his hand. So God is saying. Christian. I've hidden you. And you're safe here. In my hand. And there's more here. I think. Through the prophet Isaiah. God gave us four songs. About a servant figure. They're looking ahead. To the Messiah. Who's coming. And the servant songs. In Isaiah. The second one. Talks about the servant. Being hidden by God. It's Isaiah 49. And I think it's worth us turning to. So if you just. Turn in your Bibles. To page 737. Page 737. Page 737. [12 : 36] It's Isaiah chapter 49. If you're using a phone or something instead. Isaiah 49. And it talks about Israel here.

And Israel. Is all. The Old Testament people of God. If they're faithful. They're waiting for God's promises to be fulfilled. So Isaiah 49 here. From page 736. This is written in the past tense. But it's. Sometimes we call it the prophetic past tense. So Isaiah is foretelling what will happen. But because he's a prophet. With such certainty. He writes it as though it's already happened. And here he's using. It's the servant speaking. So this is a prophecy about Jesus. The Messiah. Speaking. If you look at verse 2. He's describing what God has done for him. Verse 2. He says. He made my mouth. Like a sharpened sword. [13 : 41] In the shadow of his hand. He hid me. He made me into a polished arrow. And concealed me. In his quiver. He said to me.

You are my servant. He calls him Israel. Because he's the faithful Israel. That Israel had never managed to be. You are my servant Israel. In whom I will display my splendor. And then you get this extraordinary moment. Of. It's like self-doubt. From the Messiah. Of. Has my work really achieved everything? Verse 4. But I said. I have labored in vain. I've spent my strength for nothing at all. But then crucially. He entrusts his mission. To God. Yet what is due to me. Is in the Lord's hand.

And my reward. Is with my God. So he waits. Hidden. And then suddenly. The Lord declares. The time has come.

[14:38] If you look at verse 5. And now. The Lord says. He who formed me in the womb. To be his servant. To bring Jacob back to himself. And gather Israel to himself.

For I am honored. In the eyes of the Lord. And my God. Has been my strength. He says. It is too small a thing. For you to be my servant.

To restore the tribes of Jacob. And bring back those of Israel. I've kept. I will also make you a light. For the Gentiles. That my salvation. May reach to the ends.

Of the earth. And then look at the promise to Jesus. In verse 7. Kings will see you. And stand up. Princes will see. And bow down. Because of the Lord.

Who is faithful. The Holy One of Israel. Who has chosen you. So you see what he's saying. Israel is waiting for this savior. God the Father.

[15:33] Is so deeply impressed. By his servant. The Messiah. That he resolves to glorify him. By saving the world. By saving people from all over the world.

Through him. And so today. We live in the kind of conflation. Of these events. Some of them have happened. Some have not yet happened. Jesus is right now.

Hidden from us. By God. Like Legolas. Would hide away. A polished arrow. In his quiver. Like a strong man. Would conceal something. Very precious.

In his hand. Where you can't see it. But as God is building. His church today. As people are coming. To know Jesus. He's fulfilling. Verse six. Of this prophecy.

His salvation. Is going out. To the ends of the world. So that one day. God is going to reveal. Jesus. In all his glory. And say.

[16:28] Look at him. And. Everyone. Will honor him. Every knee will bow. So what does Paul mean. In Colossians chapter three. When he says.

Your life. Is hidden with Christ. In God. Well because you are in Christ. God is hiding you. With Christ. And when he reveals Jesus.

To the world. In glory. And majesty. You will share. In that glory. As he is honored. And vindicated. And we his people.

Are revealed. Transformed. To be holy. And sinless. And glorious. And all our efforts. To make him known. To share that mission.

To make Jesus known. To the ends of the earth. All of it. Will be vindicated. The world. Doesn't yet see. The glory. Of God's children. Your life. Is now hidden.

[17:21] With Christ. In God. The world. Thinks nothing. Of Jesus. Right now. His glory. Is hidden. It will be displayed. It's being.

Held back. But the day is coming. And Paul says. Keep looking forward. To that day. When he is revealed. And your glory is revealed. A new future.

