

Make the Most of the Time

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[0 : 00] We'll keep open the Bibles at that page and as Jono said at the beginning this is the last of our series of eight sermons on Colossians and let's pray that God helps us as we come to his word tonight.

Our great God and Father we thank you that you speak clearly in your word and so we pray that you'll speak to our hearts tonight. Write your word in there so that we may not only believe it but follow it that we may be mature Christians giving glory to Jesus in every word and deed that we do and we pray in Jesus name.

Amen. When Christopher Robin went to bed each night he said his prayers but he didn't say them very well in fact he said them fairly badly.

Finally, God bless mummy. I know that's right. Oh wasn't it fun in the bath tonight? The cold so cold and the hot so hot. Oh God bless daddy.

I nearly forgot. If I open my fingers a little bit more I can see nanny's dressing gown on the door. It's a beautiful blue but it hasn't a hood. Oh God bless nanny and make her good.

[1 : 16] Oh mine has a hood. And I lie in bed and pull the hood right over my head. And I shut my eyes and I curl up small and nobody knows that I'm there at all. Oh thank you for a lovely day.

Oh what was the other thing I had to say? I said bless daddy. What can it be? Ah now I remember it. God bless me. Childish prayers.

How does a mature Christian pray? Hopefully not childish prayers. For what does a mature Christian pray?

For many Christians prayer is a struggle. We know that we should pray. We know that we should pray often. And yet for many we struggle to do that.

We forget. We doze off. We daydream like Christopher Robin looking around his bedroom. For some they only ever pray in times of trouble. We think well if God's really God and everything's mapped out and everything's going to come to God's purpose.

[2 : 23] Then what's the point of praying? So we don't. Or we just limit our prayers to pray for ourselves. For what we want. Distinguishing that from what we need.

Paul wrote this letter to the Colossians to urge them to be mature Christians. They'd showed signs of Christian life and faith.

They demonstrated love in their midst. And Paul gave thanks at the opening of this whole letter if you remember back seven weeks ago. For their hope in the resurrection of Jesus.

But he wants them to continue. That the evidence of the beginning of their Christian life will flow into evidence of maturity in Christian faith. And so this whole letter actually began with prayer.

And as we'll see tonight it almost ends with prayer as well. Paul's prayer at the beginning of the letter if you remember was twofold. He gave thanks for the evidence of faith, hope and love in their midst.

[3 : 30] That was in the first paragraph in effect of the letter. Having given thanks he then prayed. And the essence of his prayer for them was.

Another way of putting all that would be.

Another way of putting all that would be.

So that they are mature Christians. That they keep growing in knowledge and wisdom and understanding. So that their Christian life becomes mature. And not simply childish.

What does a worthy Christian life look like? Over the last seven weeks we've seen lots of illustrations of what a worthy life would look like. We'll remind ourselves of some of those a bit later on.

[4 : 35] But in tonight's passage as Paul rounds off what a worthy life looks like. He mentions prayer. A worthy life. Worthy of the Lord.

Is a life of prayer. Devote yourselves to prayer. Keeping alert in it with thanksgiving. We pray because as chapter 1 said.

Jesus Christ is Lord. Supreme over all from beginning to end of history. The one who's bringing all things in the universe. Towards God's good conclusion and purpose.

Therefore devote yourselves to prayer. Because we are by faith in Christ. Dead, buried and risen in Christ.

Devote yourselves to prayer. Because we in a sense belong where Jesus now is ascended to heaven. Devote yourselves to prayer.

[5 : 34] Notice that it's devote yourself. Not the occasional sporadic intermittent type of prayer. Oh I should pray about that. Oh I haven't prayed for a while.

I better pray. But a devotion to prayer. A regularity. A consistency and persistency. In praying. Praying to God through Jesus Christ his supreme Lord and son.

Devotion to prayer. Devotion to prayer. Implies effort. Implies dedication. It implies a habit. It implies persevering through good and bad times.

Through the pressures of daily life. We keep on devoting ourselves to prayer. And we're to keep alert at it. Not like Christopher Robin daydreaming. Looking at his grandmother's dressing gown. Hanging on the door. But focused and fixing our eyes in praying to God. That means that we're diligent about prayer. And determined to pray. Keep alert at it.

