

Colossians Chapter 3

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[0 : 00] If you could turn with me please to Colossians chapter 3. Colossians chapter 3.

And we'll look this morning at verses 12 through to verse 18, God willing, in the time that we have. I don't know, have you ever been in a situation when perhaps your wife returns from a shopping trip?

Maybe she's been at Akram's for the last hour and she's bought herself a new hat. It's a sort of two-tone colour way. The front's a bit lighter in shape than the back.

Maybe it's been sitting in the window for a wee while. It sits in a strange position on your head as she stands before you asking for an opinion.

It's just not quite big enough and deep enough, the hat, in its shape for the bun that she's sporting to be able to properly fit into. And the shade of the pom-pom that's dangling from the side of the hat is kind of clashing with the shade of her new eyeliner.

[1 : 16] So she stands before you in this kind of condition and she looks you in the eye and she says, well, what do you think? And you're conscious of the need to be honest and yet you're trying to find some words that will have some diplomacy and perhaps a diplomatic way of answering that question would be to say, well, I'm just not sure it suits you.

Maybe you should take it off quickly before someone comes into the house. You know, in these verses that are before us, as we're looking from, we're looking really in focus at verses 12 and following, but that obviously comes in context where we read the word therefore in verse 12 that immediately connects us with the previous verses.

And Paul, in these verses, as he's speaking to the Colossians, he tells them previously that there are some things that they are wearing, the Colossians, that just don't suit a Christian.

He's heard about this in the fellowship and he addresses what he's heard of in the fellowship and he speaks about these things that they are wearing, to use the language that he adopts, that don't suit, they're not befitting of a Christian.

And he lists them in verses 5 and verse 8. And we looked at them last Sunday. He goes through that kind of gruesome list, sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires, greed, idolatry, anger, rage, malice, slander, filthy language.

[2 : 59] He says these are all things, verse 7, that you need to be rid of. You need to take these things off. And we consider that we do that by confessing our sin.

As we confess our sin before the Lord, then he is faithful and he will cleanse us, not from some of the sins that we confess, but he will cleanse us of all unrighteousness.

He'll take it all off. This week, from verses 12 and following, we move from the negative to the positive. And God, through the Apostle Paul, tells the Colossians and tells us what we need to put on.

There's things that we need to take off, but there's also things that we need to put on. There's things that the Christian should be clothed in. There are things that the Christian suits, things that are befitting and consistent with the person who professes to be in Christ.

And the first thing I'd like us to do this morning is be reminded that if we are Christians, we are chosen in Christ.

[4 : 23] That's the first point. We are chosen in Christ. And there's three encouraging reminders that we're given in verse 12.

The first thing is simply that. We have to remember that God chose us. And I don't want to get into a deep discussion on the doctrine of election, but it's a doctrine which is in Scripture for encouragement and for assurance.

It's a doctrine which actually underlines for us the depth and the grace of God's love for us. Because we see in so many places, and this verse in particular, as it's before us, that God chose us.

Therefore, verse 12, as God's chosen people. I think we need to take that this morning and pray that the Holy Spirit will enable us to grasp that.

That we are God's chosen people. You know, other people may not choose you. You may feel like sometimes you're the guy or the lady who always seems to be left on the fringes.

[5 : 52] And that can be a hurtful thing. It can be a painful thing when we feel like we're the person who always seems to be left out.

But the encouragement here is that God chose you. He chose you to be one of his people. And he knows you as he knows me.

He knows the darkness of our hearts. He knows the tragedy of our track records. He knows what's ahead of us as well as what's behind us.

And yet he chose us. He chose you and I to be in relationship with him if we are Christians. And if you're here this morning, and you're saying, well, this is not for me because I'm not yet a Christian.

Well, think about this. You're here today, not by accident, but because God has chosen and appointed that you would be here.

[7 : 06] He has chosen this morning to give you the opportunity to come to know him. As God's word is read and expanded even with the young ones, there was opportunity there in these moments.

As we consider our lostness and as we consider the fact that Jesus came to seek and save lost sinners like us, we have the opportunity in this place as God's word comes, we pray in the power of the Holy Spirit to respond and to say, yes, Lord, I'm a sinner.