In verse four. Have a look. When Christ. Who is your life. Appears. Then you also. Will appear with him. In glory. So Paul's saying.

Keep looking up. Keep. Filling your mind. With this. Keep looking ahead. Look up to where Christ is now. Look ahead. To the day of his glory. Know that in Jesus.

You'll share. In that glory. That's our first point. And it's lofty. Isn't it? A command. To fix your mind. On Christ. Where he is. To reflect.

[18:17] You're there with him. To contemplate. Your future with him. When he appears. And these lofty ideas. They are the key. To down to earth.

Change. In your life. At Christmas. There's a classic. Kind of story. A Christmas carol. Does it. And it's a wonderful life. Just chatting to Malcolm. At the front of you. He's saying.

I'm really looking forward. To going to see. It's a wonderful life. Again at the cinema. This Christmas. Lots of people do that. And these kind of stories. They have something in common. Which is that.

Someone. Changes. Someone's life. Is transformed. Because. They're given. A supernatural. Insight. Into who they really are. So if you think about.

A Christmas carol. Scrooge. Reveals. To. Sorry. The ghosts of Christmas. Past. Present. And future. Revealed to Scrooge. Who he was.

[19:11] Who he is. The future. He keeps going. The way he is. And it. It changes him. The supernatural. Insight. And it's a wonderful life. It's a guardian angel.

Who comes. And shows George Bailey. Who he really is. And reveals to him. What Bedford Falls. His hometown. Would be like. If he hadn't been there. And he's contemplating. Ending his life. And he. He rediscovers. From this insight. His self-worth. And he exclaims. I want to live again. And Colossians chapter 3. Is giving us. That kind of process. For the Christian. The Holy Spirit. Today. Lifting the veil. On what is spiritually. True for you. Of your past. That you've died in Christ. Of your present. That your life is now hidden. In Christ. And your future. When Christ appears. So that you can exclaim. I want to live. I choose to live out. [20 : 08] A new life. I want to be godly. I want to live a life. That pleases God. Because this is now who I am. I've seen that now. So Paul says. Therefore.

Become a ruthless killer. That's our second point. Rid yourself. Of what you once were. Your old self. Paul describes our sinful desires. In a few different ways. If you look down. In verse 5. He says. It's your earthly nature. In verse 7. The life you once lived. In verse 9. It's your old self. So this is not an inner battle. Between two. Equally powerful. Living personalities. In us. In conflict. Rather. The old self in us. Is a defeated enemy. It's not who we are anymore. And Paul says. Show no mercy. Those three words. In verse 5. Put to death. Put to death. [21 : 02] Therefore. Whatever belongs. To your earthly nature. And then he gives us. Two lists of five. The first are things that are toxic. For your soul.

And the next five are things that are toxic. For the fellowship. So first. Put to death. The things that are toxic. For your soul. It's for good reason. That he picks out. Sex. And greed. Sex. And money. Verse 5. Put to death. Sexual. Immorality. Impurity. Lust. Evil desires.

And greed. Which is idolatry. Because of these. The wrath of God. Is coming. Addressing here Christians. I think the point here. Not being that you. You need to be in terror. Of the wrath of God. Coming to you. But that when Christ. When God. Brings his judgment. On the world. We will see. His righteous wrath. [21 : 56] Against these things. How incongruous. It would be. If when people. Then see his people. We're living in just the same way. We're no different. Paul wants radical action.

From you and me. He doesn't say. Don't worry too much about those besetting sins. I mean. You're only human. It's inevitable. No. He says. Take the axe out. On sexual immorality. On all sexual activity. Outside of Christian marriage. Don't indulge it. Put it to death. If you're in a relationship. Where. Physically. You've been going too far. Take action. Draw a line under it. Verse seven. You used to walk in these ways. In the life. You once lived. If you've been using pornography. Paul says. [22 : 52] It's not who you are anymore. It's a way you used to walk in. It's not who you are now. Tell yourself. This is not my life. This is not inevitable. This is not who I am.

