

"I have come that you may have life"

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Date: 30 September 2018

Preacher: Rev Alan Montgomery

[0 : 0 0] evening we're going to be reading from colossians chapter 3 verses through 1 through 17 now hear god's word therefore if you have been raised up with christ keep seeking things above where christ is seated at the right hand of god set your mind on the things above not in the things that are on earth for you have died and your life is hidden with christ in god when christ who is our life is revealed then you also will be revealed with him in glory therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality impurity passion evil desire and greed which amounts to idolatry for it is because of these things that the wrath of god will come upon the sons of disobedience and in and in them you also once walked when you were living in them but now you also put them all aside anger wrath malice slander and abusive speech abusive speech from your mouth do not lie to one another since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices and you have put on a new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the one who created him a renewal in which there is no distraction between greek and jew circumcised or uncircumcised barbarian scythian slave and freeman but christ is all and in all so as those who have been chosen of god holy and beloved put on the heart of compassion kindness humility gentleness and patience bearing with one another and forgiving each other whoever has complaint against anyone just as the lord forgave you so also you should beyond all things put on love which is the perfect bond of unity let the peace of christ rule in your hearts to which indeed you were called in one body and be thankful that the word of christ richly dwell within you with all wisdom teaching and admonition one another with psalms and hymns spiritual songs singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord

Jesus, giving thanks throughout him to God the Father. Amen. Father God, as we come to your word, open our minds and our hearts. Help us to hear you speak to us.

And may your Holy Spirit impregnate our minds with your voice and only your voice, that we may hear and in a sense see only Jesus. Amen.

A speaker in a large student conference circulated a questionnaire among those who attended, requesting them to list the most important question on their minds.

And of the four most popular answers, what is the meaning of life, came first.

[3 : 5 6] What is the meaning of life? Now you may have asked that many times over the years. What's all this about?

Why is this happening? Or why is that? What's the meaning of this life? And neither science or philosophy can truly answer that question.

Only the risen Lord Jesus Christ, as he's revealed himself in man, in a human form, as he's come from heaven's glory, humbled himself, and come to share with you and with me God's love.

And as we meet him, and as we understand him, and as he speaks into our lives by his Holy Spirit, through his word, we then begin to understand what life is all about.

Jesus said, I have come that you may have life and that you may have it in all its fullness.

[5 : 1 2] You see, he doesn't want to give us a haphazard life, a mediocre life. He wants to give us a life which is full, absolutely full, and filled with him.

And we can't ask him or put him out of our lives in any way. We shouldn't doubt him. We have to ask him to be preeminent in all things.

Not just present or prominent, but preeminent in every aspect of our life day by day. Of course, there are those who will inevitably say, I don't understand this.

I don't believe all this about the Bible, about you telling me about God. I don't understand.

And many people have said that they don't understand about God. well, on one occasion, two men were discussing religion.

[6 : 33] And one of them said to the other, I don't have anything to do with religion. I don't have anything to do with things I don't understand.

I don't understand it. Do you hear me? His friend said, yes. He said, have you had breakfast this morning? Yes.

But what's that going to do with religion? Well, his friend persisted with the questioning. Did you put butter in your toast?

Yes. He replied, increasingly bewildered. Well, his friend responded, can you tell me how a black and white cow eating green grass can produce white milk that makes yellow butter?

No, I can't, answered his friend. Well, his friend said to him, I wouldn't have anything to do with breakfast. You see, we don't understand.

[7 : 52] But it's as we get into understanding Jesus and knowing Jesus. And my journey is different from Lydia's. Lydia's is different from Sophie's.

Sophie's different from Daniel's. And we've all got different journeys. stories. But one thing is in common. We all have had a personal relationship where God has spoken into our lives.

He's arrested our attention. And we've come to know him whom to know is life eternal. And I wonder if you know that this evening.

have you come to that position and that realization that Jesus wants to be your friend, wants to live with you, wants to help you in all your troubles, in all your situations.

He wants to be someone who will be there day by day when you're waking, when you're sleeping. he will be there watching over you.

[9 : 06] The apostle Paul had three short statements about his life. He said this to the Philippians, for to me to live is Christ.

To me to live is Christ. And he said to the church at Galatia, I live yet not I, but Christ lives in me.

And the church at Colossae, Christ who is in you. You see, it's all about Jesus. He had to submit to the voice of Christ, the calling of Christ, and be motivated to do something else.

What basically Paul was saying, that to him, life was someone else. And that person is the Lord Jesus Christ.

