

**NOTES FROM STEVEN DRIVERS SERMON- Sunday 26th January 2025 am**  
**TITLE: "Seeking what is above" TEXT: Colossians 3 verses 1-17**  
**Scripture references from the ESV**

*Colossians 3:1-17* If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup> Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. <sup>3</sup> For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. <sup>4</sup> When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

<sup>5</sup> Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. <sup>6</sup> On account of these the wrath of God is coming. <sup>7</sup> In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. <sup>8</sup> But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. <sup>9</sup> Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices <sup>10</sup> and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. <sup>11</sup> Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.

<sup>12</sup> Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, <sup>13</sup> bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. <sup>14</sup> And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. <sup>15</sup> And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. <sup>16</sup> Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. <sup>17</sup> And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

We have been hearing about Paul's call in 2 Corinthians to put our faith in things unseen rather than all that is around us We are to set our minds and hearts on God, having him as our treasure. The fulness of Christ is being formed in us as we are transformed on a daily basis and come to put more of our faith in his resurrection and the freedom we have been given as a result of that. In his letters, Paul continually calls us to go after the things of Christ, rather than putting our hope in the things of this world.

However, that raises a question: if we have freedom and fulness in Christ, how come there seem to be so

many rules to follow? The passage above has a long list of things we must not do, and it is followed by a list of things we are to do! Do we not actually have freedom in Christ?

A different question can also be posed as some people will say that, since Christ died and took our punishment, surely we are free to do what we want. Is that not what true freedom means?

- The choice appears to be between doing whatever we want or trying to earn God's favour by following rules.

In reality, Paul is showing us a better way, and one which makes sense of the two apparent alternatives.

**We truly live out our new-found freedom and fulness in Christ when we live a life of Christ-centred worship.**

Worship may seem like something just Christians do, but actually everyone worships in some way. We worship the things we centre our life around, and that shape our heart and mind. The problem lies in what or who we worship. For some it might be a football team, or a celebrity. For many it is the car, house, or the latest gadget.

- Behind all of this, our greatest idol is ourself.

This has been the case since the fall, but now we see this spelled out all over our media:

- Your mind is the source and standard of truth, so no matter what, trust yourself
- Your emotions are authoritative, so never question (or let anyone else question) your feelings
- You are sovereign, so flex your omnipotence and bend the universe around your dreams and desires
- You are supreme so always act according to your chief end, to glorify and enjoy yourself forever
- You are the standard of goodness, so do not let anyone oppress you with the antiquated notion of being a sinner who needs grace
- You are the creator so use that limitless creative power to craft your identity and purpose

These are the rules that apply in our world now and we are told we must not break them. Looking at the state of our culture now, this is the true religion in our country, and we can easily see the mess created by the self-worship mindset. Just as in Paul's day, people are making rules that have the appearance of wisdom but actually are at best temporary, and, at their worst, suck the joy out of life and are frankly useless. Paul calls Christ's people to define their lives by something that is joy-giving and far, far better (**vv1-4** above):

### **We are to define our lives by who we are in Christ**

- 1. Paul gives us the instruction to worship.** If you have put your faith in Christ, and have all the fulness and freedom that brings, then set your worship on him. You are to define your life around the object of your new life instead of the things on earth which made up your old life.

Paul recognises that, although we have freedom and fulness in Christ, we often are not living in that freedom. Instead, we are still living out our old sinful life and worshipping earthly things.

Imagine you had been in the worst prison you could think of for so long that you no longer remember what freedom feels like, or what the outside world looks like. Then one day, you were told that the price of your freedom had been paid, and a new life awaits you outside the prison walls, would you not get out of that prison as fast as you could, never to look back?

Paul is telling us that this, and more, is what has happened to us. Not only have the doors been opened, and we have freedom, thanks to Christ, but we also have all of his fulness dwelling in us so that we can live out and enjoy that freedom.