I'm lost. I'm lost. But I want to be found. I want to be saved.

The Lord stands at the door of your life today knocking. And if you're hearing, it's because he has chosen to speak to you.

So there's the encouragement there of remembering that God chose us. The second encouragement in verse 12 is we're to remember that God made us holy.

[8 : 21] Verse 12 still, therefore, as God's chosen people, holy. Now, that is something that is a declaration of our status if we're in Christ.

You may have had a bad week. We have bad weeks. You may have failed on numerous accounts and the things that you've said and not said and the things that you've done and left undone.

You may be very aware of your sin this week as one who is a Christian but has been a bit of a sorry state of a Christian in the course of the last few days. And yet, the reminder that we're given here is that if we are in Christ, we are made holy.

The devil comes along when Satan tempts us to despair and tells us of the guilt within. Upward we look and we see Christ there. who made an end of all our sin and because he has done that, because he has taken our sin from us, because he has died in our place for trusting him, we have been declared holy.

the devil has no has no finger to point at us with any truthful substance because Jesus has purified us from all unrighteousness.

[9 : 59] Jesus has taken all of our sins away and we are now declared to be holy. We are declared to be saints.

We can sing with gusto from our hearts as we sang no condemnation now I dread. because God in and through Christ has made us holy.

What encouragement there is in that remembering that God has made us holy. not by what we've done but by what Christ has done.

So we are to remember here that God chose us. We're to remember that God has made us holy so that we're equipped when the devil comes at us to say no, no, Christ has died for me.

And we're to remember finally here under this point that God loves us. You know, that might be something that you say, surely that's so simple we don't even need to stop there but we do need to stop there.

[11 : 24] We need to remember that God loves us. Therefore, as God's chosen people holy and dearly loved, we sang with the children, Jesus loves me, this I know.

loveable. Now, do you know that this one? Do you remember that? That Jesus loves you? You know, the devil wants us to forget.

The world will cause us at every juncture to forget and drag us away from that truth. We are fiercest critics ourselves at times as we look at our own hearts and we can't believe that we're lovable and yet God in his word tells us time and time again, he gives us reminder after reminder that he loves us.

Therefore, as God's chosen people, he says, I've chosen you. You didn't choose me, I chose you. You're holy people, not because of what you've done but because of what I've done for you in Christ, says God.

and he says, I love you. And I want you to remember that. And maybe somebody here needs to hear that this morning.

[12 : 47] That simple, profound, healing truth that God loves you. Even though you and I sin as the Colossians sinned, even though we can be very unlovely at times, even though our love for Christ can at times be so frail and fragile and poor, he loves us.

And he will never stop loving us. And if you doubt that, make that daily return visit to the cross.

Here is love, vast as the ocean, loving kindness as the flood, when the prince of life, our ransom, gave, shed for us his precious blood. Remember the next line, who has love, will not remember.

And yet we forget. So God calls us in this passage, yet again, to remember. Remember you are daily loved in Christ.

Remember you are made holy in Christ. Remember that you are chosen in Christ. Second point here, we're chosen in Christ, that's the first point.

[14 : 20] The second point is we are to be clothed for Christ. Dr. Jennifer Baumgartner is a clinical psychologist.

She wrote a book in 2012, which I haven't read, but it's entitled *You Are What You Wear*. And in the book she says, and I'm quoting here, our clothes are a link between our internal and our external self.

Or put simply, she says, our clothes say something to the world about us. How we clothe ourselves, what we wear, it's an expression of something that's internal, something of our personality, something of our identity, and we know that, don't we?

We know that our clothes say something about what our tastes are and who we are. So you see the guy walking down the street in Stornhill and he's clad, you know, head to toe in black, black, denim and leather, he's got the leather jacket on, he's got the big badge on the back, ECDC, his jacket's a bit open, there's a black kind of ragged iron maiden t-shirt, and you look at the guy and you know instantly, this is probably not a man who's got a great love for classical music, this is a rocker, and he wants you to know it.

You know, or you see, probably more commonly, you see these outdoor enthusiasts, and you see these people, and whether you meet them at the Eastgate shopping centre, or Inverness, or at the WFM coffee morning in Scalpy, they're clothed in this kind of highly technical, super light, Gore-Tex, wind sheeting, water repellent garbs, and you look at the guy and you know, this is somebody who wants to be skipping about in the mountain, not sipping coffee and scalping.

