

July 13, 2008

Colossians 2:13-15

Alright good morning. Let me invite you to grab your Bibles this morning and turn to Colossians chapter 2. We are in the midst of an incredible portion of this letter. Today we will be looking at verse 13-15 but in case you haven't been here recently, I really want you to get a glimpse of the context Paul is giving us here. So before we look at the new verses today let's start back again with verse 9 and get back up to speed.

For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form.

- what an incredible statement of the "God-ness" of Jesus Christ

and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority

- we have been made complete in Christ

In him you were also circumcised in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, having been buried with Him in baptism and raised with Him through your faith in the power of God, who raised Him from the dead

- the dominance of the sin nature is gone
- we've been given a new nature created in righteousness
- we've been placed in Christ by faith
- and the point of course we saw last week is that the first aspect of our fullness – of our completeness in Christ is that our salvation is complete in Him – we don't need anyone or anything outside of Christ to make us "more saved"

Today we'll see the two other aspects of what it means to be given fullness or completeness in Christ. Let's look now at **verse 13-15**:

When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having cancelled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

There are really only two main points I want us to get out of these verses but there are several other truths I will just be able to make mention of as we go through this together. First of all when Paul says that you were "**dead in your sins**," we need to really get a grasp on that. The same phrase is used in Ephesians 2:1 when Paul writes, "as for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins..." That is called a locative of sphere – which means he is talking about a **POSITIONAL reality**. You are dead in your sin. When you were born, you were born spiritually dead. What does that mean? It means an inability to respond. Dead people can't respond. If you've ever watched ER or pretty much any medical drama or even comedy like Scrubs on tv, you know that the signal that somebody is dead is that they don't respond. You give them oxygen but they won't breathe. You put those paddle things on their chest – clear – bang – nothing happens. You poke their foot, you slap their face – nothing – all you get is the eeeeeeeeeeeee sound on the monitor. **To be dead in your sin is to be so locked into sin that you are unable to RESPOND to God.** The Bible and spiritual truth make no sense to you because you are lost in sin. You can't react to God. You don't respond. **You are a spiritual corpse.**

Paul says you were dead in your sins and what – and in the **uncircumcision of your sinful nature**. That's what we saw last week in verse 11 – it is a metaphor saying that you are totally in the control of your sinful nature – **you are a SLAVE to sin** – you are

dead in sin – and then Jesus comes along. Paul says **“God made you alive with Christ.”** That’s the same thing that we see in Ephesians 2:4-5 when Paul writes “But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ.” **Paul’s basically repeating what he explained in process in verse 12. We are given LIFE with Christ.**

In some miraculous way, when we receive Christ, God sends you back 2000 years and puts you on the cross with Christ, puts you in the grave with Christ, and raises you into life with Christ. I don’t understand it but when Jesus rose – we rise. And then Paul gives us the next aspect of what that means in terms of our completeness in Christ: **Our being made alive involved the FORGIVENESS of everything that had once alienated us from God.** He says at the end of verse 13, **“He forgave us all our sins...”** If the 1st aspect emphasized the completeness of our salvation apart from any ritual, then this one emphasizes that our forgiveness is complete apart from any work.

Just a couple things about this forgiveness. First of all notice that this is in **past tense**. He forgave. **It’s done.** It’s completed. It is finished. **There is no FUTURE need for forgiveness.** Why? It says “He forgave us all our sins.” **All** doesn’t mean some. It doesn’t mean part. It doesn’t even mean all to date or up to now. It means all our sins – **all we’ve done – all we’re going to do.** All. **Isaiah 1:18** says “Come now, let us reason together,” says the LORD. “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.” Not even the stain remains – He forgave us all our sins.

Verse 14 gives a glimpse at how that happened. It says he “cancelled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross.”

This is really interesting – let me just unwrap it a little bit for us. The word for **“written code”** there in Greek is “cheirographon” – it literally means autograph. What it refers to is basically an IOU. It was a written acknowledgement of a debtor about his indebtedness. You know – “I, Brett Storseth, owe you 1000 dollars – signed Brett Storseth.” **It was a signed CONFESSION of debt.**

And Paul says the written code “with its regulations.” Basically he’s referring here to the Mosaic law – God’s law. Everyone of us owes God a debt because we have violated His law. Our sin is against Him so your sin and my sin has piled up a debt that we owe to God and we have to pay but we cannot pay. That’s why it is against us and is opposed to us – it will destroy and condemn us in the end.