[6 : 35] Or watchful. It's as though we're on guard. And being on guard and alert and watchful. Means that we pray. The alertness has probably got two aspects to it.

One is that we're alert against the enemy. Or false teaching. As it's been demonstrated in this letter. So that we're on guard and praying. That God will strengthen us. And keep us under the truth of the gospel of grace.

The other on guard or watchfulness about it. Is looking forward to Jesus' return. There have just been a couple of hints earlier. In this letter of that. That is that on the day when Jesus comes back to this earth.

We will be presented mature. And blameless and spotless in his presence. So our prayers are about our preparation for that occasion. So that we are ready for Jesus' return.

So that we are growing in maturity. And Christ likeness. That we're wearing more and more the clothes of Jesus Christ. So that on the day of his return. We are found blameless and spotless in his sight.

[7 : 42] Not only are we to devote ourselves to prayer. Keeping alert in it. But with thanksgiving. That is the alertness is accompanied with thanksgiving.

They're not separate things so much as intertwined. The alertness with thanksgiving. Gives us confidence about where we stand with God.

Because our thanksgiving is grounded in what God has done. That's been a consistent theme in this letter. In fact a mark of a worthy life back in the first chapter.

The first half of the first chapter. Was that we would be filled with thanks and joy. Because chapter 1 verses 12 to 14 gave us the reasons for that.

Because God has enabled us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. He's rescued us from the power of darkness. And transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved son.

[8 : 41] And we've been redeemed and forgiven. That is because we know what God has done for us in Jesus. That when Jesus died he took our sins. So that we are forgiven. So that we are accepted by God.

And God has transferred us from the belonging to a kingdom of darkness. Into the kingdom of Jesus Christ. Into God's own kingdom. Every reason therefore to be thankful.

You see our prayers will be devoted and consistent. And we'll persevere and be alert. When we have that confidence that's expressed in thankfulness. We know where we stand with God.

We're not praying blindly. We're not praying to a remote being somewhere up there. Just in case he's there. We're not issuing prayers like you might see in pagan and other religions. Where their gods are silent and dumb.

But we're praying to a God who has acted for us in grace. Who's welcomed us into his family.

Who's redeemed us and forgiven us because of Jesus. And therefore we can have confidence in

prayer.

[9 : 44] And therefore we should persevere in prayer. We should devote ourselves to prayer. Because it's the relationship of a child to a heavenly father. Not to some remote alien being.

And with thanksgiving. Because we're not praying to try and win God's favour. We're praying with thankfulness. Because we've been accepted by God's grace.

In Jesus Christ. For those who struggle to devote themselves to prayer. And my guess is almost all of us will fall into that category at some point or other in our lives.

How do we do this? How do we keep this injunction of Paul? To devote ourselves to prayer. Well practically there are things we can do.

We can get Bible reading and prayer notes that have dates on them to urge us. We can put a prayer calendar on our desk or by our bedside or something.

[10 : 48] We can draw up a diary that lists key things, people, events etc. to pray for each day. We can use the monthly prayer calendar from Holy Trinity that's in the notice sheet tonight for example.

Practical sorts of things to do. We can pray big prayers. Like the prayer that Paul prays at the beginning of this letter for the Colossians. He's not just praying that their sore leg will get better and that they'll have a happy time at the church service the next week.

He's praying that they will ultimately be mature in Christ. A prayer that you could pray for yourself and for each other and for this church every day, day by day, week by week, year by year.

Effectively.

Under God. Pray that God's purpose in us will be fulfilled. That we'll be blameless on the final day. But maybe deeper down.

How are we going to devote ourselves to prayer? By reminding ourselves again and again. of the glory of the glory of Jesus Christ. Of what God has done for us in Him.

[11 : 52] That will force us to our knees with gratitude. As we see what God has begun in us. It will urge us to pray for the completion of that. Alert for the day of the Lord's return.

And alert that we do not go off track by false teaching. That is, keep coming back to what Paul has taught in this letter about Jesus.

Should drive us to devote ourselves in prayer. Paul then gives an example of something he'd like prayer for. He's not too proud to ask for prayer.

