

Our new way of life

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 12 January 2025

Preacher: Glen Burns

[0 : 0 0] The Bible reading today is taken from the book of Colossians, chapter 2, verses 6 to 15, which can be found on page 1184 of the Church Bibles.

See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.

For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority. In him also you were circumcised, with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead.

And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by cancelling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands.

This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities, and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.

[1 : 5 3] Great, thank you very much. Good morning. For those of you who haven't met me, my name is Glenn Burns. I am the Assistant Minister at St. Bottles. Do feel free to come and chat to me after the service.

I won't bite, I promise. But I hope you don't bite. Great. Let's pray as we look at God's word here this morning. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you for your word.

We thank you for the truth that is found in it. Truth that points us to Jesus. The one who is alive. The one who is our living head. Lord, help us to know him through this passage this morning.

Help us to know that we are found in him, and there is no greater place than to be found, than to be in Christ. So, Lord, help us to know your truth.

Help us to look to Jesus, and help us to grow in faith and maturity. And we ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen. So, what will keep us going this year?

[2 : 5 5] Now, it's a new year, and many of us find it easy to set ourselves goals or resolutions. And after a quick Google search, I was able to dig up the most popular resolutions from 2024.

And the top 10 are things that you might expect, that you probably even hear this year in 2025. Things like lose weight, eat healthily, get fit, take care of mental health, spend time with family and friends, sort out finances and save, travel more, get a new job, and stop or reduce drinking, smoking, time on social media.

Now, they all sound pretty good, don't they? In fact, some of them are quite noble causes. Even just reading that makes me feel a bit tired. But will doing all of those things actually improve your life?

Or is there something better out there that is worth pursuing, and something that can give you true, satisfying rest?

What if the secret to contentment and happiness in life isn't found in a routine of making vows and then breaking them a few months later, but instead is found in someone who is greater than us, who has met our needs before a holy and just God.

[4 : 18] And has not only given us a certain hope worth looking forward to, but helps us to grow in maturity and walk in a manner by which we can say 2025 will be a good year.

Now, this here is the big message of Colossians. Paul here is writing to a group of believers whom he is encouraged to hear from his friend Epaphras that they now know Jesus as Lord.

And Paul's desire is that they will grow in spiritual maturity so that they can walk in a manner worthy of glorifying Jesus as Lord, bearing good fruit in every good work, and growing in the knowledge of God.

And in Colossians 2, 6-15, our passage today, Paul reminds the Colossians of one thing they are to do. Look at verse 6 of me here. Paul says this, Therefore, as you receive Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him.

Now, those words in him are a bit funny to you and me because they're not words that we normally use today. But as a matter of fact, to be in him or to be in Christ is another way of saying who you are in your identity.

[5 : 37] Because if you are in Christ, if you are in him, you are a Christian. You follow Jesus and you proclaim that he is Lord.

And so to walk in a manner worthy of this is the way in which you will keep going. And so Paul's encouraging us to do this. Don't move on from Christ, but keep going in him.

Don't move on from Christ, but keep going in him. Look at verses 68 with me here. As we've read, Therefore, as you receive Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him.

Verse 7, Rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving. And see to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.

Now, just to give you some context here, Paul explodes into a sonnet of praise about who Jesus is in Colossians 1, verses 15 to 20. It's an amazing passage that you heard Adar preach upon a couple of weeks ago.

[6 : 56] And through this Jesus, Paul reminds the Colossians of how they came to faith. It's by this Jesus' amazing work on the cross.

So Paul has given them here the foundations of the faith, who Jesus is, and all that he's done. And so you'd imagine that Paul would say, okay, now you've got the basics.

It's time to go deeper and bigger and better. You need to do more. You need to adopt certain practices.

And you need to lean into further experiences in order to grow. But that's not what Paul says here. Look at what Paul says instead.

Instead of being distracted by these things, the idea that we have to do more, or go bigger and better, or have better experiences, Paul says this, as you first believed in Christ Jesus, as you first believed in the one who is supreme, keep believing, keep following, and keep looking to him through the riches of his word, and keep being amazed at the wonder of who he is.

[8 : 21] Therefore, root your life in him. Build your life upon him in order to keep going.

