

Christ Over the Past

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- [0:00] All right, so we are going to continue on. It's because it was on mute.
That's why I was muted. It's usually not their fault.! It's usually our fault. So I will fully admit that. We are going to continue on in our series on Colossians.
If you'd like to get caught up, you can go visit our YouTube channel at FBC Henrietta. On YouTube and see previous sermons in this series and others. Before we move on with the service, if you are a veteran of any of our armed forces, would you mind standing?
Current or past? Yes, thank you. There we go. Mike's standing up in the sound deck as well.
I want to thank all of you for your service on this Veterans Day weekend. You just saw the introductory video into our series on Colossians called Christ Over All.
- [1:09] And before we dive into it, can I ask you all a question? Have you ever been walking along outside, looking up at the sky, taking in the beauty of God's creation?
Maybe the birds flying, the clouds floating through the sky, and the sun peeking through. And then you trip and fall because you weren't watching where you were going. Yeah, me too.
And then at some point, I don't know what age you hit this, but when you're walking along, you're more concerned about walking along through a field. You're more concerned about twisting your ankle.
I don't know what age that happens. Yeah, there you go. It keeps getting younger and younger, I feel like.
The ancient philosophers had a bit of a reputation for that. They were so obsessed with gazing at the heavens, coming up with all kinds of wild and crazy theories about what might be up there, that they would sometimes walk right into a ditch.
- [2:14] They became known for that. It was kind of a running joke. Maybe that's why Paul kicks off the third chapter of his letter to the church in Colossae, Colossians chapter 3, by saying, Set your sights on the realities of heaven.
Set your sights on the realities of heaven. Not theories, not wild fantasies, but realities.
But exactly what good is that going to do us? Well, let's get into it. As you turn to Colossians chapter 3, we're going to kick it off in verse 1, and we can do a very, very brief recap of our study of Paul's letter to the church in Colossae.
This is called Christ Over All, our series through Colossians. Paul wrote these not as books of the Bible, but as individual letters to specific churches at a point in time.
Later, the church would compile them into what we now have as the scriptures, as the Holy Bible today. But they were specific letters written for specific people in a specific place at a specific time.
- [3:23] So we can draw much from that while understanding this was for this church in Colossae. Three weeks ago, we saw from Colossians chapter 1 that in Jesus Christ, all things hold together.

All things hold together. He's holding it all together. We called it Christ Over the Cosmos, the ordered universe as we know it. And then in week 2, we saw that once, we were alienated by sin.

We were seen as illegal aliens in God's eyes. But he has reconciled us through his son to himself, and he's rewriting us a brand new story. Once alienated, now reconciled Christ over us.

And then last Sunday, we looked at Christ over religion when we saw that a rooted relationship with Jesus is always far more meaningful than the rules of religion.

So we're compelled to let our roots grow down deep into Jesus. So now let's look at chapter 3 and verse 1. Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, set your sights on the realities of heaven, where Christ sits in the place of honor at God's right hand.

[4 : 41] Think about the things of heaven, not the things on the earth. Your Bible might say, set your affections on things above. Not on things of this earth.

For you died to this life, and your real life, the realities, are hidden with Christ in God. And when Christ, who is your life, is revealed to the whole world, you will share in all his glory.

What a powerful setup for the next several verses that he's going to get into here as he's teaching this church and he's teaching us today through this Bible that's been handed down through generations.

This reminds me of a quote by a famous pastor from many, many years ago up in New England called Jonathan Edwards. He said, Let's look at that again.

No change of religious nature will ever take place until the affections are moved. I think that's what Paul was saying at the beginning of chapter 3.

[5 : 51] He said, Set your affections on things above, not things of the earth. Think about those things. Prioritize those things.

But often we get them backwards, don't we? So Paul's kicking it off by teaching us this. Christ over our past. Christ over the past.

New affections. New realities. A new life. The old is gone. The new has come. And that's always the way with God.

That's always the way with Jesus. That's always his message. We're replacing the old with the new. And Jesus came to bring the new. We're about to enter into the Christmas season.

How many of y'all think it's crazy that Christmas is practically here? Yeah, it can't be just right. There's a lot of hands. It's here, y'all. And we're going to be talking about Jesus coming and bringing something new.

[6 : 52] Let's not forget the message of Jesus is the old is gone. The new is here. That's what he came to do. So let's see what Paul's talking about in Colossians chapter 3.