He says in verse 3, At the same time, pray for us. For Paul and those with him. Some of whom he'll mention in a minute. Pray for us as well.

Now remember that Paul's in prison. He doesn't pray for release. He doesn't pray for justice. Rather he prays that God will open to us a door.

[12 : 53] Not a door to escape from the prison. But a door for the word. It's as though the word of God is living. In the way that it's conveyed here. So that somehow a door would open.

And the word of God spoken through Paul. Would go through that door into the hearts and minds of other people. Visitors, jailers, friends, neighbours, other prisoners. Whoever.

It's as though the word is actually active. And that's common in the New Testament in fact. We sometimes think of a word as just being written on paper. And not all that important.

And often cheap. But actually God's word is living and powerful. Paul at the beginning of this letter in chapter 1. Said that the word of truth. The gospel. Is bearing fruit and growing in the world.

It's almost as though the word is like a tree. That is growing. It's living. It's powerful. And Paul is praying here not for help or comfort for himself in jail.

[13 : 53] But rather that the word will spread. Because that's God's purpose. That's what God's will is about. That's what Paul had described as the will of God.

That's what God's will say. That's what God's will say. That's what God's will say. That's what God's will say. That Jesus is supreme over all. And all things will come under him. And therefore to bring about that purpose.

The word of God will grow and bear fruit throughout the world. World. So Paul prays and asks for prayer. That there will be a door for the word. That is that he may declare the mystery of Christ.

For which I'm in prison he says. He's in jail simply because he's a preacher of the gospel of Jesus. And if you read through the last chapters of the Acts of the Apostles. You can see how that story unfolds.

He's praying that he may declare the mystery of Christ. The mystery remember he's talked about earlier in chapters 1 and 2. The mystery is not a puzzle.

[14:56] It's not a detective novel. You don't need intelligence or brilliance or ingenuity to discover what the mystery is. But rather the gospel reveals the mystery which is Jesus Christ.

Christ in us the hope of glory. The revelation of Jesus Christ as the supreme saviour of the world. That's the mystery.

And Paul is eager and urgent to declare that mystery. To declare that gospel. To declare Jesus at every opportunity.

And so he finishes this prayer request in verse 4 saying. So that I may reveal it clearly as I should. In effect as I must. As is necessary for me to do.

He's under divine compulsion in a sense. To preach the gospel. To preach the word. Clearly. So that God would use that powerful word.

[15:56] To draw people to Christian faith. And make them Christians. That's God's will. That's what we saw way back in chapter 1.

That's what Paul's ministry was about in the last part of chapter 1. To declare the word of God clearly. So that more and more people would come.

Under the glorious lordship of Jesus Christ. And so Paul prays. And wants prayer. You see when you know what God's purpose is for the universe.

It invites us to pray. Sometimes we get that so perverted. When we think well. We know that God's going to bring about his purpose. So what's the point of praying. But precisely when we know what God's will is.

As is revealed in Jesus Christ. Then it helps us to pray deeper. Bigger prayers. Because we can pray with confidence. Knowing what God is on about in this universe. And that is to bring all people.

[16:55] Reconciled to God through the blood of Jesus Christ. As Paul said in chapter 1 verse 20. Therefore pray. Well that first little paragraph.

Verses 2 to 4. Is really talking to God about people. Now Paul is talking to people about God. In verses 5 and 6. Conduct yourselves wisely.

Toward outsiders. There are two commands in this section. And the first is. Conduct yourselves wisely. In verse 5.

Wise behaviour. Not meaning just sort of common sense. Paul's already talked in this letter. That all wisdom.

Is found in Jesus Christ. And his opening prayer for the Colossians. Was that they might grow in knowledge. With wisdom and understanding. Knowing the purpose and will of God.

[17:51] So conducting yourselves wisely. Is not just being sort of. Sensible in a secular. Normal sort of way. But rather it's got a clear.

God focus about it. The wise person. Is commending. Jesus as Lord. In the way they live their lives. So the wise person. Is doing the things. That we've seen over the last couple of weeks. Forgiving. Loving. Compassionate.

Kind. A wise person. Is acting in. Good relationships. As husband and wife. As parent and child. As a slave and a master. As we saw last week. Because Jesus.