But here’s the deal – this written code is a self-confessed recognition of those debts. But when you are willing to sign it and say – this is true – this is my debt – this is my sin – I put my name on that line – that’s when God wipes it out. Paul says he **“took it away, nailing it to the cross.”** **When I own up to my debt – God then pays it in FULL through the cross of Jesus Christ – the death of Jesus pays my debt in full.** But that’s not all.

Look back at verse 14 – he says God forgave us all our sins having canceled that written code that was against us. That word **“cancelled”** means **to WIPE OFF.** Just a little bit of history here – ancient documents were written on papyrus or vellum – vellum was basically made from animal hides. Both were fairly expensive. Post it notes hadn’t been invented yet. So you wouldn’t waste either one of them. And the ink in that day didn’t have any acid in it so the ink never bit into or soaked into the papyrus or vellum. If no one messed with it – it would remain. But a scribe if he wanted to reuse the vellum could simply take a sponge and wipe off the ink in order to preserve the material and use it again. That’s what Paul is saying. Not only is our IOU – our recognition that our sin means we have a debt – an offense before God that we cannot pay – **not only is that debt paid in full by being nailed to the cross. The EVIDENCE of it – the confession – is wiped clean so it can never be referred to again.** So you know what’s left? Not a trace. No guilt – no debt – no list to remind us of what has been paid – nothing. God remembers it no more. Folks **the fullness that is ours in Christ means our forgiveness is COMPLETE – total – and finished. There is no such thing as an UNFORGIVEN sin in the life of a Christian.** But that’s not all that happened at the cross. Let’s read verse 15 again – I love this verse.

“And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.” First of all the **“powers and authorities”** there are **all the SPIRITUAL forces of this world that are in rebellion against God**. All the supposed emanations the false teachers in Colossae are talking about – nothing other than Satan and his demons. Now let me ask you a question. Who rules this world pre-Jesus? Who was in charge of this world before Jesus came in the flesh? **John 12:31-32** Jesus says “Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince (or the ruler is what that word means) of this world will be driven out. But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.”

We learn two things from what Jesus says there. **First – that God has given SATAN rule of this planet. Second – that the CROSS will be what ends that rule.** And folks – don’t think for a minute Satan didn’t know that. He learned that all the way back in Genesis chapter 3 when God said that one is coming who is going to crush your head Satan. The devil knew that one was going to come to take it all back. So he did all he could to keep Jesus from the cross. The cross is not what Satan wanted. He knew that in that moment, he was done. In Matthew 4:8 we see the third temptation of Jesus. Listen to what happens: “Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. “All this I will give you,” he said, “if you will bow down and worship me.””

Satan says I know why you’re here. And I will give you all these things – I’ll give you what you came to take back – there’s just one catch – you’ve got to worship me. Folks right then Satan was saying you don’t have to go to the cross – you don’t have to die – you don’t have to shed your blood. You’re here to take this – I’ll give it you – just worship me. And of course Jesus says unfortunately Satan – there’s only one who is worthy of worship and folks in that moment Jesus was choosing the cross. This wasn’t just some little mamby pamby playground temptation – this was huge – from here on Jesus is headed to the cross.

We know Satan tries again – we’ve talked about it before – in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus and the boys have the last supper. Judas bolts. They go to the garden. Jesus goes to pray – begging Peter James & John to pray with him because he is under such immense spiritual attack. And in that garden three times Satan tries to get Jesus to bail on the cross and three times Jesus says no.

Even when he is up on the cross, Satan throws a last ditch effort – Matthew tells us in his gospel about how while Jesus is on the cross, the people around taunt him saying “if you’re God – come off the cross – you saved others but you can’t save yourself” and in their words you hear the desperation of Satan to get Jesus off that cross. You know why? Because of Colossians 1:15. “And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.”

What does it mean that he **disarmed** them? Just listen real fast: Hebrews 2:14-15 says: “Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death-- that is, the devil--and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.”

1 Corinthians 15:55 says: ““Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?” The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Here’s the deal – Satan’s greatest tool was sin made guilty by the law of God and the wages of that sin was death, so death was Satan’s greatest victory. But what do we know – through the cross, Jesus paid for the guilt of sin and set us free from its control in life so that it has no claim on us in death. And because of the cross, we not only get our sin wiped clean, but because Jesus lived a perfect life according to the law of God we get his righteousness applied to us. **Jesus totally disarms the enemy through the cross by making sin, death, and the law no longer tools AGAINST us.** And in doing so, he exposes them to public disgrace before the entire universe. The image of this public spectacle of triumph is like a conquering king returning home with his captives coming along behind him in shackles utterly defeated – harmless – and in shame. God takes what looks like the greatest defeat but what is actually the greatest victory of all time and makes it the lynch pin – the turning point – the focus of all of history. Everything centers on – focuses on

– rotates around – points to the cross of Jesus Christ as the defining moment of the history and future of mankind. Because right there folks – and this is the third point Paul is making – **in Christ, our victory over the enemy is COMPLETE.**

Verse 10 says we have been given fullness in Christ. That means that our salvation is complete. That means that our forgiveness is complete. And that means that our victory is complete. In fact you can put it all together by saying this: **In Christ, our salvation is complete BECAUSE our forgiveness is complete which means that our VICTORY is complete.** Praise God!

