

## Gospel Victory! Colossians 2:13-15

### Intro:

- **I am not sure how much of the news of current events you keep up with in our nation and world but** there has been a lot of airtime and ink spilled over a new phrase called *fake news* since the last election. With the advent of internet news agencies, social media and bloggers are giving alternate versions of the news and often a completely different spin on the same events that are unfolding in the world than the traditional main stream media. Who's narrative of the story will you believe? I am not making a judgment on *alternate news* or *fake news*. My point is that there is a battle for "*narrative supremacy*." The mainstream media wants its message believed and alternate news agencies want their narrative believed.

**The battle for narrative supremacy has been going on since the Garden of Eden.** The serpent spun a different narrative of life than the narrative God told Adam and Eve. Adam and Eve believed the serpent's narrative and sinned.

**Since the Garden there has been a battle for narrative supremacy in the world.** The theological term for the narrative found in Scripture is called the *Historical Redemptive Narrative*. This is the narrative that says since the Fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden all of Scripture has been pointing toward God fulfilling His promise by sending a Redeemer to save His people from the consequences of their sin. The Redeemer He sent was His Son, Jesus Christ who He died on the cross in the place of His people's sin. Jesus then rose from the dead securing forgiveness for His people by cancelling the record of their debt and setting them free of the tyranny of the devil. All of this was to put them right relationship with God.

- What we find in **Colossians 2:13-15** is the real truth of the redemptive victory that Christ won through in the gospel that was promised in the Garden in **Genesis 3:14-15**, which says the Seed of the woman will crush the serpent's head. **Colossians 2:13-15** is the summary of the gospel victory.
- **Yet while this is the true narrative, the battle for narrative supremacy continues.** Our enemy is still telling people a false narrative of redemption. He promises to get us to God or make us gods, relieve our guilty consciences, fix our marriages, families, work and all kinds of physical issues. He promises heaven with no threat of Hell. He promises salvation by psychology, salvation by wealth, salvation by pragmatism, salvation by education, salvation by status and on and on the false narratives go. There is only one narrative that is true and it is the only one that is victorious and that is the good news of Jesus Christ. His gospel is our victory!
- **The question is:** *What does it mean to have "gospel victory" in our lives?*  
Quite simply we must believe the redemptive narrative of the gospel. **Colossians 2:13-15** helps us to look deeper into the gospel narrative (the work of Christ to save His people). Two points for the sermon to help us dig into the *gospel victory narrative*.

**I. The Agony of Our Defeat—You were Spiritually Dead! (v. 13a)**

**II. The Thrill of Christ's Victory—You were Made Alive with Christ! (vv. 13b-15)**

### I. The Agony of Our Defeat—You were Spiritually Dead! (v. 13a)

- **First you need to realize why you need gospel victory at all.** If someone came up to you and told you that you needed rescuing today your response might be—"No I don't" or "Rescued from what?" If you have believed the false narrative that "you're okay and I'm and that's okay" then the response that you do not need rescuing from yourself and consequences of your sin, which is eternity in Hell, makes sense.

- **My point is this, to appreciate the victory Christ has won in the gospel;** you must understand the real condition of your heart and life before coming to Christ or, if you are not a Christian, that you need Him at all.

Everyone has ever been born has been born under the curse, the death sentence of the wrath of God on us for our sin. Jesus said in **John 3:36**, *whoever believes in the Son has eternal life but whoever does not believe will not see life for the wrath of God REMAINS on him.* These are Jesus' words only 20 verses after **John 3:16**.

**Ephesians 2:1-3** says, "As for you [Christians], you were dead in your transgressions and sins, <sup>2</sup> in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. <sup>3</sup> All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. (NIV)."

- **Paul was saying the same thing to the Colossian church that he did to the Ephesian church.** They needed to understand their spiritual condition prior to being redeemed. They needed to understand the true narrative of who they were before Christ saved them.
- **The main truth in v. 13 about who we were prior to coming to Christ is that we were spiritually dead.** Two things flow out of our condition of spiritual death according to v. 13. This is bad news and it is the part of the redemptive narrative we often do not like to hear.
  - **"you . . . were dead . . . in your trespasses":** Bad news: you are a sinner. This may not be a news flash to you. *Trespasses* are sins we commit against God. These sins magnify our separation from God. **Isaiah 59:2** says, ". . . but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God."
  - **"you . . . were dead . . . in the uncircumcision of your flesh":** "The uncircumcision of your flesh" is the evidence of original sin in our lives. The "uncircumcision of your flesh" originated with Adam and Eve in the Garden. *The uncircumcision of our flesh* means we were born not in covenant relationship with God but born separated from God. We continue to sin against God because of this condition.