Is the one. Full of wisdom. Wise behaviour. Godly behaviour. We might say. They're. I think synonymous. More or less here.

[18:49] Commends. Jesus Christ. Because it wears the clothes of Christ. It looks like Jesus. In the way it behaves. And acts. Conduct yourselves wisely. Towards outsiders now.

You see. The instructions we've seen. Over the last couple of weeks. Are more about. How you relate with. Others within the church community. Forgiving. Forbearing. Putting up with. Showing compassion. And kindness.

And singing hymns of praise. And so on. People. But now it's. Turning outside. It's acting in the same. Christ-like way. But not at the sense of mutual.

Forgiving with each other. Within the church. But the demonstration. Of wise or godly living. Will actually attract people. To God. And to Jesus.

That theme runs all the way through the Bible. That's why all those laws are given to Israel. In the Old Testament. That they may be such a beacon of holiness.

[19:47] And love. That people of all the nations. Will come to their God. It rarely happened in history. But that was the aim. But that's not displaced in the New Testament totally.

Churches and Christian communities. Are meant to be such. Places of light. And love. Of Christ-like behavior. Of wise conduct. That outsiders will be drawn.

To Jesus. Our Lord. And make him theirs. This conduct. Towards the outsiders. Is to make the most of the time.

The end of verse 5 says. Literally. Making the most of the opportunity. Technically. It says redeeming the time. As though we're somehow buying. Every opportunity.

The idea is. That time is short. Our lives are short. And time is short on this earth. Before Jesus comes again. Whenever that may be. We're to use every opportunity.

[20 : 47] In acting wisely. Towards outsiders. For the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ. And to draw people. To commend him. To them.

To them. And yet. How often. Our behavior is foolish. How often we act. Immaturely as Christians. Divisively.

Unlovingly. How often we don't even relate. To the outsider. At all. How often we. Act in immoral. Or scandalous ways. The shame of. Christian behavior. Is frequently. In the media. Day by day. Sometimes we act. Proudly. And hypocritically. Often we act. With anger. And malice. The very things. That Paul tells us. Not to. Back in chapter 3. Take out.

[21 : 45] Of your life. Anger. Wrath. Malice. Slander. Abusive. Language. And lies. That's not wise conduct. That's foolish conduct. Take it out.

Because it's not Christ like. And take it out. Because it doesn't commend Christ. To the outsider. We are meant to be attractional. So think then.

About how. You as a Christian. In your workplace. School. Or environment. How you as a Christian. Community. Acting in different. Public ways.

Commend Jesus. For those who are in our. Soccer team. What a high responsibility. As a Christian church. Sports team.

Not to get angry. On the field. Not to abuse. The referee. Not to trip up. Another player. Etc. That our behavior. Must have such integrity.

[22 : 40] That it will attract people. To our God. And the same applies. In other ways. Of course. In our community. And in our life. In general. Conduct yourselves.

Wisely. Toward outsiders. Making the most. Of the time. Back in chapter 3. 17. Paul said. Whatever you do.

In word or deed. Do everything. In the name of the Lord Jesus. Here. I think. He's addressing that. He's just been saying. In verse 5. In effect.

Whatever you do. Indeed. Do wisely. In the name of the Lord Jesus. Towards the outsider. The second of these commands. In verse 6.

Picks up the word bit. Whatever you do. In deed. Or word. Do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus. So he expands on that. In verse 6. When he says. Let your speech. Always be gracious.

[23 : 37] Seasoned with salt. So that you may know. How you ought. To answer everyone. Behaviour. And words.

Both. To be Christlike. Paul's already tackled that. To a degree. Back in chapter 3. When he says. Don't be lying. And don't be filled. With abusive speech. Now in a sense.

He's putting it in. A more positive thing. Our speech. Is to be gracious. And seasoned. With salt. Paul had asked also.

For prayer. For his word. Now he's actually. Commanding them. About their word. He prayed. For a door. For the word. From him. And now their word.

Same word. That's used. Must be gracious. Gracious. Not just. At the level. Of being pleasant. And. And. And sort of. Gentle.