The big idea this morning is this. Christ over the past. What do we mean by Christ over the past? We mean trade your past for God's power.

Trade your past for God's power. It doesn't mean that you can't learn from it. It doesn't mean that you didn't maybe have some good things in your past. Although often the bad things rise to the surface.

I love how Jamie shared some of the problems and the struggles from his past. But that God used to bring him to a place of God's power in his life.

And we got to see the evidence of that this morning with him being baptized in front of our church. What a powerful moment and testimony. So we're trading our past for God's power. Number one this morning, put the old you to death.

- [7 : 53] Let's look back at the text. Colossians chapter 3 verse 5. Put the old you to death. Therefore, Paul writes, put to death what belongs to your earthly nature. Sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desire, greed.
- This is idolatry. These are literally idols that will steal your worship away from God and cause you to worship other things.
- So put the old you to death. Put to death the sinful earthly things lurking within you. The New Living Translation puts it that way. The sinful earthly things lurking within you.
- Say, man, I don't have anything sinful and earthly lurking within me. What are you talking about? I'm a good person. You're deceiving yourself. We all have sinful earthly things lurking within us.
- Until God delivers us from this body that is sinful someday, we all have to deal with this struggle constantly. We even see those written about in the scriptures having to deal with this struggle.
- [8 : 58] So we're not talking about a self-improvement plan. That leads to death. You can't get anywhere with that. You can get down a certain way, but you're relying on your own strength.
- And that's not going to get you anywhere without the power of God. That's why we're saying trading God's past for his, your past for God's power.
- So I'm not talking about a self-improvement plan. We're talking about transformation. We're talking about transformation. By a power bigger than you. Bigger than me.
- You don't negotiate with what Jesus already nailed to the cross. What do you do? You let it die. You bury it. That's why Paul literally says, put to death what belongs to your earthly nature.
- Jesus buried your sin. He buried your sin. Psalm 103 and verse 12 puts it this way. David was writing before Christ ever came about what God would do someday.
- [10 : 07] And he said, he has removed our sins as far from us as the east is from the west. I got backwards. For y'all, that worked well, though.
- Anyway. Which way is east? Which way is west? There you go. East. Okay. From the east, from the west. There we go. God has removed our sins or our transgressions from us.
- That is if we are in Christ. I always want to throw that caveat in there. Because if you're not in Christ, then you're still carrying the full load of your sin. And I don't want that for you.
- Nobody here wants that for you. We saw the testimony of someone who has experienced freedom in Christ this morning. We heard it. It was powerful. It was moving. And I want you to have that testimony.
- As so many in this room share. He has removed our sins. We'll still remember some of the things we did. But God has wiped it clean. Past, present, and future.
- [11 : 11] He's put it to death. There's another verse that says he's literally nailed it to his cross. So while they were nailing his hands, nailing his feet to the cross, in a sense, they were nailing our sins to his cross.
- Because they were going to die. The punishment for those sins was going to be gone. The effect of those sins eternally separating us from God was going to be rendered irrelevant now.
- Because Jesus conquered them. Jesus won victory over them. So now he says, don't keep those sins alive. Don't keep your sinful past alive.
- Put the old you to death. Romans chapter 6 and verse 4. Paul's writing to the church in Rome this time.

And he says, we died and we were buried with Christ by baptism. Isn't that a cool thing? That was the illustration of what Jesus did for us.

[12:17] Thank God he didn't literally ask us to go get nailed to a cross and buried in a tomb. Only God could do that. Only Jesus could pull that off. But he says, now you walk in the way that I have modeled for you.

And step number one after placing your faith in me is to get up and model what I did and would be baptized. We got to see that. We celebrate that. And we'll watch the video again next week and get excited about it again.

It'll be great. So we died and we were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of his father, now we also may live new lives.

By the glorious power of the father. That's inferred there. By God's glorious power, we get to live new lives.

So here's the thought. Stop digging up. What Jesus already buried. Stop digging up. What Jesus already buried.

[13:26] I don't know about y'all. Every once in a while. Something from my past will worm its way into my mind. And it'll make me feel like.

Trash. Anybody else? Anybody else? We're good at accusing ourselves, aren't we? Do you know who accuses you?

Anybody? The devil. That's why he's called the accuser. Does Jesus accuse you anymore?

No, he doesn't. If you are in Christ, then you stand free and clear, forgiven for Jesus. So stop digging up what Jesus already nailed to his cross.