You know. When you get. Fish and chips. At the seaside. And the seagulls gather. You know. My girls. Sometimes think. Well maybe if we just give them a chip. They'll go away. Right. Which would just never work. Would it? If you give them chips. More of them will appear. With renewed passion. And so it is for us. With our sinful desires. That we can think. If I just indulge them a little bit. They'll go away. It never works. We have to be like the cold. Merciless sniper. When it comes to our sin. We make no place for it. If greed is the issue. How about. Give your money away. Jesus says.

[23 : 48] Where your treasure is. There your heart will be. So if you've got treasure. And you're thinking about. The holidays. And the cars. And the clothes. What about. Giving it away.

To gospel work. And then your heart. Will be for the gospel work. Instead. And the word we have here. Is evil desires. Is a word.

What's being translated there. Is a word that just means. Over desires. So he's not talking about. Kind of evil desires. As in you get up in the morning. You go out. And you think. I just want to. I want to kill these people. I want to harm them.

Rather. It's that we. We see the good things. In God's good world. But we desire them too much. Out of proportion. So that. We start to worship them.

Instead of God. And we believe. The lie. Therefore. That. If we say no. To those things. We will. Lose our happiness. We will be unhappy.

[24 : 43] By. Not having those things. And. All through. Colossians. We've seen that's a lie. Because the mark. Of the mature Christian. Is that they're like. Victoria Falls.

In overflowing. With thankfulness. And joy. If we will make room. In our hearts. They will be filled. With the joy. And thankfulness. That we can find.

In setting our minds. And hearts. On. Christ. Next. He says. Get rid of. What is toxic. To the fellowship. So let's pick up. Things again.

In verse 8. Strong language. Again. Verse 8. But now. You must also. 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've taken off. Your old self. With its practices. And have put on.

[25 : 37] The new self. So the focus now. Is on anger. And it's on our words. And we're seeing here. That being a truly spiritual person. Is about the whole of life.

It's about. Our ability to do relationships. Being restored. As sin is taken away. And that's important. Because we've seen already in Colossians.

That the church. God's new community. Is his first glimpse. Of the future. That he's building. So in verse 8. He mentions anger. Or rage.

Whether you're someone. Who lashes out. At other people. Maybe behind closed doors. In the home. Or you're someone. Who lets your anger. Fester away. Paul says.

It destroys. It's a relationship wrecker. Rid yourself of it. Make no place for that. Then it's our words. Malice.

[26 : 33] And slander. And we might think. We're just. Getting something off our chest. We're just. Unburdening. Of ourselves. Of something. When we. Speak badly. Of somebody else. Well.

Is it harming them. What we're saying about them. Is it gossip. Is it speaking unfairly. About someone else. The Lord says. As a community.

Of his people. We are to rid ourselves. Of that. Then filthy language. Swearing. And lies. Saying things.

That are not true. True. So Paul is painting. A picture here. Of a community. Where you can trust. The word. Of the people around you. That it will be true. And you can trust.

What they'll be. Be saying about you. When you're not there. And where people know. Of you and me. That we will. Tell the truth. Even when. It's really embarrassing.

[27 : 28] Even when we have to say. Look. This is really embarrassing. But I'm not going to lie to you. I've messed up. Spectacularly. I've done this. That we would be. Honest.

With our words. So that's our second point. Become a ruthless. Killer. Of your old self. And maybe it helps. Each of us. To think. Which one of these.

Ten things. Specifically. Am I going to focus. On eradicating. Right now. In my Christian life. Rather than thinking. Yeah. I'm in a battle with sin. Let's be specific.

With ourselves. And. The ruthless. Elimination. Of. What. In your life. What's vital. This morning. Is we see the connection. Between points one. And points two. That none of us. Sins out of duty.

We. We don't feel. A responsibility. To sin. We sin. Because of desires.

[28 : 23] And we can't. Change. Therefore. By just trying to. Stop ourselves. Having desires. We have desires. But we can change. When we direct. Our desires.

Towards Christ. When our hearts. Are more full of Jesus. And more full of our hope. In Jesus. Then. Our desires. Are redirected. To seek him.

And seek to live. In a way that pleases him. And we don't want to sin. Anymore. So we return to that. In our third point. More briefly. Thirdly. Take hold of who you now are.

