

**Kailua Christian Church**  
**Sunday, March 5, 2023**  
**Colossians 3:1-4**  
**“Christians Stand in Solid Ground”**  
**Guest Pastor: Pastor Clive Cowell**

**Scripture Reading:**

*“If then [or since] you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.” Col 3:1-4.*

**Passage: Col 3:1-4**

**Message Title: Christians Stand on Solid Ground!**

**Introduction for the Bulletin:** Have you ever truly thought about building your house on sinking sand? There’s not a builder in the world who would do such a crazy thing – the house would sink. How about our lives? Do we build our lives on statements we say to ourselves that are sinking sand or do we build our lives on a simple statement that is solid ground? Today we will compare statements we often make and look at a simple passage from the Bible and what it states found in Colossians 3:1-4. Decide for yourself if you are on sinking sand... or solid ground!

**Message**

There is a marvelous image found in the Bible.

*“the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.” Col. 3:1b*

Let us think on this image today. Let us think about this person whom we all know – Jesus – let us think of Him; seated at the right hand of the Father.

No one else has that position. No one else. Only Jesus. Only Jesus is seated... at the right hand of the Father.

Let’s pray.

*Let’s pray for today’s message that we will think on the things that God wants us to think about. Let’s pray that if we have old ways of doing things; things that do not actually line up with God’s heart... that we will know with clarity what is the way; what are the things we should think about; what are the ways we should do things.*

## Good morning.

You know, I'm pretty sure most of here today have read that verse I mentioned in the beginning. Here it is again:

*"the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God." Col. 3:1b*

Would you imagine for a moment what that place looks like? There is God the Father and there seated at His right hand (God's right hand), is Jesus... the anointed one... the Christ.

There they are... both together. Above. In the heavens.

Who could possibly be at the right hand of God? Is such a thing possible? Could anyone really be so close to God the Father? Does the divine allow such intimacy? Does the Divine allow anyone that close?

Yes, He does. God has His Son.... By His side.

What does such imagery convey to you?

Intimacy? Closeness? Unity? Togetherness? Sovereignty? A bond unbreakable? A force immovable? Strength? Power? Does it bring warm comfort?

That place above... referred to in the Scripture... is a place that is on solid ground, don't you think?

### ***The ground on which we stand is solid ground.***

There's an old song, "My Hope is Built on Nothing Less" with the lyric:  
*"On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand."*

It was written about 180 years ago and it was prompted by the *Parable of the Wise and Foolish Builders* Jesus told on the mountain.

*"Some built their house on a rock...*

*The rain came down, the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat on that house; and it didn't fall, for it was founded on the rock.*

*Everyone who hears these words of mine, and doesn't do them will be like ...*

*...a foolish man, who built his house on the sand. The rain came down, the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat on that house; and it fell—and great was its fall."*

Matthew 7:24-27.

As I read that parable, I am grateful. And here's why. Jesus doesn't want anyone to fall! And neither does the Father! They are one in agreement on that!

The Father knows that we could be on sinking sand. A terrible place to be.

But in His love for us... He provides solid ground... a rock... and that rock is Jesus Himself.

What a statement in the song: *all other ground... is sinking sand.*

***The question for today.***

I guess that's a question relevant for today: Is the ground we stand on rock.. or is it sinking sand?

I hope you agree with me that it's a relevant question: Is the ground we stand on rock or is it sinking sand?

Of course, neither the song nor Jesus... neither of them is literally talking about building a house down on the sandy beach. Everyone knows that that is foolish.

So, what is Jesus... and the song... really talking about?

Let's explore that today by looking at two things. If it's ok, I'd like to focus on things that are said or spoken.

First: is things **we** say.

Second: is things **that the Lord** says **in the Bible**.

We shall need reminders of both and I'm happy to provide some reminders.

And the purpose is this... to see if the things we say... match up... or do not match up... with what the Lord says in the Bible.