[16 : 18] Our clothes give an impression of who we are, what we like, and what we're like. And Paul says to the Colossians here, you give an impression, not just of who you are, but whose you are.

You give an impression of what Jesus is like by what you wear, to use the metaphor that he's been working with.

So he says to the Colossians, when you call yourself a Christian and you're clothed and you're wearing the wrong things, people won't think just ill of you, but they will think ill of Christ when you profess to be following.

So Paul says to them very clearly in the previous verses, these wrong things that he lists, he says, take them off. Take off the clothing of verse five, take off the clothing of verse eight, be done with anger and rage and malice and slander and sexual immorality and all these things that he lists.

He says, that's stuff that you've got to take off by repentance, by confession. And then he goes on to say, and you need to wear, if I can summarize this, he says, you need to wear what Jesus wore.

[17 : 50] Look at verse 12 still, he says, clothe yourselves, you know, he grinds it, first of all, in who we are. Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, he says, clothe yourself appropriately.

Clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Bear with one another 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. And one way we could approach these verses 12 to 14, we could go through in terms of picking out each word and doing a kind of word study.

If you're interested in that kind of thing, it would be a worthwhile exercise to do, but I'm not going to do that this morning. I think what we have here as we read through all these words, all these pieces of clothing, you could say that Paul lists here, what we have here is a portrait of Christ.

We see Jesus. Clothe yourselves with compassion. Matthew 9, 36.

[19 : 17] When Jesus saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd.

He says, clothe yourselves with kindness. Think about the feeding of the 5,000. It's getting late. Crowds are hungry. They haven't got a brownie shop around the corner.

They're getting tired. Jesus meets their need. He doesn't need to do that. but in his power and in his kindness, he reaches out to them.

Or the healing of the sick, or opening the eyes of the blind, unblocking the deaf ears, casting out demons of those who were possessed deeply, troubled.

In all these things we see the power, but we also see the kindness of Christ. I think we underestimate the impact that kindness has on people.

[20 : 29] Humility. We're going to sing at the end. Love divine, all loves excelling, joy of heaven, to earth come down.

Jesus, the one who's high and exalted, he came down. sometimes we want people to look up to us in a sinful state of mind.

Jesus showed such humility, he came down. Philippians 2.8 and being found in appearance as a man, he, Christ Jesus, that is, humbled himself and became obedient to death.

death, even death on a cross. God almighty, God the Son, who did nothing wrong, perfectly innocent, absolutely glorious, all powerful.

And yet, as we sang, he emptied himself of all but love. He bled for Adam's helpless race. that's us. Gentleness.

[21 : 51] Think about the gentleness of Christ. Couldn't help but be struck by that this morning. As I watched scenes from Pakistan, as the country in large hundreds of thousands reacts to the prospect of this Christian lady being able to walk free, and there's such hatred and there's such violence, there is such a powerful demonstration of aggression against her.

And yet, she didn't do anything wrong. Think about Jesus. John chapter 8. A woman who has done something wrong.

she's dragged before Christ by these kind of bloodthirsty mobs that we're seeing on TV. They're all ready with their stones to kill her.

They want to drag Jesus in to this violent, bloody scene. They were prepared for violence. But Jesus is so gentle with her.

And he restores her. takes her to repentance. Clothe yourselves with patience.

[23 : 21] Love the disciples in the Gospels because they're so bumbling. They're like the dad's arm of the Christian world. They're forever getting things wrong.

They're forever getting the wrong end of the stick. they're so slow to learn. They're so quick to make a mess of things. And yet Jesus was so patient with them. He bore with them day after day even though he could see not only the feelings of their outward but he could see the feelings of their heart.

And he knew what was ahead of him. He knew how they would desert him and abandon him and ultimately could make a huge mess of things. He knew one of them was a devil as it says.

And yet he was so patient with them. He bore with them. Call yourself with forgiveness says Paul forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another.

You can imagine some of the Colossians saying you know Paul who are you to tell me to forgive? What do you know about my life? What do you know about what I've gone through?

