The Cross of Christ is a Victory

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Date: 30 August 2020

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[0:00] Well, good morning, everyone. Again, it's a wonderful privilege to be here and to open the Word of God to you this morning. I'd like to, if you have your Bibles still in hand, I would like to invite you to turn to Colossians 2, 13-15.

We just read it. I'd like us just to refresh and read it again. Colossians 2, 13-15. And you who are dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made to live together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses by counseling the record of debt that stood against us, that stood against us with its legal demands.
This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame by triumphing over them in him.
Let's pray. Our dear, gracious and heavenly Father, we gather together this morning in your presence with hearts of thanksgiving and gratitude for what you have done for us on the cross. We pray, Lord, that you would soften our hearts, that you would open our ears, enable us by your Spirit to receive your Word this morning.
[1:33] We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior. Amen. Well, preparing this message, I was reminded of how nothing compares to the thrill and joy of having a personal relationship with God through Jesus.

I was reminded of how nothing is more important than cultivating that relationship with Him. And to fully appreciate that nothing in this life is more important than knowing Christ and building that relationship with Him, as forgetful people, we need to be reminded of how this relationship was made possible in the first place.
We need to be constantly reminded about what the cross of Christ has accomplished and how it applies to our daily living.
In this sermon series, we've been looking at what the cross of Christ has accomplished and what it means for you and I. And this morning, we're going to look to God's Word and see how the cross of Christ is a victory and how this applies, what are the implications of this victory in our life.
This brings us to our text in Colossians 2, 13 to 15, where Paul speaks, and here's the main idea, the big idea, of how the cross of Christ opens the way to forgiveness and defeats demonic powers.
[3:17] How the cross of Christ opened the way to forgiveness and defeats demonic powers.
Before we get into our text, let me provide you with a brief background to Colossians 2, 13 to 15.

Imprisoned in Rome, Paul writes his letter primarily in response to a report of false teaching that had crept into the Colossian church. One commentator notes how this likely revolved around a false teacher who claimed to have some special revelation into the spiritual realm, who insisted on the worship of angels, among other things.
Paul gives us a little insight into this in verse, if you look at verse 18, he writes, let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism, which is rigorous self-denial, and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions, puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind.
Now, ultimately, this false teaching served to diminish, to devalue the sufficiency of Christ and the new identity we have when we put our trust in him.
Now, Paul wastes no time reminding the Colossians that Jesus is enough. We are complete in him, and only in him can we experience life in its fullness.
[4:58] As Lord of all creation, Lord of redemption, and triumphant victor over sin and Satan, Christ alone is to be the highest object of our faith.

Christ alone is to be the highest object of our affection. As the image of the invisible God, Jesus is sufficient in all things.

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And with Christ being sufficient in all things, we come to Colossians 2.13, where Paul speaks of how the cross of Christ opens the way to forgiveness.
How the cross of Christ opens the way to forgiveness. He writes, Paul says, And you who are dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses.
Paul says that we were dead in our trespasses and the uncircumcision of our flesh. In the Old Testament, circumcision was a Jewish sign of God's covenant with his people.
[6:10] By saying that we were uncircumcised in the flesh, Paul means that we were outside of God's covenant care. We were spiritually dead in our trespasses, echoed in Ephesians 2.

And when a person dies, they're physically unreceptive. unreceptive. When we were living and studying in Massachusetts and members of a local church, I was once asked by the lead pastor to visit him, to visit a Christian man who was dying of cancer.
And in that hospital room in Mass General, downtown Boston, I remember speaking with him and praying with him. He was talkative and receptive, though in considerable pain.
And just like that, a few days later, he went to be with the Lord. At the funeral, after the funeral, at the wake, I remember looking into that casket and seeing the same person completely unresponsive and unreceptive.
It just didn't seem right. It felt wrong. It seemed wrong. The difference from life to death was like night and day.
[7:35] And I think it's a terrible thing to see, especially for grieving family and loved ones. Now, Paul is saying that prior to conversion, we were spiritually unreceptive to God.