**Illst: Imagine you are hard of hearing.** Now imagine your physical health is not good. You know you have some physical problems but you do not think they are too serious and of all the possible problems you do not think your hearing is one of them. So you go to the doctor and he checks you out and he begins to tell you that you have heart disease and that it is deadly unless you have a heart transplant.

For the surgery you will have to have the old heart removed and a new heart put in that is given from a donor. During the surgery you will die but do not worry, the surgeon who will be doing the surgery has done millions of these surgeries and he has never lost a patient. The new heart will be put in and you will feel like a new man (woman).

However, if you do not have a heart transplant you could die anytime from any number of issues. It is possible you might live a long life with some degree of satisfaction but eventually it is going to kill you.

Yet, because of your selective hearing problem, what you hear the doctor say is not that you are in danger of dying but that everything is going to be okay. So you listen to the doc and you nod your head in agreement, "Yes . . . ah . . . mmhhmm . . . yep" and then you leave his office thinking, "I am not as bad as I thought."

Spiritual selective hearing means we are prone to hear and believe the wrong narrative about our spiritual condition before God, who God is and what He came to do in Christ. It means we will believe the wrong narrative about God, His word and His redemptive plan.

### Application:

1. **Friend if you are here this morning and you are not a Christian** perhaps you are checking out Christianity or are not sure if you even believe it. This is probably not the most encouraging news you have heard. After all you come to church and the preacher tells you that God has said you are separated from God by your sin, you are dead in those sins, the uncircumcision of your flesh, under God's wrath and in danger of spending eternity in Hell if your condition does not change. That is a lot to take in so if you are hearing me correctly this is what I am saying.

It is an accurate diagnosis. The question is, will you own it. You need to believe what the word of God says about who you are and not the false narrative of the enemy who whispers in your heart and mind . . . *"Did God really say you were that bad? He didn't mean you were spiritually dead. He really meant you were just spiritually sick and if you just try harder you can live your best life now."*

You will never do it on your own efforts. You will never save yourself. You need a Savior and Jesus is that Savior who paid for your sin on the cross. Trust Him only.

2. **Brother and sister in Christ perhaps** you are hearing these things about your life prior to becoming a follower of Christ and you are thinking, *"Well I was not really that bad. I was just a kid when I trusted Jesus so how bad could I be?"* Sometimes when we come to Christ at a young age it is hard for us to comprehend that we were really sinners desperately in need of a Savior. When we hear the Bible speak like that we often resist its diagnosis. Yet we must submit to the word of God and if this is God's diagnosis of who we were then we need to own it.

A big part of gospel growth is growing in our understanding of how much we needed a Savior. We often do not understand the depth of our depravity when we begin our Christian life. Often the older we get the more we find sin hidden and rooted deep in our hearts. As we practice a life of repentance, turning from sin and to Jesus, Christ will till the soil of our hearts and the worship of our Savior grows in gospel rich soil.

3. **The Apostle Paul understood the depth of his depravity.** He called himself the chief of sinners. He had been a murderer and blasphemer. He could not get over that fact that in spite of who he was Christ saved him. This leads us to our next point in the text . . .

### II. The Thrill of Christ's Victory—You were Made Alive with Christ! (vv. 13b-15)

- **It is in the spirit of celebration and optimism that Paul describes these next gospel truths.** *He was saying, you who were dead in your trespasses and sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive with Christ.* God, in His great mercy, took pity on the Jews, God's covenant people, and on the Gentiles. Both of these peoples were spiritually dead, not only because of their individual sins against God's holy law but also because they were born in a hopeless state of sin separated from God. This condition put them under God's wrath, doomed to pay for their sin in Hell for eternity.

**It was as if Paul was saying,** *"Consider this, reflect on this and remember the whole gospel. You, yes even when you, were so deeply fallen, so hopelessly lost, so utterly corrupt and God showed great grace and mercy toward you in Christ."*

The Apostle Paul cannot talk about the gospel victory in Christ without being deeply moved in his own soul. He knew that God had rescued him from inevitable damnation. He knew God rescued him even when he was not seeking to be rescued. He understood the implications of the person and work of Christ and the depth of the grace that God poured out on him.

