

Colossians 3

Part 1

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Note: This text is a computer generated transcript of the sermon. In some cases it may contain errors.

[00:00:00] Gnessians, Chapter 3, Verse 1 If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth, on the right hand of God.

Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth.

We are dead and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

Verse 12 Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and in love, vows of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, forbearing one another and forgiving one another.

If any man have a quarrel against any, even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.

[00:01:09] And above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfectness.

Let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body, and be ye thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. That whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him.

[00:02:11] I want to speak to you tonight from these well-known verses, which I must confess have engaged me quite a little late.

But the Lord Jesus seems to have impressed them upon me in the last few days in an entirely new way. And I want to speak to you of the two spheres which obtain in our day and the way in which those spheres are dealt with in divine resources.

[00:03:01] You will remember that the last verse of the book of Judges relates that in that day there was no king in Israel.

Every man did what was right in his own eyes. That in itself is serious enough, and it speaks very loudly of the moral condition in which we are found today.

A condition of spiritual amity.

Every man doing what is right in his own eyes.

That is serious, but the next book, the book of Ruth, opens with a more serious note.

[00:04:05] We are told of a man called Elimelech, whose very name means, whose God is King.

And he was an Ephraimite of Bethlehem Judah, one of the most privileged sections of God's people.

And he was not at all in the good, either of what his name signified or of the circumstances in which the government of God had placed him.

The Holy Spirit is most careful in the language he uses.

He not only left Bethlehem Judah and went to Moab, but he evidently found it to his taste, for it says he continued there.

[00:05:06] He continued there.

Beloved brethren, what one is concerned about is that we might be delivered from this principle of spiritual anarchy, doing what is right in our own eyes.

And be found responsive to the wonderful truth that God has illumined our souls with.

The circumstances in which divine mercy and surpassing grace has placed us in the vicinity of Bethlehem Judah.

Bethlehem Judah, what a wonderful expression.

It is where the one came from who was here for the pleasure of God, and who would maintain the praise of God as Judah sacrificed.

[00:06:11] And so I want to speak to you of the two elements, the two features of kingdoms which are found in this world.

And I want to speak of the way in which they are dealt with by divine resources through Christ. Let me say at the outset I don't want anyone here to think that I am forgetting that to the assembly the Lord is Lord, and not exactly King.

But I want to speak of the King as one who has rights, rights that must be accepted and respected.

The first king in scripture is named Rebel. That's his name. Rebel.

[00:07:06] He was marked by rebellion against God. And the beginning of his kingdom was rebellion too. Disorder, moral depravity. He himself a murderer and a polygamist.

Moral disorder which has increased right on to this day, creeping as it has into the circle of profession.

And it will end as we know according to scripture in the one who says I am a queen and no widow.

Rides apparently victorious, trampling as she would if she could underfoot all that is holy and precious in the sight of God. [00:08:04] But God has his king and he's going to bring him in. Let us have no doubt about that.

God has his king and the next king mentioned in scripture is the King of Righteousness and of Salem of Peace. And wherever Melchizedek is noticed, that order is preserved.

He is Melchizedek which means the King of Righteousness and he is also King of Salem, the King of Peace. And if the confusion which man's king has brought into this world is to be dealt with, it must be dealt with on a righteous basis before there can be peace in place of confusion. God has his king in mind.

He says in the second psalm, the kings of the earth have gathered themselves together against God and against his anointed.

[00:09:12] It says they have set themselves.

That word set is a most peculiar word, one of the most important words in scripture. It is in the middle voice, it is reflexive and it reflects the glory back upon the one who does it. And these kings in setting themselves were glorifying themselves and that in itself dear brethren is an insult to God himself. And if there is any principle in our hearts of self-exaltation, we are on the line of that which is contrary to the will and the mind and the heart of God. But God says, he brings in his king.

Yet have I set my king, what does the word say, I have anointed my king. [00:10:04] He has brought in Christ, God's anointed.

And I haven't the slightest doubt in my own mind that in the second psalm it is a reference not to the incarnation only but to the resurrection. As we read in Paul's address at Antioch, it is when Christ was raised up in resurrection, a blessed victorious man over all the death and confusion that man's king had brought in. It is then that God says, this day thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee.