[24 : 38] What do you know about the pain that I'm experiencing? You're just a preacher. You don't live in the real world. And yet Paul, as God guides him, says, forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another.

Forgive as the Lord forgave you. You. We've no defence against that one.

When we think about the vastness of the forgiveness given to us, how dare we hold back forgiveness from another.

clothe yourselves with the forgiveness of Jesus. Remember, as the soldiers stripped Jesus and as they mocked him and as they beat him and as they put the nails to his hands and his feet and as they crucified him.

This Christ, the most powerful man in the universe, with a word, could have put them all on their backs.

[25 : 58] He remained there and simply prayed, Father, forgive him. And clothe yourselves, says Paul, with love.

John 15, 13, greater love has no man in this than a man laid down his life for his friends.

So as Paul, you know, using this picture, as he takes all these pieces of clothing and he lays them out on the table before the Colossians, what we see here is the wardrobe of Christ.

And he says to the Colossians and he says to us, clothe yourselves. And I've underlined that in my Bible, clothe yourselves.

There's a real imperative there, there's a directive, there's a command, there's an instruction there. You know, these pieces of clothing, he says, they're not just going to jump onto you any more than the jacket and the shoes and the trousers that you're wearing today jumped onto you automatically this morning.

[27 : 12] They didn't. You had to pick them up and you had to put them on. And day by day, you and I need to pick up these pieces of clothing.

We need to clothe ourselves. Imagine you have the manna in the desert. Remember Exodus 16. Every morning, the Lord laid it all out.

But he didn't put it straight onto their plates. They had to go and gather it. as they gathered it, they were able to take it, consume it, and be built up in these graces of Jesus.

They're laid out for us each day, but by faith, we need to come to the Lord and pick them up and clothe ourselves with them.

Now, sometimes you see these models on the television and these programs from time to time. The catwalks there and these models are kind of swaggering down the catwalk wearing Hugo Boss or Gucci or Harris Tweed or whatever it is that they've got on.

[28 : 33] And everybody's sitting at the side with their notebooks. And as they watch the man or the woman walking down the catwalk, they take their notes and they're impressed by the designers.

they see the model, but they don't pay a whole lot of attention to the model. The impression that's made on them through this walk is concerning the designer.

And as you and I walk through this life, as we live, people should be given a good impression of Christ.

The one who made us, the one who loves us, the one who wants us to live and be clothed for his glory. So we're chosen in Christ.

We're to be clothed for Christ. And the final thing here, briefly, is we are called by Christ. Sometimes we think it's only ministers and missionaries that are called, but that's not the truth.

[29 : 46] All Christians are called. And we're called by Christ, in verse 15, to do two things. We're called, first of all, to be peaceful.

And finally, in a word, we'll just come to the final thing, which is we're called to be thankful. Called, first of all, to be peaceful. Look at verse 15. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body, you were called to peace.

Back in a more gruesome day, dog fighting was a popular sport. And working men would finish their days and they would go to these places where these two dogs would fight it out and the bets would be placed.

And one man who looked after the dogs, he always seemed to know, in advance of the fight going ahead, he always seemed to know which dog would win.

He couldn't bet because he was one who was looking after these dogs, but he could always predict that he wasn't allowed to say it too much. He always predicted, he always knew, he could see how he could watch the dogs because he knew which dog would win.

[31 : 10] And one of his friends, one day asked him on the quiet, on the QT, how do you always know which dog is going to win?

He says, the dogs that are in that ring fighting, they're the same breed, they're the same size, they look identical. So how do you know which one will win?

And he replied, the day before the dogs fight, I feed one and I starve the other. That's how he knew.

Now we've talked in past weeks about the fight that goes on within us between the old man of sin and the new man in Christ, the old nature and the new nature.

And Paul, as he addresses the Colossians here, he says, let the peace of Christ rule, let the peace of Christ win in your lives, let the peace of Christ have that dominance in your life.

[32 : 19] Let the peace of Christ prevail in the battlefield of your heart. Now how do we do that? And that's a great thing to aspire to, but how practically do we do this?

How can we have this peace of Jesus ruling and having that dominance and that victory in our hearts?

Well, the way we can do it is by starving the old dog, by starving the old man of sin who rises up within us and by feeding the new man in Christ.