Your new self. So Paul describes. In verse 10. That we have a new power. To change. And he says. You've put on the new self. Which is being renewed.

In knowledge. In the image of its creator. So who's. Who's doing that renewing. Of the new self. In verse 10. It's God. God at work in us. As we grow in our knowledge. Of him.

[29 : 17] And that gives us the power. To change. It's God at work in us. And he works. By taking. Moving us. To take hold of our new identity.

In Christ. So. In verse 11. Paul points to the different things. That could divide. A first century. Community. And he says. Verse 11. Here there is no Gentile or Jew. Circumcised or uncircumcised. Barbarian. Scythian. Slave or free. But Christ is all. And is in all. And today. In our world. We're not much different to that. In that. The things that divide us. The things people will say. Give us our. Identity. That define us. Our religious backgrounds. Our ethnicity. Our nationality. Our social status. Paul says. Those things don't define you anymore. There is none of that here. In this community. Because Christ is everything. [30 : 17] And he's in. He's in everyone. So today we hear people say. You do you. That's a kind of. Big phrase for our times. You do you. And Paul says. In Colossians 3.

Christian. You do the new you. Live out who you really are now. In Christ. Some years ago. There was a footballer. Nicky Barnby. He was from Hull. And he became. In football terms. What we sometimes call. A journeyman. In the football world. Where he was bought and sold. By a few different clubs. Everton. Middlesbrough. Spurs. Liverpool. Leeds. And at Leeds. He had an unhappy time. It was. It was difficult for him. He was not valued. And then. Hull City. Came in and signed him. Now. I'm already realising. Some of you thinking. This is not very interesting. Because it's. You know. It's Hull. And it's Leeds. And it. But in Yorkshire. Right. [31 : 09] This is life and death. Right. Leeds and Hull. And Nicky Barnby made the switch. From Leeds. To Hull. And Leeds. And Leeds. And Leeds were playing. Hull. One night. At Elland Road. At Leeds.

As ground. Under the floodlights. Full stadium. And it was full of. Vitriolic hatred. Towards Nicky Barnby. He now played for the other team. And. Songs. Gia's. I mean. Immense. Hatred. Nasty things being sung about him. And. At one stage. Hull got a corner. And Nicky Barnby takes the corners. Right. So he's walking. To take this corner. But the corner he walked up to. Was the little bit of the ground. Where the Hull City fans were. So they were singing his name. And singing. You know. He's one of our own. He's from Hull. So he's back home. And as he walks up to the corner flag. With all this jeering going on. All around him. What does he do? He kisses his badge. [32 : 05] On his shirt. Because he's saying in defiance. This is where I belong now. These are my people. And this is who I am. I used to wear the lead shirt.

But they sold me. And now I'm home. And for the Christian. We have that new kind of identity. That kind of transformation has happened. To each of us. It's as though we used to have a shirt that we wore. That said I live for myself. And now we have a shirt that says. I was bought for a great price. The banner over our life says under new ownership. We used to wear a shirt that said lost. I don't know who I belong to really. And now we wear a shirt that says. I'm home now. Christ is my life. And Colossians 3 is saying. Wear the new shirt. Don't go back. Put to death any desire you have still to play for the other team. [33 : 05] You don't play for them anymore. You don't belong to them now. Fill your mind with your present reality. And your future glory. And you do the new you. Let's pray together.

We'll just have a moment of quiet. To reflect on what God has been saying personally to each of us. Through his word. Mighty God and loving heavenly father. These are lofty realities. But they are wonderful realities. And we pray you would help us to take hold of them. Give us the resolve we pray. To set our minds on things above where Christ is. And set our hearts on things above. Where our lives are now hidden with Christ. By you. We pray that your spirit will fix our eyes and our thoughts on Christ. And on the future we will share with him when he appears in glory. [34 : 16] So that we would now live lives that are fitting. For people for whom these things are true. That we will be people who put to death.

Whatever belongs to our earthly nature. That we will rid ourselves of sexual impurity. And greed. And anger and malice and lies. That we might live lives that please you. Lives that are fitting. As those who have now put on the new self. That you are renewing. And we ask these things in Jesus name.

Amen.