I'll give you an example of both to begin with and once you get the picture, let's go a little deeper to make sure we really understand the key part of the message: **are you on solid ground or sinking sand?**

If your life is on solid ground – thank God. He's made a good place for you.

If your life is on sinking sand... well thank God also... because He's got a place for you to relocate to... it's time to move!!!!

Ok, here's an example of something a person might say:

*"Alright, I'm not the best person in the world but I can point you to a million people who are far worse than me. Surely, I'm on the plus side. By comparison, I'm in. Right?"*

What is this person saying? Well, they are talking about salvation, that's what they are talking about. And, the place they want to be in... is heaven.

And how do they figure that they are "in"? Well, they are comparing themselves to other people.

What's the comparison? *"Well, there are a million people far worse than me."*

You know, if you are in 18 foot of water off the beach of Waikiki and there are a million people bobbing up and down in 180 foot of water.... here's the thing... you may be closer to the beach than they are **but you are both wet!**

Comparisons. We make them all the time. I know I do! But when we make such comparisons... though they might make us feel good or better... are such comparisons solid ground or are they sinking sand? Comparing ourselves to other in matters of salvation: well, that's sinking sand, isn't it?

So, what is the solid ground that the Bible speaks of?

Let's look at Col. 3:1-4 to see what is the ground that we as Christians stand on.

*"If then [or since] you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory."* Col 3:1-4.

Wow! That's solid ground! Let's take a look around this passage to see this solid ground. I think you'll find many amazing aspects.

### 1. First. We have died to the mastery of earthly things over our lives and we have been raised together with Christ.

The ground on which we stand on is described this way...

*"For you have died" Col. 3:3a*

The force, the spirit, that made us sinner... is dead. It has no control over us, Christian. It is gone! You have died.

And...also, another description, this time in verse 1...

*"[Since] you have been raised with Christ" Col. 3:1a*

What a great affirmation. Dead to old ways, but not dead and buried... No, dead and resurrected. Now, these ideas are not new to Paul. In fact, if you turn your Bible back to Col. 2:20 you will see the same idea:

*"If [or since] with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulation?" Col 2:20.*

This statement is a rhetorical statement;

So, Paul is not describing any uncertainty for these believing readers.  
No, Paul is saying that the readers have died to the elemental spirits. Fact!

And with that, Paul is stating (in Col 2) that there is no legitimate reason to go on living under the influence of a world they were previously governed by... governed by such elemental spirits.

So, what are these elemental spirits that one could be living under? Or what were these elemental spirits that they were living under?

Paul is talking about **doctrines (not of God); or, ways of this world; or, earthly rules.**

**Guess what?**

**It's things that we say that we think bring us salvation.**

These "rules" ... if you'd believe them... are presented as keys to 'successful' religion.

But Paul is clear ... the 'elemental spirits'; the ways of the world; the earthly rules have zero value in curbing the real problem we all face.

And what is that problem: our fallen nature.

So, the world will teach ways, rules, elemental spirits to overcome our fallen nature, but the Bible is clear; such ways will not work.

Paul says as much...

*"These [elemental spirits] have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh." Col 2:23*

People ask: what is Paul getting at here in modern terms? Paul is clear...

You have died.

You have been raised. Not by works, or rules, or regulations, or even sayings that you come up with... no, you are saved because of Christ!

Here are some modern-day ways people try to live by rules, or earthly ways. These are all "kinds" of saying we all might have said at some time or other.

1. *"I'm going to give money. I'm going to contribute. I'm going to give to the poor. I'm going to see someone in need and as I give I really cannot imagine in the final day that the Almighty would condemn me. After all, look at all the money I've given!"* **You cannot buy your way into heaven.**
2. Here's another way. *"I'm going to volunteer. I'm going to pitch in. I'm going to give my time. I'm going to use my skill and expertise. I'm going to get my hands dirty for Jesus, or for whatever deity I think is in charge. I'm going to work, do good, serve. And, on judgment day, I just can't imagine that God would watch the video of my life, of me serving on Thanksgiving Day with the homeless, and still send me to hell."* **You cannot work your way into heaven.**
3. Here's another: *"Confession. Confirmation. Communion. Baptism. Prayers. Beads. Candles. Church attendance. Pointing a mat toward a city and bowing down five times a day in the direction of that city. Whatever. Some sort of a ceremony is going to get me right with God."* No! **rituals will not get you into heaven.**
4. Next: *"Alright, I'm not the best guy in the world but I can point you to a million people who are far worse than me. Surely, I'm on the plus side. By comparison, I'm in."* **You cannot hope by comparison that you'll be in heaven.**