[24 : 32] But gracious. I think. Is a more loaded term here. As well. The gospel. Is the gospel. Of grace. Grace. Is about God. Acting for us. Though we don't deserve it.

So we are to act. In our speech. In the same way. Towards the outsider. Words of grace. Words of forgiveness. Words of Jesus. Words of commendation. Of the gospel.

Words of love. Paul had said. In chapter 3. Verse 12. Clothe yourselves. With compassion.

Kindness. Humility. Meekness. And patience. Our words. Words are to. Demonstrate.

Those characteristics. Kind and compassionate. Speech. Humble speech. Meek and patient. Speech. Here the focus still.

Is on the. Outsider. So that our words. Will commend. Jesus. As Lord. To them. But they're not.

[25 : 27] Bland words. They're salty words. They've got a taste. There's something. There's something. That will. Will. Will. Grab attention. For others. Jesus.

Of course. Had famously said. In the. Sermon on the mount. You are the salt of the earth. Maybe Jesus. Paul here is. Remembering. And picking up. That. That image. Our words. Are to be salty. There's something. Of the taste. Of Jesus. In what we say. That is. It's not just being. Nice and pleasant. It's being filled. With Jesus. That will create. The tang. And the taste. For other people. So our words. Are to be. Salt and grace. Not salt and vinegar. As we speak. To the world. As I say. This is applying. What Paul has said. In recent weeks. Speech. That is not angry. Or malicious. Or abusive. Rather kind. [26 : 23] And compassionate. Wise. And salty. In every word. And deed. Notice. To the connection. Again. Between what Paul.

Asks for prayer. For himself. And what he commands. Of the Colossians. Paul's motive. And aim. Was the spread. Of the gospel. And that's what he's actually. Behind these commands. In verses five and six. That their work. Their deeds. And words. Will commend. And further. The spread of the gospel. To draw people. To Jesus Christ. As savior. Not that they are. To preach Jesus. Like Paul. He was a public preacher. An evangelist. An apostle. He's not suggesting. That they replicate. His ministry. But rather. That they live. Such holy lives. That it will draw. People to their God. And so. He says. At the end of verse six. [27 : 17] You may know. You need to know. How you ought. To answer everyone. Just as Paul. Must. Of necessity. He should. Preach. Clearly. The end of verse.

Four. Same word. Is ought. At the end of verse six. As I ought. To preach clearly. You ought. To be able. To give an answer. Not that they're all. Public preachers. But that when their. Godly lives. Draw people. To God. That's not going to. Convert people. Just a godly life. That might. Draw people. Attract people. Then give an answer. Why are you like this? Why are you so forgiving? Why are you so kind? Why are you a compassionate person? What makes you humble? When our world is proud? Now it doesn't mean. That you have to be able. To answer every theological question. And so on. [28 : 12] But to give a basic answer. That I'm like this. Because I'm in Jesus Christ. I've been saved by Jesus. By grace. And I'm trying to live a life. That reflects his character.

That's in effect. What's behind. What Paul is commanding. At the end of verse 6. It ought to be. That all of us. Are able to give. Some sort of answer. For why we're seeking. To live. Christ-like lives. An answer. That will draw people. Even closer. To Jesus. Through the gospel. I wonder. If you can give an answer. For the faith. That's in you. I wonder. If someone says to you. Why are you a Christian. What you would say. May not be. Fully articulate. Or fluent. But it ought to be. That you can commend. Jesus in your speech. And if not. Then I'd urge you. To think about. [29 : 06] Reading and. Talking with someone. To help you articulate. That better. Do one of our courses. From time to time. Like introducing God. To grasp.

In a sense. The flow of the gospel. So you've got better answers. For people. When they ask. Draw people to Jesus. As Paul keeps doing. Through this letter. Bring friends to church. Invite them to come. And meet someone. Who perhaps can give. A better. More fluent. Or deeper answer. In July. We've got a. A very famous. Australian. Evangelist. Preacher. Coming to speak. On a midweek. Occasion. Called John Chapman. He's a wonderful person. So. Plan now. To start. Inviting and bringing people. To hear him speak. When we. We'll give you the date. A bit later on. Well. The letter is over. More or less. [30 : 01] What follows. Is a bit like. The credits. At a film. Some people get up. As soon as the credits begin. I usually like to sit. And look. Millions and millions. Of names in credits.