Stop digging up what Jesus already buried. Now go back to Colossians 3, would you? Colossians 3, verse 10. He said, put these things to death.

[14:28] The sexual immorality, the impurity, the lust, the evil desire, the greed, the idolatry. Because of these problems, these sins, God's wrath has come on the disobedient. By the way, we were all at one time disobedient.

Oftentimes, we still disobey God's laws. But now we are forgiven. Even before we do it, God's already forgiven it. So, you once walked in these things when you were living in them, but now put them away.

He says in verse 8, put away all the following. Anger, wrath, malice, slander, filthy language from your mouth. Don't lie to one another, since you put off the old self with its practices. Now pick up with me in verse 10, would you?

Have put on the new self. Put on the new self. He doesn't tell you to stop something without telling you to start something. He doesn't tell you to take something off without telling you to put something on.

So, he says, put on the new self. You are being renewed in knowledge according to the image of your creator. By the way, we all bear the image of our creator.

[15:35] That's why we have to treat each other, not as some of us less than someone else, not as an enemy, not as an opposition, but as an image bearer of God.

Every one of us bears the image of almighty God because we are his creation. So, you're being renewed in knowledge according to the image of your creator.

Verse 11. In Christ, watch this. There's no Greek. There's no Jew. There's no circumcision or uncircumcision. We talked about this a little bit last Sunday.

That was one of the controversies of the day. Nowadays, you take a brand new baby, you take him back to the hospital pretty soon after they're born and they get circumcised. It's a medical procedure.

A lot of people do it. Back then, it was very rare. Pretty much only the Jews did it. So, that was their thing. God told us to do this and it makes us better than you. We're circumcised and you're not. He says, no.

[16:35] None of that matters anymore. If you're a barbarian, if you're a Scythian, if you're a slave or free, these were often insults that would be thrown around by people from different areas.

He said, none of that matters anymore. Substitute our modern day dividing lines into this verse. Every age has to do that. They have to look and see what was Paul saying by this.

Why was he using these terms, these words? Oh, okay. Now I see. These were dividing lines across cultures that divided people. Let's put ours in there now so we can understand it in context.

He says, none of this matters anymore. These lines of division don't matter anymore. Now Christ is all. And in all.

That's why the whole title of this whole series and this whole letter from Paul is Christ over all. Jesus is the answer.

[17:35] Jesus is the answer. Jesus is the way. And the further away his followers get from him, the less effective we are. The less good we do.

The less light of Jesus we shine in this world. So Colossians 3, 10 through 11 is teaching us Christ is more important than all these old dividing lines.

So he says, throw those things out and replace it now with something new. So point number two is this. Put on what reflects Christ.

Put the old you to death. Take that off and now put on what reflects Christ. Pick it up in verse 12. Therefore, as God's chosen ones, holy and dearly loved, put on compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, bearing with one another and forgiving one another.

If anyone has a grievance against somebody else, just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also are to forgive. Look at verse 14. Above all, put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.

[18:46] That's how we stay unified together, even when we disagree, even when we don't get along, is if we genuinely love one another. And let the peace of Christ, to which you were also called, you were called to this peace.

So if we're not experiencing it, why not? Let the peace of Christ, to which you were also called in one body, rule in your hearts and be thankful.

Throws that in there at the end. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell richly among you in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another through psalms, hymns, spiritual songs.

Say, why do y'all sing these songs when we come to church? No other gathering do they get around and sing unless it's like Fourth of July or something. Why do y'all do that? Because we're told to. God loves to hear his people sing songs of praise to him.

And it's good for us. We encourage and admonish and uplift one another by singing together. And we're singing it to God with gratitude, that thankfulness in our hearts.

[19:52] And whatever we do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. Now, that was a lot all at once.

Verses 12 through 17. He's teaching us a lot here. It's like drinking from a fire hose. Let's go over to Ephesians chapter 4. Turn back just a few pages. Ephesians chapter 4.

A couple years ago, we did a study through Ephesians. By the way, there's a lot of similarities in what he wrote to the church at Ephesus and what he wrote to the church at Colossae. It seems like he might have written these letters around the same time and sent them by courier to these two far apart churches.

So, Paul's teaching these guys something valuable. So, Ephesians chapter 4, verse 22. He's going to shed a little bit of light on what he was just talking about in Colossians 3.