5. Then there is the person who says: *“This whole thing is a riddle. And I’m going to figure it out and when I figure it out then I’m going to be in God’s good graces – because I figured it out. If I learn enough about the Almighty, then I will be accepted. **If I just get smart enough, then I will be saved.**”*
6. Here’s another. A bit more subtle: *“Ok, I’m going to walk that aisle, sign that card, pray the sinner’s prayer.”* Yes, pastors will encourage **the act of decision**. And a decision is important, but the ground for assurance is Christ.
7. Then there’s the person who says: *“I’ve done a lot of bad things in my life so I need to go back and take care of it.”* Should you make **restitution**? Yes. But only Christ is the solid rock.
8. Here’s another: *“I can just go on a retreat and be quiet and still before God. He connects with me when I clear my mind. When I’m poised and quiet, God comes and meets me where I am.”* No. **Not even meditation will save you.**
9. Here’s yet another: *“I don’t know whether or not I’m saved but if I can get the elders to say that I am, or if I can get anybody else who is saved to tell me that I am, then if they say it... well then I’m saved!”* **This person seeks the vote of affirmation.** But only Christ is the solid rock.
10. And one more. **The supposed work of affliction.** This looks like beating yourself up, or penance. *“If I give myself hell here and now, then God won’t give me hell later.”* Martin Luther, in an attempt to be saved, used to beat himself with a whip, literally, he used to flog himself until he realized... that the just shall live by faith.

Christians don’t stand on sinking sand! The ground beneath the Christian’s foot is solid rock! The solid rock? Jesus!

So, a reminder: the first description of the ground we stand on: We have died to all these ways. And we are raised!

Now let’s look at another description of the ground we stand on.

## 2. We are hidden with Christ in God.

*“and your life is hidden with Christ in God.” Col. 3:3a*

You are protected! What ground we stand on.

And...there’s more...

## 3. We will return with Him in glory.

When Christ returns, we will return with Him in glory.

*“When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.” Col. 3:4ab*

Christians don’t stand on sinking sand! The ground beneath our feet is solid rock!

We have died; we are raised with Christ, our new life is hidden in Christ, and when He appears you also will appear in glory!

Do you know where you stand?

On solid rock?  
Or sinking sand?

For the readers of Paul's letter. He is telling them. **You are on solid ground!**

Once we know where we stand, and I hope you do today... we might ask...  
what direction does God give us so that I can live and grow as He wants me to live and grow?

#### 4. What response are we to have... once we know the ground we are on?

Two things...

*"seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God." Col 3:1b*

And...

*"Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth." Col. 3:2.*

Let's fix our minds on this truth and person; occupy our mind with what (or WHO!) matters most – Christ, our ascended and seated Lord; the truth, the person, who is our very life. He is the solid rock... He is not sinking sand!

Troubles will come, and temptations will be to return to old ways, old sayings we have... but those old ways are sinking sand.

So how do we reassure ourselves we have the right foothold? The Scriptures!

There are things **above** that are more important than things of the earth. And... when we look upward... we shall see Christ... seated at the right hand.

So, next time we are tempted to fix our minds on problems we face, or pleasures enticing us, it's probable that we've become distracted or we have fallen into trouble. The real problem? We are not looking upward!

So, let's remind ourselves that Christ is our life and let us treasure our place in Him.

Christians don't stand on sinking sand! The ground beneath our feet is solid rock!