So just like we were unreceptive physically, prior to conversion, we were spiritually unreceptive to God. We had no realization that we needed God's forgiveness.
No desire or responsiveness to know him, to follow him, and to walk with him. Being dead in our trespasses, we violated God's commands as evidenced in our sin and trespasses.
We offended him in thought and word and deed. We were spiritually dead. We were dead, sorry, 19th century Anglican missionary to Japan, Barclay Buxton, once said that apart from God, we were like the dead log floating downstream with the flow of this world, our flesh, and the devil.
We were dead in our trespasses and the uncircumcision of our flesh until, until a miracle happens in our life. Until a miracle happens when God makes us alive together with him.
[9:13] only the triune God can bring us from death to life. And when God makes us alive together with him, we become spiritually alive and sensitive.

We can enjoy fellowship with God and relationship with him who is creator and sustainer of everything and everyone. Shortly after I received Christ, I remember going for long walks and marveling that I had access to God, that I could pray to him, that I can be in relationship with him. It was truly like being born again with a newness of life, a new awareness of his presence and sensitivity to the things of God.
When God makes us alive together with Christ, we truly love him. and walk with him and seek him. Our hearts are set on knowing him and making him known by pointing others to Jesus.
When God makes us alive together with him, our worldview begins to change. We begin to see things differently. We begin to see things as God sees them, as revealed in his word.
[10:38] When God makes us alive together with him, we become conscious of our daily need of God. We can't bear the thought of life without him.

We recognize that apart from Christ, we can do nothing when it comes to bearing fruit. We become aware of his sovereignty and how our days are in his hands.
We become aware of God's greatness and our smallness. Jesus becomes our only hope, our everything. God made us alive together with him.
How did he do this? How did he do this, you ask? He did this by graciously forgiving us of all our sins at the cross.
Again, verse 13 and 14 read, and you who are dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses by cancelling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands.
[11:51] This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. New Testament scholar Clinton Arnold notes how in the ancient world the record of debt was a written note of indebtedness.

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Roman authorities would take this note and fasten it to the cross, declaring the crime for which the criminal was being executed for.
Here in verse 13, Paul illustrates our indebtedness to God because of our sin. A debt so enormous it could never be paid off.
But God, who is rich in mercy and love, graciously forgives us by taking our note of indebtedness, our debt of sin that we could never pay off and nails it to the cross.
At the cross, Jesus took our punishment, our sin, and he paid our debt, literally taking it out of the way. This is why we sing those wonderful words, Jesus paid it all, all to him I owe.
[13:14] Sin had left the crimson stain, he washed it white as snow. Alive together with him, forgiven of all our trespasses, we are no longer like that dead log floating downstream.

In Christ, we are more like the fish swimming upstream against the world, our flesh, and the demonic forces that work against us.
Dear friends, do you know the freedom of having all your sins forgiven? It is like a freedom like no other.
To be forgiven by God is like being released from a lifelong prison sentence where the chains of sin are broken. The cross of Christ is God's emancipation proclamation to you and to I.
And even after being liberated from sin, as you all know, we still have a sin nature. In Christ, however, we are no longer ruled by sin.
[14:29] If you can imagine sin like handcuffs, those handcuffs are broken. At the cross, Jesus put to death sin's grip on our life.

In other words, we don't have to go down that road that we know we shouldn't go down. We don't have to open that door that we know we shouldn't open. By virtue of our union with Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit, we can turn in the opposite direction and keep that door closed.
In Christ, we don't have to yield to temptation. We don't have to succumb to sin's seduction. And if we do sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ.
When we confess our sins, God is what? He's faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Charles Wesley described the freedom of God's forgiveness in one of the great hymns where he wrote, Long my imprisoned spirit lay, fast bound in sin and nature's night, thine eye diffused a quickening ray.
I woke the dungeon flamed with light. My chains fell off, my heart was free, I rose, went forth and followed thee. Who is like the Lord our God?
[16:05] If you don't know Jesus, then come to him as you are. consider him who came from heaven to earth to suffer and to die for you, the God of the universe, the God of our salvation.