Often they go. Far too fast. Up the screen. But I'm usually looking. For something like. Where was this filmed. Or what music was that. That I couldn't quite. Identify or something. And this is a little bit. Like the credits. From verse 7. To the end. A list of names. Paul mentions. Firstly. The postman. Tychicus. The person. Who's going to take. The letter. To Colossae. And he's going.

With a person. Called Onesimus. Tychicus. Tychicus is mentioned. A few times. In the New Testament. He traveled with Paul. In Acts of the Apostles. At different times. And Onesimus. Who's mentioned. In verse 9. He's a slave.

He ran away. And now he's been converted. Through Paul's ministry. It seems in Rome. And so with Tychicus. And maybe others. He's been taken back. To his owner. A man called Philemon. [30 : 56] Along with the letter. To Philemon. And this letter. To the Colossians. At the same time. And then in verses 10 and 11. Paul passes on greetings. You'll meet a friend of mine.

A bit later. In tonight's service. And she brought me greetings. From other people. Whom I know. As she arrived tonight. And that's what Paul's doing here. Oh. They've got greetings. From these three people.

They're Jewish Christians. Firstly. Three people. Who've become Christians. But come from a Jewish background. Aristarchus. Mark. And Jesus. Called Justice. Aristarchus. Is also mentioned. In the Acts of the Apostles. As one who was with Paul. And went with Paul to Rome. When he was under arrest. At the end of Acts. Mark. Is the one who wrote. The Gospel of Mark. Someone with whom Paul. Had an early ministry.

But fell out. And now. In his later years. Is reconciled with Mark. And in a later period. Again. He writes in 2 Timothy. Still in reconciled with Mark. Wanting him to come to him.

[31 : 51] And bring things. And so on. Jesus called Justice. Is not known. Outside this reference here. Paul says of these three. Jewish Christians. That is the ones of the circumcision.

In verse 11. They are a great comfort to him. Aristarchus. It seems. Is also a prisoner. Maybe not Mark. Or Jesus called Justice.

But they're in Rome. With Paul. They bring him comfort. And fellowship. And encouragement. And they send greetings. To the church in Colossae. And then come three. Gentile Christians.

That is from non-Jewish backgrounds. Who've become Christians. Whom Paul mentions.

Epaphras. Firstly. And then Luke and Demas. Epaphras was mentioned in chapter 1.

He's the one who started the church. In Colossae. He is one of you. That is he. Belongs in the Colossian church. In a sense. Maybe he originally. Even came from there.

[32 : 46] He's called three things. That are titles of honour. A servant of Christ Jesus. He's wrestling in prayers. On your behalf. And he's worked hard for you.

The idea of working hard is a rare word. It suggests that Epaphras has not just worked hard. But actually under some pain. And struggle. And maybe opposition or difficulty. He's been commended by Paul.

In these words. Back to the Colossian church. And what he says of him. Wrestling in his prayers. On your behalf. Is a bit like Paul. Wrestling for the Colossians.

Back at the end of chapter 1 as well. Same word is actually used. So he's saying that Epaphras' ministry. Is a great ministry. And it's a ministry of prayer.

For the Colossians. Just as he has been urging. The Colossians to be devoted. To prayer. Then Luke. The beloved doctor. Or physician.

[33 : 41] In verse 14. The gospel writer again. It's no wonder that the gospels. Have got such similarities. When clearly Luke and Mark. At one point. Maybe a bit later than this. Were both.

Well even here. And later. Were with Paul in Rome. And so we've got two gospels. Written by them. And one each. And Luke was the writer. Of the Acts of the Apostles as well.

This is where we find out. That he was a doctor. And a Gentile. And Demas. Sadly. Three or four years later. Perhaps. When Paul writes another letter.

To Ephesus. To Timothy in Ephesus. Demas has abandoned Paul. Here he's with him. And sends greetings. To the church in Colossae. But later on.

Demas falls in love. With the world. And abandons. It seems. His Christian faith. And then Paul sends. His own greetings. Give my greetings. He says in verse 15. To the brothers and sisters.

