

COLOSSIANS 1:13–20

Christ the King, November 23-25, 2019

Smith

THE KINGDOM OF REDEMPTION AND FORGIVENESS

¹³ For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. ¹⁵ The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶ For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. ¹⁷ He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸ And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. ¹⁹ For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

Three of Paul's letters address the basic doctrines of Christianity. Romans is the longest, and Ephesians is somewhere in the middle. The letter before us, Colossians, is the shortest of these general doctrinal essays, and the theme of this letter comes from the verses before us: **Christ is the Head of the Church.**

To establish this theme and Christ's headship over the church, Paul reminds us all where we came from. He reminds us that we were rescued from the **dominion of darkness**. What is that dominion? Well, it's of course the sinful state in which we were conceived and born. But not only is it that that state, but also all of the actual wicked things we do that violate the will of God.

You know, unless we take the **Word of God** to be what that title says it is, we could never come to a correct understanding of what sin is, who Christ is, and what our salvation truly means. We must begin in the text of the Scriptures and confess that we believe that the Bible is true, that the Bible consists of and only of the 66 books we know: 39 in the Old Testament from Genesis to Malachi and 27 in the New Testament from Matthew to the Revelation. We must believe, teach our children, and confess that the Bible is the inerrant Word of God, without error, and normative in our lives. "Normative" means that the Bible sets the norm, that we submit to what it says.

There are people today (as there have always been, I suppose) who imagine that God has spoken to them apart from the word of God and who want their words or their interpretation to be on the same level as the words of the Bible. But whenever this happens, they end up denying much or even most of what God has said in his word, the Bible. In effect, they nullify the Bible and make it into a dead letter by elevating their own opinions.

So we throw ourselves completely into the Word of God in our text for today, and we find that it is impossible for a person so get into the Kingdom of Heaven, the Kingdom of the Son of God, by their own choice or by their own work. That's because the Scriptures tell us that we are dead in our sins, unable to do anything that pleases God or obeys God even if it might seem like it does on the outside. It's like a person with filthy hands trying to give you a sandwich. You're not about to take that because its full of germs and sickness.

Whenever anyone tries to break into the Kingdom of God apart from faith: three things will happen:

- (1) He will show up at heaven's doorstep without the one thing necessary, like the virgins in the parable without any oil for their lamps.
- (2) He will be deceived into thinking that his way of religion is the true one, when it is false and leads to nothing at all, and
- (3) he will end up in despair, without hope, possibly angry, but certainly lost.

So how has Christ brought us into his Kingdom? We let the Word of God lead us to the only correct answer: Jesus Christ atoned for our sins through his own blood, shed on the cross. The Romans crucified thousands upon thousands of men. What made the death of Jesus any different than the death of the thief to his right, the thief to his left, or to Peter whom we think was crucified in Rome itself?

Once again, we listen to what the Bible says: This Jesus is the very *image* of the invisible God. We can't see God the Father because he is a spirit. He is invisible unless he lets himself be glimpsed in rare moments as he did once for Moses. But his Son is different. His Son took flesh like ours and put himself under the law so that when he, holy and sinless as he was, was sacrificed to death, his death had so much infinite value that the sins of those thieves were paid for by his blood, too. Peter's sins were paid for. Pilate's sins were paid for. My sins were paid for. Your sins were paid for.

So the Holy Spirit does his amazing work in our hearts: By giving us faith in Jesus, the Holy Spirit connects us to Jesus by these cords of faith, and we are brought home to heaven because of his payment. We're all in, under his one perfect and infinite ticket.

It's only possible to fall away from this by rejecting Jesus. But he strengthens our faith every time we hear the Gospel, every time we receive the sacrament. So by the same word of God, we are connected to Jesus.

Listen to the triumph Paul describes for us that our King has won:

- (1) He has rescued us from the inescapable prison of our sinful human nature.

- (2) He has brought us into the Kingdom of God, the everlasting kingdom of light and joy that we could never have achieved on our own, and which it impossible for anyone to achieve apart from faith in Jesus.
- (3) He has redeemed us, paying the price of our sin and guilt with his own blood, and
- (4) He had forgiven us, so that even the sins we commit today and for the rest of our lives have the same atonement.

Is there some sin in your past that bothers you? Were you unfaithful to your spouse? Unfaithful to your faith? Unfaithful to your God? Did you commit blasphemy in such a way that it hurt someone's faith? Did you turn on your parents, or did you turn away from your children and abandon them when they needed you?

Did you hurt someone? Hate someone? Kill someone? Turn to Jesus and be forgiven. Understand what forgiveness means in eternity. It means facing the Last Judgment with no fear, not even any doubt. It means being certain that through Christ our King, who reigns over all things, we have confidence, and we have peace.

There are seven or eight gospel terms in this passage: Notice how amazing each one is, and cherish them all: *** He rescued us * He brought us * Redemption * Forgiveness of sins * He is the firstborn from among the dead * He reconciled to himself *all things* * We have peace through his blood, and * His blood was shed on the cross** – the altar of your forgiveness.

Jesus rules over his kingdom and over all kingdom today and always. He has (1) Supreme authority over everything. His miracles show that, his omniscient knowledge shows that, and his glorification by the Father shows that.

- (2) He rules everything for the good of our souls, feeding us with his Word and Sacraments so that our faith is preserved, nourished, and built up day by day, week by week, year by year.
- (3) He rules for the good of our physical lives, preserving us through natural and supernatural means, and finally
- (4) He rules by using you and me, both our flesh and our faith, to do things for the good of other souls in the world.

He reigns through us. He reigns for us. He reigns to accomplish everything God that Father has planned. And he reigns through all things—even our troubles, even our tragedies—for our eternal good. Amen.