So that you can walk in a manner worthy of being a follower of Jesus, and you can be fruitful for God. But the thing is, sometimes the Christian life doesn't feel like Satan, does it?

And the temptation is, is that we need to do more, or feel more, in order to prove that we are walking in the right steps of faith, or in spiritual freedom.

And with that will come voices all around us who will give insight and wisdom as to what we need to do in order to move on. Now for the Colossians, they were being encouraged by some people to partake in legalistic practices out of fear that they might be disqualified or cancelled.

Others were insisting that they were having to seek help outside of Christ, be it angels or their own selves. And for us, that could take shape in various ways too.

[9 : 32] Having to follow the legalistic practices of dress code, cultural rhythms, and the additions of rules and regulations which are outside of God's word. Or it could be the experiential side that people lean upon instead.

Insisting that everyone must show some sort of sign that they are one of God's anointed, or that they have to feel some sort of experience to feel like they are in the presence of God himself.

And even further afield, you can see how this plays out beyond the Christian faith, can't you? With messages of another way to walk in, another method of spiritual freedom, or an experience that you must find yourself in.

Be it New Age spiritualism, witchcraft, tarot card readings, just to name a few. But it's also in the culture of London that we find ourselves living in today. We're called to live your best life now.

We're called to take holidays regularly so that we can broaden our mind. We're called to go to concerts all the time because we want to feel like we're part of something special.

[10 : 38] And I mean, what's more special than being at an Oasis reunion gig? Or going to Taylor Swift and saying, I was there at Wembley Arena when she played for five months straight?

Or it's just that idea in general that living in London is living for now. But you see, the only thing that will keep us going in life, it isn't these things.

The only thing that will keep us going in life is the source of life. That we know Christ and set our minds upon him through the understanding of God's word.

The Colossians first knew Jesus when they understood the truth of who he is through the ministry of the word from Epaphras. And so the very way that they learnt of him is the same way that they will keep growing in faith and walking in faith each day.

And so, don't move on from Christ, but keep going in him. Because in Christ, we have all that we need.

[11 : 46] And in Christ, we learn the security of our salvation as we can look ahead with certain hope of what is to come. And so, you'll see in your handout sheet, Paul gives us three reasons why we can keep going.

And this is where we're going here this morning. Firstly, you are complete in Christ, verses 9 to 10. You are raised to new life in Christ, verses 11 to 13.

And you are forgiven by God through Christ's victory, verses 13 to 15. Okay, let's look at these one by one. Firstly, you are complete in Christ.

Now, look at what Paul says here in verses 9 to 10. In verse 9, Paul says that in Christ, the whole fullness of God or deity dwells bodily. Now, just bear with me for one wee second here.

Okay, so, here, we, we, have, Christ, okay? Christ, okay?

[13 : 00] And it says here that the fullness of God dwells in him bodily. So, all of God is in Christ.

Okay? You with me? God in Christ. Okay, now let's keep going here. Keep reading with me here. Look on at verse 10. Paul says that we are also filled in him.

Okay, so just bear with me two wee seconds. Let me just draw. Okay, now I always think nothing is more worthless in today's day and age in a Chinese carton.

So, this is you. Okay? Hope you can get used to that. And it says here, Paul says in verse 10 that the fullness of Christ is in you.

So, God is in Christ and Christ is in you. Okay? Let's just put a lid on that. But what else have we seen already?

[14 : 05] We have been filled with Christ who is the head of all rule and authority. But as we've been looking at so far, you are also in Christ as well.

Okay? So, here we go as well. Christ and you are in Christ. Okay? Let's just get a lid on that. Okay?

But then Paul goes on to say in Colossians chapter 3 verse 3 that Christ is in God. Your life is hidden in Christ but Christ is in God.

Okay? So, one more. We're going to put God on that. And we've got the fullness of God in Christ, Christ in you, you in Christ and Christ is in God.

Okay? So, this is your life right here, right now, if you are a Christian. Okay? I'm just going to set you down here.

[15 : 06] Hope you don't mind. This is who we are in Christ. Okay? We are in Christ who is in God. Christ is in us and the fullness of God is in him. Christ who is the head of all rule and authority, verse 10 and he is Colossians chapter 1 verses 15 to 20.

We also know that he is sovereign over all things he created including us. Furthermore, chapter 1 verse 22 we are presented before God holy without blemish and free from sin.