And wherever that is referred to, you find the same expression, God has set him at his right hand. A reflexive verb again is glorifying himself in doing it. And all that God has done in bringing Christ in is to glorify himself, to glorify himself. [00:11:06] Ah beloved brethren, I make no apology for this simple word.

It's not exactly doctrinal but I trust it's full of Christology. That the blessed saviour might be endeared to our hearts as the one who is here to glorify God. God's blessed son, the Christ of God.

Zechariah 9 chapter 9 and verse 9 I think it is, speaks of your king who is coming to you, lowly riding upon an ass, having salvation.

And there again it is the same word, the very same word. Salvation is set in that blessed person, it's God's salvation not only our salvation. God has come in to vindicate himself in the presence of all that man has brought in. [00:12:03] And he's doing it in the lowly Christ, he's doing it in the exalted, the risen Christ at God's right hand. This day have I begotten thee, what a glorious day when God's king

was sat down on the right hand of God. Having made a show openly of all that are opposed to God. A blessed man risen there in mighty power to hold the whole scene for the glory of God. I love to think of the Trinity, we read of God, the God of glory and we read of the glory of God.

We read of the Lord of glory and we read of the glory of the Lord.

We read of the Lord, the spirit of glory but we never read of the glory of the spirit. The spirit is not here to glorify himself, it is here to glorify that blessed man, the man at God's right hand. [00:13:07] The spirit of glory rests upon us, as Peter says, in order that our affections might be already touched with the preciousness of that glorious man at God's right hand. God's beloved son, this day, he says, have I begotten thee. The pains of death were loosened. The panoply of the devil was taken away completely. We have a defeated foe.

The word panoply is only used twice. It says when a man keepeth his goods, his palace, his goods are in peace, until a stronger than he comes upon him and takes away his panoply in which he trusted. The devil has been stripped of his armour and there has been provided for you and me, as I might point out later, a whole panoply of God to put on in order that we might enjoy victory over all that Satan has brought in [00:14:03] and be found in triumph with Christ filling our hearts and the glory of God shining on our path. So beloved, if in the book of Ruth we find at the commencement, under blessing of course, as I often do, I haven't got to Colossians yet, but beloved, in the beginning of Ruth, if you get a man who is not true to his name, how easy it is for us not to be true to our names as Christians. Christian is only mentioned three times in scripture, twice as to be known, twice as to share the sufferings of Christ. And this man wasn't prepared for it.

He says the meeting is dropping down, there's nobody left, it's a front end condition, I'm going into the world. [00:15:01] All young people keep away from the world. It isn't only the evil of the world. It doesn't say that Demas loved this present evil world. You may not love the evil of it, but it says of Demas that he loved this present world. He went away from the ministry of Christ which was in the heart of Paul. Beloved young people, hold tenaciously to the friendship of those who exhort Christ. Keep near to those who are spiritually your superiors. Hold on to those who magnify the blessed son of God in all his eternal preciousness.

God has but one man before him, one blessed man, and he wants just you and I to have just one blessed man before us. And so at the end of Ruth, God reaches his objective.

The last word in Ruth's book is the key to the whole book.

[00:16:03] The last word in Ruth's is David.

God has reached his beloved.

David was not yet born, but God has reached him. He was ever before the mind of God, before the incarnation. In the 110th Psalm, I mean in the 8th of Proverbs, he says that I was set before thee, the same word again.

I was set before thee from before the foundation of the world. He was set there as the one who would reflect glory upon the blessed God and upon himself. God reaches him.

David is brought in.

And objectively God has reached David. His choice is beloved for the David. David's name means beloved of course. He's reached his beloved son objectively.

And so in the first book of Samuel, having reached himself objectively, he begins to work it out in the subjective hearts of the saints. [00:17:11] He takes up the resources by which he does it. He takes up hammer.

Hammer means the grace of God.

And my beloved brethren, it is in the grace of God that we have sufficient resource to hold us in our affections true to Christ right unto the end. This precious book is full of matter which engages the heart.

Some time ago I gave an address on the last verse in the Bible. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with all the saints. Think of it.