Let's go see what he's telling the Ephesians. Verse 22. Take off your former way of life, the old self. Take off your former way of life, the old self.

[20:59] Why? Because it's corrupted. It's corrupted by deceitful desires. Instead, be renewed in the spirit of your minds and put on the new self.

Here we are. This is where we just said, put on what reflects Christ. He says, put on the new self. Clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience.

He says back in Ephesians 4, put on the new self, the one created according to God's likeness. Remember that whole part about bearing the image of God? He's telling the Ephesians the same thing.

The one that is created according to God's likeness, that new spirit that Jesus is giving you, put that on every day. So, what does it mean?

When we wake up before we get dressed for the day, we put on what reflects Christ. We put on our new spirit, the new self, according to God's likeness in righteousness and purity of the truth.

[22:07] Back in Colossians 3 now. Every once in a while you get to turn a couple pages in your Bible, you'll be all right, all right? You can't live a new life wearing old clothes.

You can't live a new life wearing old clothes. I think that's a principle we can draw from what Paul's teaching here. He's trying to teach us how to live a new life.

Have you ever felt like things just aren't changing? Things aren't getting better. You keep waiting for God to make your life better, and it just isn't happening.

Number one, we've got to reevaluate what we think is better. Is what is better what is of Jesus, or is it what is of this world?

Got to draw a distinction there. Secondly, we're not going to get to what is better while we're wearing the old clothes of our former selves.

[23:10] That's what Paul's teaching here. You can't live a new life wearing old clothes. Some time ago, we studied Jesus' parables back over the summer, and we looked at the one of the wedding feast.

And the king invited his guest list, and they turned him down. They had something better to do, and he was deeply hurt by that. And he said, anybody can come now. Go out into the streets.

Invite anybody to the wedding feast of my son, because my guest list turned me down. And so he said, now anyone can come. And people started flooding in.

And when they got into the door, they were given a wedding garment to put on. A special garment. This was common back then. It was the custom. And nobody could brag about their outfit being better or more expensive than someone else's.

So everyone got a new wedding garment to put on so they could be part of the wedding party. There's my little friend. He comes to visit every Sunday. And then finally, the king saw one person standing over there not wearing a wedding garment.

[24:13] He said, how did he get in? He's not wearing the wedding garment. The point of that is, you have to be wearing the new garment that Jesus gives you. If you're not, then you don't belong.

You don't fit in. And you'll never live the life that Jesus has for you. So you can't live a new life wearing old clothes.

Talking about this reminds me of Lazarus. Remember this story?

Jesus' dear friends back in Bethany. Mary, Martha, their brother Lazarus. He grew up with these people. And he would go see them and visit them and eat at their house.

And then he gets word that Lazarus is dying. And he doesn't rush back to say goodbye to him. He doesn't even rush back to heal him. He waits for Lazarus to die.

[25:15] And then he goes back to Bethany. And the sisters greet him and say, Jesus, he's dead. If you had been here, maybe you could have saved him. And he goes to the grave and he says, Lazarus, come out.

Lazarus, come forth. And what happens? Life is breathed back by God's power into that dead body. And Lazarus rises up, wrapped in his grave clothes.

And they move the stone and he comes out. And the first thing Jesus said is, unwrap him. Get those grave clothes off of the guy. He doesn't need to wear those any longer.

He is alive. And I think that is what Jesus is teaching us. And that's what Paul was trying to teach this church. Get those grave clothes off of you. Trade them for grace clothes.

We trade our grave clothes for the clothes of God's grace that he has mercifully given to us. You did nothing to earn it. Lazarus did nothing to bring himself back to life.

[26:22] But God, by his good pleasure, breathed life into us when we were dead in our sins. And he brought us back to life. And now he says, don't go back and put on the clothes of your past life.

And I'm not just talking about going out and carousing and living like the devil. I'm talking about the internal clothes that we put on. The clothes of fear.

The clothes of being judgmental. The clothes of being selfish. The clothes of being self-absorbed. The clothes of looking down on others. The clothes of pride. The clothes of ego.

Those old grave clothes that were holding us down. Condemning us to death. Separating us from God. God says, take them off. Every day, take them off.

Because if not, you'll never taste the freedom. You'll never taste the life that I have for you. The guilt. The shame.

[27:21] The sin. Those are the grave clothes. Jesus calls you out. Just trade them for grace clothes.