[34 : 38] In Laodicea. Laodicea is a town. Just a bit further up. The Lycus Valley. In what. Central western Turkey. Probably. Ten miles. Or so.

Like Colossae. Today. It's. It's really just ruins. Although there's. More significant. Excavation work. That's being done there. And to Nympha. And the church. In her house. Remember. There were no big church.

Buildings like this. In those days. People. Churches met in houses. And Nympha. Is probably a lady. Maybe a wealthy lady. In Laodicea. And the church met. In her house. It seems.

And when this letter. Has been read. Among you. Have it read. Also. In the church. Of the Laodiceans. This letter. Would be read. Publicly. Probably on one of their. Church gatherings. Maybe even a. Special meeting. During the week. Word would go around. The town. We've received a letter. From Paul. Let's get together. And hear it. Many would be illiterate. And couldn't read it. For themselves.

[35 : 33] Because it's. Not possible. To photocopy something. In those days. So there would be a public. Loud reading. Of the letter. And then there's. An exchange of letters.

When you've read it. Send it on to the church. In Laodicea. And you read the letter. From Laodicea. As well. Maybe there's similarities. Between the two. We don't know. That letter to Laodicea. Is presumably lost. And say to Archippus. One of the members. Of the church in Colossae. See that you complete. The task. That you've received. In the Lord. But we don't know. What that is. But he's urged.

To complete. A task. Given to him. By God. I remember. When I was young. Getting a chain letter. I was meant.

It was a postcard. I think. I was meant. To then send. Post six postcards. On to some other people. And I would eventually. End up with. 400,000 postcards. Or something. I don't think. I ever got any. Can't quite remember.

[36 : 28] The figures behind it. But. It all broke down. Somewhere. They're probably still sitting. In some postbox. In outer Mongolia. Or something like that. But a chain letter. Is one where you.

You in effect. Pass it on. Or you send a letter. In response to receiving one. And this is a chain letter. In two ways. One is. It's a letter. To the Colossians. That would be referred. On to the Laodiceans. In exchange for the one.

To them. But it's also a letter. Written. By someone in chains. Paul concludes. By saying. I Paul. Write this greeting.

With my own hand. Remember. My chains. Grace be with you. Remember. My chains. Don't be ashamed.

That I'm in prison. Don't be ashamed. That I'm in chains. For the sake of the gospel. Don't think. That that means. That the gospel is. Weak.

[37 : 22] Or foolish. As some might think. Remember. My chains. Because the purpose of God. Is that Jesus is supreme.

Not Rome. Not any government. Jesus. Is supreme. Two thousand years ago. Paul wrote this little letter. Three pages in our Bible.

To a church in a place. That no longer exists. Is just a hill. Near a big town. In the middle of Turkey. And yet now. We here tonight.

From cultures. From cultures all around the world. Representing even in this congregation. My guess would be. A dozen or fifteen. Different. Cultures and nationalities.

Have studied this letter. It's not written to us. It's written to them. Two thousand years ago. Why?

[38 : 17] Why do we devote this time. Eight sermons. To this letter. I Paul write this greeting. With my own hand. But it's not just Paul.

It's God. This letter has got God's hand on it. And yes. It's written. To that Colossian church. In the first century AD.

Thirty years at most. After Jesus died. And rose from the dead. But it's written to us. It's God's word. To us as well.

Through Paul. Through the Colossians even. But ultimately it has God's hand. And God's signature at its end. That's why Paul wrote in verse 16 of chapter 3.

Let the word of Christ. Dwell in you richly. Teach and admonish one another. In all wisdom. And in a sense.

[39 : 20] This is part of the word of Christ. Maybe Paul hadn't quite anticipated. That connection when he wrote this letter. Probably many of his letters. Are completely lost in history now.

But this one isn't. This one under God's superintendence. Is part of God's word. The New Testament of the Bible. And God is writing and speaking to us.

In it. Because God's unchanging purposes. Still stand. God's will for the Colossians. Is his will for us.

That we may lead a life. Worthy. Of the Lord. And of course the statements made in this letter. About Jesus Christ. Are still true. Jesus is supreme.

The image of the invisible God. He was described in chapter 1 verse 15. In him. In Jesus. All things were created. Jesus is the head of the church.