After all that has been displayed and revealed, there remains the immeasurable and alterable grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. The fullness of resource of the blessed God. [00:18:01] Not only for you and me but for all the saints. In the millions of saints on the earth today, there is sufficient grace in this blessed person to meet every contingency. The resources are immeasurable.

Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

What a verse. What an end of the scripture. What a wonderful finality of the Holy Spirit. As he says, after all that I have been saying to you in this book in relation to Christ and the revelation that he has made and the ways and purposes of God with his ancient people and his church, there remains a fullness and ocean of grace for grace is but love in movement. That's all it is.

Grace is there in all its fullness and blessedness to meet every contingency and hold every heart true to Christ. And so hammer is taken up. And in the second chapter of the first book of Samuel, we get the most peculiar statement.

[00:19:03] It says this is the prayer of Anna. And you can read that prayer and she never asked for a single thing. Not one single thing.

She asked for nothing at all. All she was doing was pulling at her heart to God for his blessed purpose. And you know, the last word of her prayer is the key.

The last word of Anna's prayer is Christ.

Yes, anointed.

Same word.

Anointed Messiah Christ. The same word in three languages. And the very last word in her prayer is anointed. She's reached Christ.

Beloved brethren, it's not only that God has reached him as his beloved son in David, but in the infinitude of his grace he would have you and me. He would have each one of us to reach Christ in our hearts. The oil that we might be here set for his glory.

[00:20:03] I don't want to strain the scripture, but we were speaking in the home the other day. It says in the first book of Samuel that God gave Anna three sons and two daughters in place of Samuel.

And she then took a lord.

Three and two and one made six.

But she says there was not the barren to bear seven. Oh, she's looking beyond all that's human. She's looking to the perfection of the one. The seventh, she's looking to Christ. She's reaching on.

She reaches him in the last words of her prayer. God has reached his anointed. Anna has reached his anointed. And beloved brethren, in the grace of God, you and I can meet and reach his anointed tonight.

What is Christ to your heart, dear young brother, young sister? What is Christ to your heart? [00:21:02] Is he someone you hear spoken of in the meetings? Or is he someone that excludes everyone else from your heart and ambitions and desires? Anna looked on to Christ, I believe.

In actual history, of course, she was looking on to the one whom Samuel was anointed, to David, to God's beloved. But, my beloved brethren, I delight to see the last word of her prayer. She's reached God's anointed. She's reached Christ in her affections. Now I desire through this simple address that every one of us here tonight might reach Christ in a living and blessed and excluding way.

That we might be content with that blessed person to fill our hearts. And so I come now to Colossians, the doctrinal part of it, if you like.

[00:22:02] If he then be risen with Christ, the word if in scripture and of course elsewhere has two meanings. It's not an if of doubt, it's an if of consequence.

This is a consequential. Call your risen with Christ.

This is the position that God has put us into. This is our standing.

And the Holy Spirit is here in order that our state might be equal to our standing.

If he then be risen with Christ.

Seek those things which are above. You dear young fellows and girls, you have more opportunity than whenever I have in studying grammar at your schools. And one of the most important parts of scripture are the active verbs. There are verbs of quietude.

For instance it says be still and know that I am God.

[00:23:02] Not be still and be lazy, but be still and know that I am God. Quiescent.

Shut up in solitude to God.

But there are active verbs.

At the end of the church's history, at the end of the apostles' history rather, he's insisting upon Timothy taking account of the active verbs. Leave, pursue, continue.

These active verbs.

And here's an active verb, seek.

These things don't drop into your laps like apples from a tree.

They're to be sought after. And having said what I've said about these kings and God's resources to bring you to his own thoughts in Christ, I want to urge upon you now that you might be active to seek the things which are above. Go in for them.

Not to just wait for someone to say something that might interest you, but to really seek them for yourselves. [00:24:06] I remember an old regimental sergeant major, and they were very nice fellows, you know, generally, but he used to say to the intakes when they came in, what have you had for your breakfast this morning? And they used to say, oh, I mean, what have you had for your soul? What have you been feeding on? What have you been seeking? And I would like to press it home, especially for you young people, but upon us older ones as well. What are we seeking after?