Live in resurrection power. Isaiah chapter 61. I love it. When the Old Testament prophets testify to something that we get to experience now since Jesus has come and died and raised back to life.

And we get to live in this age of his church. Carrying out his mission. So this prophet Isaiah says, I will greatly rejoice in the Lord my God for he has clothed me with garments of salvation.

That's what you and I get to put on every day. We recognize we are clothed in garments of salvation. And he has covered me with the robe of righteousness.

Thank God that every day I get to be covered with the robe of God's righteousness. Because I don't have a robe of righteousness. I can't afford it.

[28:22] It's too expensive. It requires perfection. It requires being divine. It requires not being born into this sinful human race.

I can't get me a robe of righteousness. There's no black market deals. Only Jesus has the real authentic article.

But he clothes me with that every day. So I get to wake up clothed in a robe of righteousness. And then when God looks at me, he says, you can stay at the wedding feast.

You could be here. You're dressed right. You got the garment on. So don't go out in the street and go slumming with the old way.

With the old you. If you don't know what it is, husbands, ask your wives. And they'll tell you what the old you is. Wives, ask your husbands. If neither one of you are being honest with each other, ask your kids.

[29:28] Have an honest conversation. The ones who know us best know what we are at our worst. God's saying, I love you at your worst.

But don't stay at your worst. Put on me. I can help you. Not asking you to enter into a 10-step program or a self-improvement plan.

And maybe there's been a 10-step program that helped you break an addiction. God can use all kinds of things. But I'm telling you, God's power is where the secret lies. He has power over your past.

He has power over your present. But He has power over your past. We're going to close with this this morning. Trade the fantasy of your past for the reality of God's power.

What do we mean by the fantasy of your past? Sometimes, sometimes we'll glorify the past. Has there ever been a generation that didn't believe how they grew up was better than how the current one was growing up?

[30:31] How many of y'all believe that how you grew up was better than how they're growing up nowadays? I do too, okay? Except I'm right. So, we had the perfect blend of like, still keeping it old school but also enjoying some of the new stuff.

You know, it was great. Truth is, none of our pasts were as good as we think they were. Every generation has its flaws.

Every generation has its problems. We look back and often we'll glorify the past. Sometimes we'll do the opposite. Sometimes we'll make it worse than it was.

And psychiatrists have made a living off of that sometimes. Whatever it is, we never see the past clearly. You know who has 20-20 vision of your past?

God. He's the only one. When you and I look back in our memory, it's always distorted. It's actually a fantasy.

[31:32] Whether we've erred on making it better or we've erred on making it worse. Sometimes we'll do both. God is teaching us. Paul is using this to teach this church and we can learn just like they did to trade the fantasy of our past for the reality.

Not a fantasy, not walking up, wondering what's up there. We can know for reality what is God's power. Would you bow with me in prayer?

God, I pray that you would reveal your power to us right now. We tasted your power. We saw the results of it earlier in the service.

We saw Jamie up there going before a whole church out of his comfort zone saying, I have chosen to follow Jesus.

Now I'm going to be an example for my family, for my church family of what it looks like to be a follower of Jesus. I'm going to get up and I'm going to testify in front of my church family and say, I choose the Jesus way.

[32 : 38] God's been teaching me. God's been walking with me. We saw that power on display. We felt the power of your spirit as we lifted up those songs to you and we're singing about how we don't need to live in that place of shame anymore.

We can let it go. We can recognize that you've buried it. You've nailed it to your cross. Let us not get our shovel of shame and regret and go dig it up again.

Let us trade that for your power. God, to your glory, by your spirit, let us not try to live this life wearing old clothes, but trade our past for your power.

We'll give you the glory for it. In Jesus' name. Would you keep your seats just for a moment? We'll have just a moment of prayer, quiet reflection. If God's doing business with you, then you listen to him.

You respond to him. If there's somebody who needs to turn from sin and turn to Jesus and give your life to Jesus for the first time, then please walk down here.

[33 : 51] Meet me at the front. I'd love to sit and talk with you about that. There's many in this room who would love to share with you the gospel of Jesus, how you can know for sure that God is your savior, the forgiver of your sins.

If there's somebody who would like to make a decision to partner with this church and membership and say, I'd like to join with you as you follow Jesus together, then please come down. I would love to talk with you about that as well. If you just need prayer, stay in your seat, come down to these steps.

You can kneel here, whatever you'd like to do. Do some business with God.