- **So in light of the stunning work of Christ, we find Paul unpacking the implications of the great victory of the gospel in vv. 13a-15.** There are three great gospel truths that are described in these verses:

- *We have been forgiven (v. 13b):*
- *Our record of debt has been cancelled. (v. 14)*
- *Our enemy has been stripped of his power (v. 15)*
- **Here is what I want to do.** I want to explain these three doctrinal truths and then illustrate the gravity of these truths. My fear is that we often say these truths without allowing them to fully land on our hearts or they grow so familiar or we grow dull of hearing so these truths do not produce the deep impact of worship that they should produce. It is like our hearts are hard, stony planets BUT these three truths should hit our hearts like ginormous asteroids making deep impact, breaking up the hard surface therefore setting our hearts on fire. So here we go.

**1. We have been forgiven (v. 13b):**

Paul picked up in last half of v. 13 with the idea of being raised from spiritual death in v. 12 by being made alive together with him but this time he unpacks one of these implications of being made alive in Christ by saying, “. . . *having forgiven us all our trespasses.*”

The fact that Paul said God has forgiven us implies that we are guilty of something and we are guilty of breaking the laws of God. Sin is lawbreaking and specifically sinning against God. We have broken the moral law of The Ten Commandments, we have not loved God as we ought to have and we have not loved our neighbors as we love ourselves. We have not treated others, as we want to be treated. As a result we have a record of lawlessness against us.

When Jesus Christ was nailed to the cross he took our sins on Himself and therefore nailed our sins to the cross with Him and He purchased forgiveness for His people! In this forgiveness, God has broken you clean away from your past and has freely forgiven all your sins not in part but the whole.

**2. Verse 14 says He cancelled “the record of debt that stood against us.”**

What this means is that all the while we were breaking God’s laws they were not going unnoticed. I think sometimes we think that if no one sees us and we do not get caught then it is not a sin. Nope . . . not true. God sees and we were piling up records of debt.

**Think of it this way. Have you ever got a parking ticket at ISU?** If you get a parking ticket at ISU and you go to pay it and they tell you that you owe \$500.00 and you say, “*It is only one ticket.*” Then they reply, “Well this ticket is only \$5 bucks but you have 100 other tickets you never paid and you owe for them too. You have piled up a record of debt and not just 100 tickets but your record of debt is infinite.

Sin is like that but it is not simply paid like a fine is paid. **Romans 3:23** says the wages of sin is death. Another way to think of the word *wages* means debt and the *debt owed for your sins is death and not just dying and it is all over but an eternal death paying for your sin against a holy God.*

**An objection to this sentence is that your sin was never that bad.** You didn’t murder anyone or steal or commit adultery or some other heinous crime. That is a man-centered view of sin. You have to see sin from the vantage point of your Creator to whom you owe allegiance, love and worship. To sin against infinite perfect holiness demands equal punishment. An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth—the punishment must fit the crime and in this case to sin against the infinite holiness of God means to receive infinite punishment in Hell for eternity. The problem is we just do not have a category for what it means to sin against infinite holiness.

So . . . here is what Jesus did on the cross to save us from infinite punishment in Hell for eternity. When Jesus Christ was nailed to the cross, He cancelled the record of debt that we owed to God because He paid our debt on the cross.

**Do you understand how it could be cancelled?** Jesus Christ, the very God Himself was the embodiment of infinite holiness in the flesh and when He went to the cross to die for sinners it was infinite holiness that was nailed to the cross to pay for our sin. It was the image of the invisible God on the cross (**Colossians 1:15**) paying for our *sin not in part but the whole was nailed to the tree and we bear it no more praise the Lord, praise the Lord O my soul.*

### 3. Verse 15 is the culmination of gospel victory.

On the cross, Jesus broke the power of the enemy over us and freed us from their accusations that we do not deserve to be forgiven and freed from our debt. What may have looked like defeat when Jesus was nailed to the cross was in reality victory for Jesus and for the people of God.

On the cross, it looked like Jesus was put to shame but in reality it was the undoing of our enemy. It resulted in Satan and his demons be stripped and put to shame. The image of this Greek phrase is literally of a victorious army capturing his enemy and stripping them of their clothes and parading them through the streets to show their defeat and shame.

Jesus freed us from the power of sin, the penalty of sin and the accusations of the enemy that we are guilty, unworthy sinners. That is why Paul said in v. 16, "*let no one judge you.*" Christ freed us from their accusations of our accusing enemy, Satan.

- **Illst: Now let me try to bring all of this together in an illustration.** It is a bit harsh but just bear with me. Suppose you are the parent of a young child and your child is intentionally and brutally murdered. Yet because of the quick and thorough actions of the police they are able to catch the murderer. The trial is set and you go to court. You walk in the courtroom; all eyes are on you until the accused walks in the courtroom. You glare at the man who abducted and killed your child. Then the Judge is about to walk in courtroom. The Bailiff yells out, "*All rise!*" With that it is silent, everyone rises and then they are seated.