Now that alone is enough to send you home happy today, right? But if we believe this today, then there are a few truths we need to apply to our lives because of it.

Number 1 I want you to listen to **Hebrews 8:10-12**

“This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. (listen to verse 12) For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.”

I am always amazed at the fact that there are so many Christians who continue to remember what God has forgotten. John MacArthur calls it a “God complex.” The highest court in the universe is God and if God has forgiven you then the only thing that would justify the holding of yourself guilty for sin is if you are a higher authority than God. Folks you aren't. **So if you are hanging on to the guilt of something God has forgotten – you might as well forgive YOURSELF.**

Number 2 – Knowing the completeness and totality of the forgiveness of God, what should that create in you and me? **Ephesians 4:32** “Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.” **God's forgiveness of us should MOTIVATE our forgiveness of others.** In fact I want you to really understand this – a person who claims to be a Christian but who is perpetually resentful, vindictive, and unforgiving does not understand the forgiveness of Jesus. And if that person doesn't understand the forgiveness of Jesus, they have a reason to wonder if they've ever really experienced it. **The forgiveness of Jesus changes us or we haven't EXPERIENCED it.**

Number 3 – I'm just going to give you the statement here – understand that **within the sovereignty of God, Satan cannot harm believers who will not harm THEMSELVES.** What does that mean? It means you do what you want to do. And so do I. Sin is no longer our master. Satan cannot make us do anything. James chapter 1 makes that abundantly clear in practice but so does what Paul says here in Colossians 2. If we refuse to choose to sin, Satan has no power over us. Don't go saying the devil made me do it or I couldn't resist or it's not my fault. The victory we have in Christ means **if Satan has a stronghold in my life, it is because I GAVE him the property. And the SOLUTION is to realign my “want to” with the truth of God's Word in the victory that is mine in Christ.**

Number 4 and I'll wrap up.

Jesus Christ – because He is God – can free men from sin – from its power and consequences – and give them new life – a life that is so alive – so vital – so free that it can only be described as resurrection life. You ask – do you mean to say that it is possible for someone to be completely restored to God – given a new heart – a new nature – to have a completely new relationship with God that

includes total forgiveness forever and complete victory over sin, death, & Satan? Yes. That's exactly what God is saying. How? The "how" is all through these verses.

Verse 9 says "in Him."

Verse 10 says "in Him."

Verse 11 says "in whom."

Verse 12 says "with Him."

Verse 13 says "with Him."

It is all possible by being in Christ. That's the key. There is no other way. No other way to pay the debt of sin. No other way to get out of sin's control. No other way to be forgiven. No other way to escape eternal death. **The only way to get in on what Paul has described is to put yourself in the hands of Jesus – to receive Jesus by FAITH – to surrender your life for His – and it all becomes yours.**

Folks we talked last week about how the salvation that God gives us is a transforming salvation. And that the faith that enables God to save us is the faith that causes us to live being transformed. And if that transformation is not taking place, then the salvation isn't there.

So today – if you look at your life and though you know about Jesus you know as well that nothing is being transformed in you – then don't play around. Swallow whatever pride may be in the way and call out for Jesus to save you and change you today.

If you are weighed down by the guilt of your sin and you know you have never experienced the forgiveness of the God you have sinned against – then don't wait, turn that IOU of sin over to Jesus today.

If you are tired of living in fear of death and the devil because you just don't know what happens next, then don't wait – you can inherit the victory of Jesus today.

Let me ask all of you to stand right where you are. Just stand and bow your heads and close your eyes. With every head bowed and every eye closed – just listen to me.

In a moment we're going to sing. I'm going to be standing down front. And if you want to know how to get in on the fullness that is available in Jesus – the salvation, the forgiveness, the victory that he alone can provide, then when we stand – meet me down front and you can talk to someone about that today.

And if you know all about this but you also know its not yours – then you know what you need to do – meet me at the altar and lets give your life to Jesus. Don't wait – when we sing – you come.