What is our objective? If God has reached David, his beloved son, if he has given us grace, as Anna had, to reach Christ, have we reached him? Have we the desire to reach him? Seek those things which are above. But really go in for them.

You make them your own. A brother came to me once, and he said, Mr. Eubanks, you would only tell the young people what your thoughts on Ephesians are. [00:25:02] I said, stop. I don't want the young people to be controlled by my thoughts on Ephesians. Not a bit of it.

I want them to read Ephesians for themselves and get the Spirit's thoughts. And I want you young people to read your Bibles and to let your hearts seek the things that the Bible speaks of. The Holy Spirit is down here.

But he is here to glorify Christ. He is here to engage our hearts with Christ. I know this is simple. I know you've heard it before. But may God bring it right home to every heart in these Laodicean days. These days of lukewarmness. In the city of Laodicea, the springs were neither hot nor cold. They were lukewarm, the actual springs. And that's the condition of things that was coming into the assembly. The conditions that marked the city were coming into the assembly. And the things that mark the city today. Indolence.

Samskirian, as we used to say in the war. Couldn't care less. All this is coming in. [00:26:02] And over against that the Holy Spirit is pleading that you might be marked by this active love to seek the things that are above. And you know we have the divine promise that if we seek we shall find. Seek those things which are above. Christianity, my beloved brethren, is not mere theory.

Christianity is concrete.

It consists in things.

May I suggest to you a subject for you to study?

Go through the very many times in scripture and all things are connected with Christ. It will amaze you.

It will amaze you.

But make it your own.

Remember the woman in the fourth of John? She says, we know that when Messiah cometh, which is the Christ, he will tell us all things. [00:27:02] Yes. But she didn't stop there.

When she contacted him herself, and when he poured his grace into her heart, she goes to the men of the city and she says, come see a man which has told me all things that ever I did. Is not this the Christ?

All things are connected with Christ. God has set him above all things. He's put all things into his hands. You can go through the scriptures and find over and over again how all things, whatever you may want, whatever you may need, whatever you may want personally or collectively or domestically or in your business, whatever you may need at your college, at your school, they're all to be found in Christ. So God has put all things into his blessed hands. Seek those things, those concrete matters.

And where are they?

[00:28:01] They're above.

They're morally elevated. The things down here won't satisfy you at all. Nothing but impurity.

Nothing but departure from God.

The very devil himself.

The prince of this age.

What's he seeking to do?

To defile the name of the Lord Jesus before men. That's the condition of things.

You know, he's never called the prince of this world or the prince of power of the age or the god of this world until first the Israelites had rejected Christ. Notice that.

It was the world that had rejected Christ that put itself under the principedom of Satan. And scholars here will know that the word prince in scripture involves something even higher than a king. [00:29:03] He's the prince of the power of the air. The very air around us is contagious with the awful blasphemy

and loyals of the devil in order that our hearts might be weaned away from the concrete blessedness that exists in Christ. Those things which are morally elevated, we're to be engaged with those things. You know, in the book of the Revelation, at the end of the church's history, the next words are, come up hither.

And that's where we're going soon. Thank God we're going there soon. And we're going to see everything that happens down here from that vantage point up there. But beloved, morally we can see it now.

Because we have the Spirit. And He will engage our hearts with that blessed man. And give us to see the emptiness of everything here. [00:30:03] And the blessedness of all that God is securing for Himself. Come, He says, and I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife. The compliment of Christ.

But you know, we're never told to look at the harlot. We're never told to be occupied with the evil. Come, He says, and I will show you the sentence of the great harlot. We're not to be occupied with the religious profession around us which denies the preciousness of Christ. We're to be occupied with the supreme blessedness of Christ Himself. He has in mind, you know, as we are engaged with those things above, He has in mind as we shall see in those latter verses of Colossians that I read, that we might come out in the features of Christ Himself. Did you notice those things that are said of the saints there? They're all said of Christ. Elect.

[00:31:01] Holy. Beloved.