Why? Because we have Christ in us the hope of glory. We are filled with Christ and being filled in Christ means that because of Christ's completed work you are complete in Christ and that doesn't matter from when you first come to faith or if you've been a Christian walking for 30, 40, 50, 60 years or more.

You are complete in Christ Christ. And so if you feel like that being in Christ isn't enough that Christ Jesus isn't enough if you feel like you need more or that your faith is shaky then think about this.

[16 : 30] This is where you are as a Christian here today if your faith is in Jesus. Christ is in you, you're in Christ Christ and Christ is in God.

Now is there anywhere more safe or secure than your life could be right now? This is the one who fills you.

This is the one who makes you fit for his kingdom and able to stand before God. Nobody, nothing on earth or outside of this earth that we live in, in the spiritual ages.

Nothing can get you if you are in Christ. You are complete in him and you stand before God holy and without blemish because of what Christ has done for you.

Because secondly, you are raised to new life in Christ. Now you'll often hear people saying new year new me when it comes to January.

[17 : 40] However, there's a song from a band I like that's called the new year that often sums up this reality and it goes like this. So this is the new year and I don't feel any different because the fact of the matter is you can try and change something about yourself, a new look, a new lifestyle, a new behaviour, but you will always be the same you.

But look at what Paul says in verses 11 to 12. In verse 11, Paul is saying here that if you are in Christ, you can call yourself confidently a new me.

How? Because not only are you complete in Christ, but you've also been raised to new life and set apart in new life with him. Because in the past you did what everyone else did around you.

You were, by Paul's words in Colossians, an enemy of God. God. But now God has set you apart. That's basically what's meant by circumcision here.

Not by the old ceremonial practices, but by verse 11, Christ. Because you were buried with him in death and you were raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God who gives life.

[19 : 25] life. Now, one of the things that my wife and I are trying to do this year is that we want to make our place a warm, inviting, so that people can come around and feel at home when they come to see us.

Now, one thing I would love more in our home is houseplants. But, here is the problem. My wife Lauren is a serial plant killer.

She is a threat to all botanical life. She either doesn't water plants or she waters them too much. Now, here is the problem.

When a plant dies, it is very difficult to revive it. But, God does the impossible with us who were dead in our sins.

He takes our dead hearts and he gives us new life. Look at verse 13 with me here. Paul puts it this way. And you who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him through his powerful working who raised Jesus from the dead.

[20 : 39] God made us alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses. God made us alive with him.

sin. Our trespasses, our rebellion, our sin, our circumcision of the flesh, Paul calls it. Basically, the way in which we live like the rest of the world.

We live like the world in darkness. But God made us alive together with him as we are given new life in Jesus. darkness. And this means that you are now able to walk in the ways which he has called you to without the problem of sin.

To quote Paul, you've been taken from darkness and you now live in the light where you can follow Christ and you can imitate him. And being raised to life also means that you're not ill equipped to imitate Christ for Christ is in you through his spirit.

Not only are you complete in Christ but you're completely equipped to walk in him through his completeness inhabiting you. See your strength to live as a Christian day by day comes from knowing Jesus and being found in him.

[21 : 53] The one who gives you life. And finally you're also forgiven by God through Christ's victory.

Paul goes on to say this in verses 13 to 15. verse 13 God made alive together with him having forgiven us all our trespasses by cancelling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands.

This he set aside nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame by triumphing over them in him. So we're in January and some of you might get what's called the January blues because January is typically a time when people are in the most debt after all the Christmas spending.

Now the record of debt Paul is talking about here in verse 14 is worse than any financial woe than we can ever face. Because look at verse 13. Paul is talking about our sin, our transgressions.

That's every single thing we do which is an offense to a holy and just God. And that burden here cannot be repaid by anything we try to do.

[23 : 14] And this isn't just one or two little light things that can be swept under the carpet by the way. Paul makes it clear how separated you were in your transgressions. Colossians chapter 121 says that you are alienated and hostile in mind.

doing evil deeds. Every offense, every single thing wrong that you've done, it counts as a black mark against your name.

But God's great plan for you, God's great plan was to save you from your hostile state of sinning. And God's great plan went into action when his son went to the cross where your sins, your transgressions, everything you've done wrong, is nailed to the cross.