So, if I think very practically here, when we sense conflict, we taste the beginnings of conflict, when there is a growing rage within us, that is at the deep level, hasn't yet come close to being articulated, when we feel malice towards another believer, in this fellowship or any fellowship, we starve that.

When that thought comes in, when we're tempted to go off down that alley of thinking destructive and demeaning thoughts of another person, what do we do? The devil is the one who's throwing these bombs in.

[33 : 56] We starve it. We remember, as Paul instructs here, we remember when there is a tension and a conflict that's developing, we remember we are members of the one body.

We remember verse 11, that Christ is in that person that we may have a sense of beef with. And as we do that, as we starve these thoughts and these feelings that the devil introduces, as we starve the malice and the rage of sin in any area of our lives, then it's suffocated.

And the life of Christ, and specifically here, that the peace of Christ is shared among us and known within us and is blessing. I heard a story this week about, it dates back to the 1920s and it's about two fellows, one is a man called Duncan McRae, the other one was called Angus Munro, in the 1920s and there was a real shortage of ministers and Angus, Duncan McRae, sorry, was overseeing a church, the church that he was in.

And it was the communion season. So he was charged with having people speak over the course of the communion weekend. And Angus Munro, his friend, another elder, was due to come on the Thursday to help with some of these services and Munro never appeared on the Thursday and Duncan McRae wondered what had happened and he found out later what happened.

Munro had set off from his home and he was ten miles down the road walking towards this church where he was due to speak. And the devil really came to him and started battling with him and started pointing the finger at him.

[36 : 15] He said in the dialogue, you know, you look at yourself, you're heading to a communion season, you're going to be speaking to the people that are before you in these pews about brotherly love, aren't you?

And yet just yesterday you're warring with your neighbour over a peat bank. What a hypocrite you are. How dare you go and stand before these people?

And Munro in this dialogue that he records, he says he protested his innocence to the devil. He says, well, I didn't start the fight, I didn't pick the fight, I didn't begin this quarrel, I was just defending my own rights, it was my peat bank.

The devil says, listen to yourself, your rights. that Christian language. And Munro, when he followed this track through, he was troubled.

so he turned around, ten miles on the outward journey, he turned around, he did a 180, but he didn't go to his home, he went straight to his neighbour's home, and he apologised for the way that he spoke to him, and he gave up, actually, what was his right, the peat bank.

[37 : 41] He made peace with his neighbour, and he turned right back around and he headed to the communion. He arrived on the Friday, not on the Thursday, one day late, but when he preached, people said it was like the message that he preached dripped with a heavenly dew, and they wondered why.

And the reason was, that the peace of Christ was ruling in his heart. See, when the peace of Christ is ruling in our hearts, there's blessing.

It's not just within us, but it's a blessing that is with everybody connected to and around us. So we are called to be peaceful.

We're called to be peaceful. And finally, we're called to be thankful. Be thankful, verse 15, 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, spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.

love. Now, this is probably one of the rarest jewels in our day and in our culture. We have so much and yet there's so little thankfulness and contentment.

[39 : 17] so when we see it, it's compelling and it's attractive and it causes people to say, what's the secret?

it. So where do we learn this thankfulness? Well, it's not in the world because the world that we are living in trades in our lack of contentment and our lust to have more.

So where are we taught to be thankful? What's in and through the word of God? which we learn in the private place as we open and meditate upon it in verse 16.

Let it dwell richly within us. And we learn it in the public place, even here. And we learn it through each other.

We learn it actually through lives which don't grumble and growl at each other. but we learn it through lives which sing and show gratitude and teach and encourage each other.

[40 : 40] So as we go from here this morning, some of you going back tomorrow to offices, some to yards, some to classrooms, some to hospital words, as we go from here to do a wide variety of different jobs, here's our takeaway verse.

Verse 17. 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.

God the Lord, we're called to be thankful, we're much to be thankful for, we are called to be peaceful, as those who are called by Christ.

Each day we're to clothe ourselves with Christ, his grace, all that we see in him. and each day as well, let's take time to be encouraged, as we remember that we're chosen in Christ.

He chose us, he loved us, and he always will love us. he he