These are the things that are said of the saints. And if you take the pastoral epistles at the end of the age, Jude and James and John's epistles too, you will find the word beloved in relation to the saints more than anywhere else in scripture. At the end of the age, the Holy Spirit is reminding the saints that if Christ is God's beloved, they also are beloved. They're accepted in the beloved. They're beloved brethren.

Elect.

Holy. Beloved.

These are the features that came out in all their perfection in Christ. I want to say this to you.

That God will never form in me any feature by the Spirit until He shows me that feature in all its perfection in Christ objectively. I once said that in a meeting when a brother immediately challenged me. [00:32:02] He said, what about discipleship? I felt flawed for the moment.

What about discipleship? Was Christ a disciple? You say that God will never form any feature in me until He shows it in me perfectly in Christ? And the Lord said to me as I sat on that seat, read Isaiah Samson. Look at Mr. Darby's footnote.

He opened my ear morning by morning to hear as he instructed. Same word as disciple. And it stood fast.

He was here to learn obedience.

To move here in absolute dependance. In total subjection to the will of God. God would engage your hearts with Christ in order that you, in order that I might come out like Him. Be loved.

Have you ever thought, dear brethren, that when Christ takes His church from this world He'll take her out in exactly the same moral condition in which He went Himself? [00:33:05] Listen.

He offered Himself without spot by the eternal Spirit of God.

When He presents the church to Himself, He presents it without spot. And we shall go out exactly morally conformed to His blessed image. We shall go out.

Not only physically, not only in our bodies conformed to His image, but morally exactly like that beloved man.

He was without spot before God.

There never was a spot in Him. You don't find spots mentioned in relation to the sacrifices till you come to the book of Numbers. You get the defects and blemishes of no spots. The outward spot is contracted by our passage through this world, as Numbers suggested. But He went through without a spot. And every spot is going to be removed in order that we might be presented without spot, all glorious to the heart of Christ.

[00:34:05] These are blessed things, dear brethren. I know they're not new, but I trust they're fresh and living and powerful. We're to be engaged with things of God.

Yes. Where Christ sits, the work is finished.

He's sitting in a place that is unique to Himself. No one else will ever be on the right hand of God. It's unique to Christ. He's sitting there.

His work is finished.

Perfect.

Nothing to be added to. Nothing to be taken from. To let us stay, He cries as He went into the darkness.

As He came from the darkness, it is finished. But you know, a connotation of that word, to let us stay, is seen when it says that God will perfect His work in the saints. [00:35:02] The same word.

God is going to say to let us stay over every one of the saints. The work is finished. It's completed.

Completed to His glory. He alone could say it in atonement. Through the power of the Spirit, God will perfect in you and in me, every feature that He has in mind of forming us after Christ. What a blessed prospect.

Where Christ sits at God's right hand, all the powers there below Him. The powers there.

Wonderful power in the right hand of God.

Daniel felt it.

Millions more have felt it.

The right hand of God in bereavement, in sorrow, in difficulty, in failure.

The preciousness of God's right hand of power.

That wonderful power in that right hand.

[00:36:04] You know, He touched the leper.

He didn't just touch him like that, you know. He said He freely handled him.

The only hand that had power to touch that which was contagious without being contaminated.

The preciousness of the hand that holds us.

Going across the Atlantic some years ago, a heavy storm came along. And a young Jewess said to me, do you think the ship will go down? Well, I said, supposing it does? She said, well, we'll all be drowned, won't we? I said, well, yes. But you know what will happen to me? She said, what? I said, I shall just fall into the hands of my Saviour for He holds all the water in the hollow of His hand. Oh, what a blessed, glorious Saviour we have, the Christ of God. Some of the things from above for a few moments.

Peace is there.

[00:37:01] He's made peace by the blood of His cross. The God of Peace is there.

Do you know that the title God of Peace is the most frequent title given to God in the New Testament? I'm not speaking of His name as Father and so on, but there's no title used of God so many times in the New Testament as the God of Peace. Men are seeking for peace.