He was a man who at one time demonstrated physically and emotionally his bitter hatred of Christ and his church.

[10 : 30] But by the grace of God, the love of God, the power of God, in one sweeping move, his hatred was turned into a blazing and sacrificial love.

God has to God We don't all have journeys like Paul, or Saul, who later became Paul.

Our journey into faith is different from each one of us. But the end result is still the same. There comes a point in our life when we have to acknowledge that our way is our own way and turn and follow Christ.

Christ who is in me. the whole energy of his brilliant intellect and dynamic will was concentrated on making amends for the havoc he had brought on the church and the grief he had brought on Christ.

So real was his experience that Paul could only describe it in a cryptic sentence, for me to live is Christ to die is gain.

[12 : 14] For me to live is Christ but to die is gain. There's something far better in this world than just living aimlessly day by day.

When one comes to know the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal saviour, when transformation takes place, God promises that there's something better, more abundant.

You see when Saul surrendered his hatred and his hang-ups, indeed his whole life to God, he was then able to make to be made into the kind of person God intended him to be.

And that is the only way in which we can do what God wants us to do when he is in control, when he is preeminent in all things.

And we all need, each person here, needs to have that pivotal experience of coming to know and then live for God with all our faults and failings because once we become a Christian, we will do things that fail.

[13 : 47] Have you ever failed? yes. But in a sense, God can take us in our situation when we are going to fail and he can by the power of his spirit enable us not to fall into that temptation or testing.

Let me give you an example. shortly after I became a Christian, about 14 or so, I was going home from school one day and this big guy came to watch me.

He was a big guy. Okay, nobody here could match him. He was big. I don't know what I said to him or how I looked at him but he beat me up.

Now, I didn't tell anybody about that. You're one of the first people I've told. Not for a sympathy vote. Okay. I didn't tell my father, my mother.

I just accepted. But, about 10 years later, after I went into Baptist College and trained for the ministry, I was preaching in Coat Bridge Baptist Church and who should be sitting in the congregation but that big guy.

[15 : 26] Now, I've just felt like I'm going to go and take him out. Then, no, God said, don't do that. There'll be too much of a mess if he gets hold of you. No, I didn't do that.

But, what happened was, after the service, he came up to me and said, Alan, I want to apologize for what I did to you so many years ago.

Did that make me feel better? I still was a bit sore, but I could have done something that wouldn't have been Christ-like in that service and pointed him out and said, that guy beat me up one day, but I didn't.

But God spoke into his heart and he came and apologized for what he did to me. And that was wonderful to know that, to hear that, and to have that apology.

And as we think about our life with our feelings, our shortcomings, and knowing that God never leaves us or forsakes us, knowing that God will arrest our attention day by day to bring us closer to himself.

[16 : 46] There are four particular things relating to Paul's experience of Christ with which we can identify very shortly. The first is this, Christ was Paul's example.

example. Romans chapter 15, may the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind towards each other that Christ Jesus had.

He was Paul's example. Ananias had come to Paul. We read in Acts chapter 9, Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus had appeared to you on the road, road to Damascus, as you were coming here, has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.

immediately something like scales fell from Saul's eyes and he could see again. He got up and was baptized and after taking some food, he regained his strength.

Christ was his example day by day in every situation in life. Of course, he also, Paul could also say, the things that I want to do, I don't do, and the things that I should do, I shouldn't, or I should do.

[18 : 38] And we all go through those experiences of wanting to do something and then we fall flat, we fail. But if we keep our eyes fixed on Christ, and see him, who he is, he will strengthen us day by day.

And with the Lord Jesus Christ as his example, he learned to be obedient, he learned to be loving, and he learned to be sacrificial.

All of those things brought a deep assurance and peace to his life. you'll recall in the Gospels that Jesus gave one golden rule when he said this, do to others as you would have them do to you.

What a high calling. You see, Christ makes the bar so high that we have to strive, we have to depend upon him to succeed and be where he wants us to be.

Striving towards the goal to win the prize for which God has called you heavenwards in Christ Jesus.

[20 : 12] He places that bar high, low. But let me say this, he also places it low. Why? Not because it will be easy to step over, no.

He sometimes places that bar low in order we are humble enough to get under it. therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourself with compassion, kindness, and humility.

The first step up is always down. To be humble humble is to follow Jesus Christ who humbled himself, gave up the throne in heaven that he may show each and every one of us what life is like to be lived to the full.