Now the moment you have dreaded has comes where the crime is retold in horribly graphic terms. You begin to weep and get very angry. The evidence is overwhelming. There is no way the man will go free. You are going to get justice for your child.

Then after the crime has been recounted, the arguments have been made, the Judge rises and says, and "*You are forgiven of your crime. You are innocent and not only that you are a model citizen. You are free to go.*"

You cannot believe your ears. What did that Judge just say? He simply forgave that man who killed my child? How can he do that? Nevertheless the man goes free. Now you want the Judge's head because he should not be on the bench.

#### **I made this story up to make a point; well I sort of made it up.**

- What would happen to a Judge who simply declared a murderer to go free after he had been caught red-handed? He would be thrown off the bench and most likely thrown in jail himself because he has no right to justify a criminal without the penalty of the crime being paid. Moreover how can the Judge declare a murderer to be innocent, right with the law and even a model citizen?
- You see in human terms, we are exactly right that the Judge is wrong to declare a murderer innocent, forgive criminal and declare him a model citizen.
- Finally, what about the murderer, why does he not have to pay for his crime?

- **You are probably thinking, “Michael I am glad you made this story up.”** However, this story is true. This story is actually an adaptation of the life of King David but the true story is even worse. King David committed adultery with Bathsheba, got her pregnant and then had her husband brutally murdered on the front lines of a battle. David is later confronted with his sin and he confessed his sin to God and God simply forgave him.
  - How can God simply forgive a man like David and allow him to remain king, declare that he has a heart after God? How can God justify the ungodly?
  - Now let me go back to my story about your child being murdered and the killer being forgiven and set free. This story is true but it is not simply about King David, you are the murderer, it was God’s son that was killed because of your sin and God is the Judge who let you go free, declared you forgiven, innocent and righteous before Him.
  - **How can King David, the Apostle Paul and we be declared forgiven, innocent and righteous before God?** It is because God came in Christ and paid our debt of sin by dying on the cross. Jesus then rose from the dead to declare victory over sin, death and God’s enemies. Furthermore, His judgment is that we are forgiven and declared righteous and this comes from the highest court—the throne of God in Heaven.
  - **You see the law’s demand of justice must be fulfilled.** God cannot simply overlook sin so He took upon Himself human flesh and paid our debt of sin for breaking His Laws. He bore His own wrath in Christ. The law’s demands are met in Christ’s death on the cross. In this way, God remains just and the Justifier of the ungodly. This is how you are declared forgiven, innocent and righteous before a holy God.
  - **Why? Why would he do that? What is God’s purpose in forgiveness?**
- a. What is the purpose of forgiveness?**  
**1 Peter. 3:18** says, *“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God.”* God for His glory . . . settled all accounts in order to remove all the obstacles and make us holy so that He can bring us into His presence and we can have a relationship with Him.
- John Piper says it this way,** *“Everything else in the gospel is meant to display God’s glory and remove every obstacle in him (such as his wrath) and in us (such as our rebellion) so that we can enjoy him forever. God is the gospel. That is, he is what makes the good news good. Nothing less can make the gospel good. Nothing less can make the gospel good news. God is the final and highest gift that makes the good news good. Until people use the gospel to get to God, they use it wrongly.”<sup>1</sup>*
- In other words, the gospel is not about avoiding Hell, having a clean conscience, being forgiven, given a second chance and going to heaven. These are all good gifts but they are only means by which we are able to enjoy God—God is the gospel.
- b. How do we receive the gospel gift of forgiveness so that we may know God?**
- First we must hear the correct diagnosis.** We must realize we are dead in our sin and cry out to God for salvation. If you hear the diagnosis that you are a sinner, grieve over your sin. Genuinely desire to forsake sin and turn to Jesus Christ for deliverance and life. Call out to Him to save you.
- c. What are the evidences that you have received God’s forgiveness of your sin in Jesus?**
- **Colossians 3:13** says . . .

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<sup>1</sup> John Piper, *God is the Gospel*, p. 42.

- **Jesus said it this way, unless you forgive you will not be forgiven.** He did not mean you earn forgiveness by forgiving. What he meant is that true repentance is evidenced in the fact that we forgive others their sin against us. We do this because we now understand in the deepest of ways that it was our sin that sent Jesus to the cross and He forgave you so how can we not forgive others.

### **Conclusion**

Friends the fight for narrative supremacy is still being waged. Which narrative are you living your life according to, God's or the enemies? Victory is only found in the blood stained cross of Christ and His resurrected life. All other narratives are false.