You get pretty sick of hearing that they've been talking all day about peace and they've arrived at no conclusion. Of course they haven't. The way of peace they have not known. They don't know peace. Peace has been made by the blood of His cross. The God of Peace is there. The Prince of Peace is there. The peace that passeth all understanding is there above. It's not here. It's above. We can enjoy it in the Spirit's power, but it's there in its complete blessedness, one of the things that is above. The God of Peace is mentioned in Scripture in relation to past, present and future. [00:38:06] A whole range of our lives is covered by the God of Peace. The God of Peace who brought again from the dead that great shepherd of the sheep. Yes, that's fine.

The very God of Peace sanctify you, Holy Spirit, Soul and Body. That's the present. The God of Peace will brew Satan under your feet shortly. That's the future. And whether past, present or future, the God of Peace is available to us. This is one of the things that are above. That's where peace is. In the presence of God there. In the Prince of Peace who made peace by the blood of His cross.

There's righteousness there. One day He will come forth and the King will reign in righteousness and it will fill the earth. Righteousness shares this scene with the principle of sin today. [00:39:01] Righteousness in the millennia will reign because there will be sin to be kept down. But in the eternal day of God righteousness will dwell. There will be nothing there to be kept down. Righteousness will dwell. The very nature and holiness of God will permeate the whole scene. Things which are above. Convict the world of righteousness, He says. Because I go to the Father. Yes, you don't find righteousness down here. Judicially the courts are falling away from righteousness on every hand. But righteousness is there. One of the things that we can seek above. Joy is there.

In thy presence there is fullness of joy. Pleasure is forevermore. Yes. Man lost his first Eden. The word means pleasure. He lost it. As he listened to Satan rather than to God. [00:40:01] But at God's right hand where Christ is. There are Edens that are pleasures forevermore. God wants our minds to be set free. He wants us to seek the pleasures that are there. Young people don't seek the pleasures of this world. They want satisfying.

They want satisfying. They need you away from God. This world crucified your Saviour. There's no pleasure to be found in a world which treated Christ like that. But there there are pleasures forevermore. And you young students. If you want wisdom.

Well there's the wisdom that comes from above. Which is first pure.

Peaceable, easy to be treated.

The wisdom of God is there in the person of Christ. Go to him Lord of problems.

That wisdom which comes from above. The wisdom of this world says James is devilish. But the wisdom that comes from above is pure. [00:41:02] Peaceable, easy to be treated. Yes. There's light there.

The light for the darkest moment of your pathway. It says every good and perfect gift comes down from the father of light. It's only there's no variableness. No shadow of turning.

It's a reference to the way in which the earth is set in relation to the sun. The shadow either lengthen or shorten according to that distance. But there's no variableness with God. There's no shadow of turning there. He's the I am, the eternal I am.

And his light is always shining.

Radiant in the face of Christ.

We're to seek it. Not merely to read about it. Not merely to listen to it. But we're to seek it for ourselves. To live in the light.

Of that blessed one.

The father for whom every good and perfect gift comes down. [00:42:05] And so we can go on to be up to peace and joy and righteousness.

Abounding love is there. For God is love.

And many, many other things ought to be found in that wonderful sphere where Christ is. The truth is there in all its blessedness. If you want to know the truth about any matter, beloved brethren, seek it. As you seek the things which are above. I am the way, the truth and the life. The only time the Lord Jesus spoke of himself as a man was when he said, A man who has told you the truth. And if you want the truth, it's embodied in that blessed person of God's right hand. I think I've said enough. If we follow this out. If we seek these things.

This will be a result. [00:43:03] And what a blessed atmosphere would be seen down here. So different from the world in which we move. Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved. These seven things.

This perfect representation of Christ in the spirit's power. Bowels of mercies.

Kindness.

Humbleness of mind.

Meekness.

Long-suffering. Forbearing one another. Forgiving one another. If any man ever quarrel against any. Even as Christ forgave you, so also you do.

That's six.

And above all these things. This is the overcoat, if you like. Above all these things. Put on love.

Which is the bond of perfectness. Here's the seventh item. The bond of perfectness. My dear brethren.

Think of a business.

Think of a home.

[00:44:02] Think of a meeting.

Where these things are found.

Where to put them on.

But we shall never put them on unless we appreciate them. And we shall never appreciate them until we see them in all their blessed perfection. In Christ, who is above. At God's right hand.

May the Lord bless His work to us. Praise the Lord.

Amen.