How he can change us day by day and how he can come into our lives moment by moment. And at Jesus' baptism, what Jesus was doing, it was different from that of John's baptism, but Jesus was getting under the problem of sin and carrying it to the cross.

Your sin, my sin, and if I were to ask you this evening, have you ever sinned? I don't think any there would be anybody here who would say no.

[22 : 04] We all have come short of the glory of God. He got under our sin through baptism, the dying and rising again, and carrying it to the cross.

God's forgiveness. And as we repent and know God's forgiveness, we go forward in obedience.

We die to self. We are buried with Christ. We rise again with a purposeful determination to follow his example.

you are baptized, Lydia, not to make you a Christian, but because you are a Christian and want to follow him and show your friends and family your commitment.

His example. But secondly, Christ was Paul's reconciliation. We read that in his letter to the Corinthians.

[23 : 24] God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.

Helping adults and young people, helping our peers, understand God's love.

Sometimes we're a bad example, but God can fill us with his power and brings us closer to himself. That way we may be stronger in our faith, in our witness, in our discipleship.

That way we may be able to help people understand God's love. And that's something that's needed in the world today.

You know, that love can heal the fractions and brokenness caused by sin.

[24 : 37] sin. And yes, there are those who feel pain more than other people. There are those whose wounds are deep-rooted.

Indeed, there might even be some people here this evening who weep on their pillows every night for what's happened, how they've been ill-treated, there's injustice done to them.

And dare I say, sometimes those injustices come through the church. You only have to listen to the news in recent days, how that's happened.

And when we think about the Lord Jesus Christ, we see and hear that Jesus too wept. He wept over the grave of an individual, his friend Lazarus.

He wept over a city, oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem, he cried out. And he wept over the world from the cross.

[26 : 01] And then he cried out, it is finished. The work was complete, the price was paid, and reconciliation was for all those who believed.

When was the last time you cried for someone as Jesus cried? When was the last time you wept for a family member?

When was the last time you wept asking Christ to forgive you for your sin and cleanse you? Maybe tonight is a night you'll do that.

and you'll go home renewed, strengthened, and revitalized by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The third thing is this, that Christ was his strength. Paul said this, I can do all things, I can do everything through him who strengthens me.

[27 : 20] And that was no glib statement. It wasn't insincere or shallow. But what he was saying this, I can do everything that Christ wants me to do by his strength.

Now we all have our own agenda sometimes. I want to do this, I want to do that. I'd like to win this prize or win that lottery. But that's not the thing Christ wants of us.

He asks us to do things for him. Why? The God who owns the cattle in a thousand hills doesn't need any of those things.

And neither do we because we have everything we need. in Christ. He wants us to do his will. He wants to empower me to do it.

And don't confuse that ever. That it's things we want to do. I can do everything that Christ wants me to do.

[28 : 30] Not I, but Christ. Be honored, loved, exalted. Not I, but Christ be seen and known and heard.

And that is hard to put ourselves to the side that Christ may be seen in everything I do and everything I say.

Jesus, only Jesus, because it's all about him and his glory. and as Paul allowed the Lord Jesus Christ to be preeminent, he had a new sense of fellowship, companionship, and realized he didn't walk alone because Christ walked with him.

and the fourth thing is this, Christ as his savior. His letter to Titus, Paul's letter to Titus, says, he saved us not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy.

He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal of the Holy Spirit. You see, we are saved from the effects of sin, the power of sin, the hold of sin, the ugliness of sin, and the one who, when faith and trust, with faith and trust, are expressed, comes to live within you.

[30 : 18] Christ was his savior. Faith hears the inaudible, sees the invisible, believes the incredible, and receives the impossible.

Lydia has testified this evening, and a few moments she's going to testify as she goes through the water of baptism, that Christ is her savior.

But what about you? What about the many people who are here tonight? Have you had that life-changing experience of Jesus?

has he transformed you? Has he changed you? Has he set you on this journey and promised never to leave you and stick with you through thick and thin?

Even when we do things we don't want to do, he comes to us and he brings us back under his wings.

[31 : 28] I wonder if you've heard that still small voice, maybe this evening, maybe last week, maybe last month or even last year, where God was speaking to you and you've been resistant to respond positively to him.

The Savior is waiting to enter your heart. Why don't you let him come in? There's nothing in this world to keep you apart.

What is your answer to him? And as Lydia, in a few moments, O come, what's your back here?

The ladies are going to sing to us that song. The Savior is waiting.