Jesus pays for your life with his blood and satisfies the payment for sin before a holy and just God. You see, this good news, this gospel, sets us apart and frees us to live in hope.

You are forgiven by God. your record of debt is cancelled. It is wiped clean. Satan, the world, nobody can tell you that you have to do more to earn God's grace or you have to find some sort of spiritual freedom.

[24 : 41] Because your life as a Christian is shaped and defined by the God who dwells in you and your life. Your meaning, your perspective, everything about you is found completely in Christ.

The one who triumphs over everything because he is Lord. So what does all of this mean for us today?

Well, there's one thing that will help us, excuse me, there's one thing that will help us to apply this truth in Colossians chapter two. And it's this, to enjoy stability and peace for the year ahead in order for us to walk and to keep going.

Don't move on from Christ, but live in him. And we have seen why it is so amazing to find ourselves in Christ or to be known as a Christian.

And there will be times where you will find yourself struggling to find peace because of the chaos that's going on around you. Your work-life balance can feel like it's impossible to manage.

[25 : 53] That new job that you took on leaves you feeling unsatisfied. The bills are stacking up and you feel like it's impossible to pay them all off. You find it's easier to eat fast food each day than to prepare your own meals due to the time per lifestyle that you have.

Or it could be just so many other things going on around you. Sickness, loved ones dying, or just a general instability and a feeling that life isn't okay.

You see, it is in those moments when doubt creeps in and we feel like we have to do more in order to adjust our lives and find balance. But Paul is encouraging us to set our minds on Christ and be reminded of who he is and all that he has done for us.

He is both the one who has rescued us from sin and the one who has reconciled us to God. And he is also the one who cures our lives in certain hope and enables us to grow in him.

The one who is supreme. If you are a Christian here this morning, if you are in Christ, then listen to these words from Paul in Colossians 3 that teaches us to live how we can live out the hope we have in him for the year ahead.

[27 : 19] It's not about trying to do more. It's not about working hard or trying to be a better person. Paul says this instead firstly. First, set your mind on the things that are above, where Christ is right now in glory.

Put to death your old self and put on compassionate hearts that are filled with the gift of his grace. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly on whatever you do in word or deed. Do everything, every single thing in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Giving thanks to God the Father through him. In other words, Christ has already given you all that you need in him.

You can be content in him right now here today. Because in him you're complete to fulfill his work in all that you do this year.

[28 : 27] But if you're here today and you don't know who Jesus is, then can I encourage you to find out more about him and see why he is able to give you what you need. And what you might find here is that this Jesus, this Jesus of the gospel speak of and that Paul holds up so supremely is the solutions to your worries, your desires and all your ambitions.

You see, in today's culture we see a lot of people seeking to find themselves, to find belonging and a sense of wonder in the experience that they must have to find fulfillment.

And yet here in Jesus, all those things are found and much, much more because he can eternally satisfy those longings because he is the eternal Lord.

And so this year, no matter who you are, can I encourage you to do one thing? Get to know Jesus more and more.

Read about him in his word. Set your mind on him. Set your mind on his completed work for you and his ongoing work in you as well because he who began a good work in you is faithful and sure to achieve the completion of that work in his return.

[29 : 51] Don't move on from Christ. Keep going in him because Christ is in you. You are in Christ and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

God. Let's pray. Father, we thank you for these words and we thank you for how amazing it is to not only be a Christian but to be found in Christ and to know that Christ is in us, the hope of glory.

Lord, help us to seek, to see that joy that you have hidden in our hearts each day and to know the freedom that we have that comes from being in Christ.

Lord, help us to not only know that fullness but to be satisfied by that fullness as well. Lord, to live day by day knowing that there is nothing that can take us outside of your will, outside of your grip, outside of your hold for our lives are secure in him if we are Christians, if we follow Jesus and Lord, there is no greater place to be.

Lord, for those who are here who don't know Christ, I pray that you continue to speak to them through your word. Lord, draw them to know Jesus. Draw all of us to know Jesus, Lord, and help us to see why he is worth living for.

[31 : 26] So Father, in this year ahead, help us to keep knowing you, help us to keep going in Christ, for your name's sake and for your glory. And we ask these things in Jesus' name, Amen.