However, many of us remain in prison, still living by our cultural norms and engaging in the worship of self. Rather than enjoying our freedom, we still let our lives be defined by the prison cell of our own making. Many people, including Christians have found success in worldly terms but end up damaging themselves or others.

We are instructed to come out of that prison cell, and actually enjoy the life that has been won for each one of us.

**We do this by worshipping Christ, constantly seeking him and finding our delight and identity in him.**

Our Lord Jesus Christ said that the most important commandment is: **You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might** (Deuteronomy 6:4). Paul encourages us to do this.

We are called to be Christ-centred worshippers, fixing our eyes on him and him alone. It takes effort, and is very counter cultural. Paul calls us to **seek**, using a word that means to keep on seeking. It is not a one-off task. If we stop worshipping Christ, we naturally worship earthly things, because we always worship something. We must persist, as great athletes do, endlessly striving as we set our minds on Christ every day. We are called to set our minds on him, to dwell on his magnificence and to remind ourselves daily who he is. We might need to slow down as we read God's word, perhaps taking time to memorise scripture, so that God's word can dominate our minds.

Paul's letters are written to churches that have already heard the gospel, and presumably already know much of what he is writing about Christ. Yet, he has no hesitation in setting pen to parchment to remind them (and us) once again who Christ is. Paul is doing the very thing he is instructing us all to do:

### **Paul is worshipping**

He is doing this because he has a reason to worship. Unlike the athlete, we are not persisting in our own strength. We have Christ's fulness. God's power is displayed in our weakness - we have this treasure in jars of clay (**2 Cor 4:7**). We have God's fulness, strength and power flowing through our veins to strengthen us to be the true worshippers we were designed to be.

- Do you truly believe that your life is hidden with Christ in God?
- 2. Paul gives us the reason to worship.** We worship because of what Jesus has done for us. He lived the life that we cannot live and took on our sin to satisfy the almighty wrath of God in humiliation on the cross, where he died for us. Not only that, he was raised to life, with a glorious resurrection body and is now seated above, ruling over all.

**If you have put your trust in him, you are now inseparable from Christ and secure in him.**

**Your life is already part of the heavens above because that is where Christ is, and you are in him and he is in you.**

All of his fulness has passed into our emptiness, his life into our death. All of his identity is now our identity. His treasure in our weak jars is there to be enjoyed and worshipped now as we wait for his return. When he returns, he will be revealed in his glorious body, and we too will be revealed as the people we truly are.

**His people; his true worshippers; his bride  
With glorious bodies with all defects removed  
That is our future, and it is a reason to worship now**

When we live as Christ-centred worshippers, we will put to death all worship that is not Christ-centred, and reject everything that puts us back in that prison cell. We will put on the new life that has been won for us.

**We will put to death all self-worship, and anything that replaces or dishonours God.**

**We will put on a life that is so counter-cultural in its love that it can only come from God.**

- Take time this week to read and meditate on vv5-17 (above) and consider the implications.

This should be transformative for us as we more and more seek Christ. We might still enjoy our favourite music star's singing, but we will start to see it just as music and not let the song words define our world view. Instead, it will be God's word that is the defining fact. No matter how our favourite sports star or team performs, our joy will be secure in the Lord.

We can tell what we are truly setting our minds on by asking ourselves what it is that we talk about the most, and what we are looking at the most.

- Is it the things of God, or the TV or our smartphone?
- Are we seeking those things more than we are seeking after God? Are we thinking about them more than we think about the things above?

Some of them might be good things but we lose out when we focus on those things.

We lose out on enjoying the freedom and fulness we have in Christ. We lose out on enjoying him more and delighting in him more. We even lose out on enjoying the earthly things to the full.

**We lose out on being fully satisfied in Christ.**

If this is new to you, and you want to know how you can have this better life, ask God to open up this truth to you.

If you know the truth of all this, and realise you are in danger of falling back into prison, remember that in the strength and forgiveness of Christ, you can walk out of that prison and enjoy him once again.

**The reality of being in Christ is that we can put to death the things of this world.**

**No one can take this truth from us.**