[40 : 23] The Colossian church. Our church. Every church. And. The aim of God. Is that Jesus might come. To have first place in everything.

For in Jesus. All the fullness of God. Was pleased to dwell. Still true. Different hemisphere. Two millennia later. Still true.

And God's will for us. Remains. To lead a life worthy of the Lord. God. Back in chapter 1. In the prayer that Paul prayed. There were four aspects of description.

Of what a worthy life was like. Growing in knowledge. Bearing fruit. Enduring with patience. And giving thanks with joy. God's will for us today. And that's God's will for us today.

As well. Is it a description of your life? Would you say that four central aspects of your life. Are growing in knowledge.

[41 : 21] Bearing fruit. Enduring with patience. And giving thanks with joy. I reckon the most. The majority of us. Would probably say no.

Not quite. If someone described my life. They probably wouldn't use all four of those things. Then. Colossians is for you. You see it's for you. To remind you of who you are.

If you're a believer in Jesus. If you've placed your faith and trust in him. Then you are in him. You died in him. You were buried in him. And when he rose to heaven.

You rose in him with him. We in a sense are in heaven. And that's why we're exhorted in this letter. To look to heaven. So remember what Paul commanded therefore.

Back in chapter 2 verse 6. As you have received Christ Jesus the Lord. Continue to live your lives. In him. Rooted and built up. In him.

[42 : 18] And established in the faith. Just as you were taught. Abounding in thanksgiving. Later on he said. If you've been raised with Christ. Seek the things above. True for us.

As it was for them. Put to death therefore. Whatever in you is earthly. A whole range of sins. Paul mentioned that we also. Are to put to death.

And in their place. Put on the clothes of Christ. Be clothed with compassion. Kindness. Humility. Meekness. Patience. And above all. Love. Whatever you do.

In word or deed. Do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus. Paul had said then. That the glorious word of the gospel of Jesus. The word of truth.

The word of grace. Was bearing fruit and growing through the whole world. And here we are. Representatives of the whole world.

[43 : 16] Australians. Singaporeans. Malaysians. From Hong Kong. From India. Sri Lanka. From Korea. Probably from England. South Africa. Probably other places as well.

Here tonight. The gospel is growing through the whole world. It's bearing fruit in the whole world. Paul's statement was true. And as we look around tonight. We see it's truth. And that's because it focuses on Jesus Christ.

Who is Lord of all the world. Lord supreme over the whole universe. The glorious risen Lord Jesus Christ. Paul said of Jesus.

Remember. In him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell. He said in chapter 2. In Jesus are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

So look to Jesus. Look above to Jesus where he is. At God's right hand. Where in fact we are in him. And look to the end of history.

[44 : 21] Paul said in chapter 1. That the aim of Paul's ministry. God's purpose in the universe. God's aim. Paul's aim.

Are to present you holy and blameless. And irreproachable before him. Provided that you continue securely established. And steadfast in the faith. Without shifting from the hope.

Promised by the gospel that you heard. Which has been proclaimed to every creature. Under heaven. That hope. Christ in you. The hope of glory.

It is Jesus whom we proclaim. Warning everyone. And teaching everyone in all wisdom. So that we may present everyone. Mature. In Christ.

That's Paul's aim. It's my aim in ministry here. Over the last 13 years. It's God's purpose.

[45 : 19] For each of you. That on the day of Jesus Christ. You are mature. And steadfast. In the likeness. Of Jesus. So devote yourselves.

To prayer. Let's pray. Let's pray. Oh God. We thank you for your son.

The Lord Jesus Christ. We thank you that in him. All things. Were created. And were created for him. And for his glory. Thank you that he is supreme.
Over the church. That he's reconciling. All things to yourself. And we pray. That we may live such wise. And godly lives. In deed.
And in word. Gracious. And salty words. That others may be drawn to you. And reconciled to you. Through the blood of his cross.
[46 : 18] And stand firm. Looking to his coming. And that day. Of being irreproachable. And blameless. In your sight. Strengthen us Lord God.
In faith. Strengthen us in perseverance. And in prayer. And we pray. That Jesus will come. And come again soon.
Amen.