He came to purchase salvation for you. Come to him who stands ready to receive you with open arms if you don't know him and forgive you when you turn to him in true repentance and faith.
only Jesus can satisfy the deep spiritual longings of our heart. If you know Jesus, which many of you here know him, one way to respond to God's forgiveness is with a heart of thankfulness and praise.
As our prayer book reads, thank God for the great benefits you have received at his hands.
forgiveness if you need to write it in your smartphone or on a sticky note where you can see it until you no longer need those reminders.
Thank God for what he has done. And as you thank God, as you thank him, never lose sight of what forgiveness of sins cost Jesus.
[17:31] forgiveness. Another way to respond to God's forgiveness is to forgive as you have been forgiven. If you look over to Colossians 3.13, Paul tells us, as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

And as we bear with one another's many faults, God has called us to forgiveness, to forgive others as we have been forgiven.
Perhaps there's someone that you know that you need to forgive. The cross of Christ opens the way to forgiveness.
I was recently reminded by my former New Testament professor that the victory of the cross was not restricted to our personal individual sins as important as that is.
The victory of the cross looked to undo and remake the world in its entirety. And this brings me to my second point where the cross of Christ defeats demonic powers.

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[18:46] The cross of Christ defeats demonic powers. Verse 15 says, he, speaking of Jesus, disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame by triumphing over them in him.

Many scholars agree that the rulers and authorities likely refers to demonic rulers and authorities. The cross of Christ is a decisive defeat of demonic powers whereby Jesus put them to open shame by triumphing over them.
Paul's imagery of Jesus' defeat of demonic powers was written in the context of ancient Rome. Now at some point in Paul's travels in Rome, he would have likely witnessed a Roman military procession where there was a lavish parade to celebrate great victories.
In this procession, the defeated king, with all his leaders and spoils of war, were paraded through the streets of Rome, a public spectacle for all to see.
In a much greater and more powerful image, this is what we see at the cross of Christ. On the cross, Jesus defeated demonic powers and put them to open shame.
[20:18] Jesus defeated or stripped the demonic forces, of their power to accuse us before God. In 1 Corinthians 2 68, we learn Satan's plot to thwart God's plan of salvation was turned on its head.

And though the demonic forces were defeated, they were not totally destroyed. Their time of destruction will come.
will be done. And until that appointed time, demons continue to exist and to deceive and incite evil.
And until, dear friends, we go home to Jesus, we are all engaged in a spiritual battle.
So we need to be sober-minded and watchful because our adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking whom or someone to devour.
Though not totally destroyed, the devil is a defeated enemy. Christians don't need to be fearful of the devil. Jesus has not left us as orphans to fend on our own, but has given us the power to stand against the schemes of the devil.
[21:39] And we stand against demonic forces by submitting ourselves to God daily. We stand against demonic forces by standing firm in the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.

We stand firm in our faith by leaning on God's word. God's word. The accuser can accuse you no longer.
He can accuse you no longer in Christ. Romans 8 verses 1 says, therefore, there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ.
And if he does accuse you with lying whispers, believers, then, dear friends, lean on God's word.
Say with Paul, who shall bring a charge against God's elect?
It is God who justifies. If he accuses you again, lean on God's word and say with Paul, who is to condemn?
[22:55] Christ Jesus is the one who died, more than that, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. And should the devil accuse you again, hold fast to God's word and say with confidence, who shall separate us from the love of Christ?

Shall tribulation or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? No, says Paul. No, says Paul in Romans 8, 33 to 39, for in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.
For I am sure, I am certain, that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.
Swiss theologian Karl Barth once was asked, what was the deepest truth he had learned in all his study of theology? To which he replied, Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible, tells me so.
We need to stand against the demonic forces by leaning on God's sustaining word. And we can't engage in these spiritual battles alone.
[24:34] We need one another in the body of Christ. And as a church, we can pray for those who may be going through some intense spiritual battle.

And one of the best places to do this is in a small group. If you're not part of a small group, I want to encourage you to joining one as they resume in the coming weeks.
But my point, dear friends, is this, that we pray for one another knowing and believing that our victory is assured in Christ. We pray for one another knowing and believing that our victory is assured in Christ, who is our triumphant victor over sin and the devil.
The cross of Christ is a victory, for it opens the way to forgiveness and defeats demonic powers.
Let's pray. Dear Father, we thank you for this great victory on the cross.

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We thank you for your gift of salvation. We pray that you would enable us, Lord, as long as we have breath on this side of heaven, to never cease and never fail to give thanks and praise for what you have done.
[26:02] I pray that you would write your word as we lean on your word on the tablet of our hearts that we may live to glorify you, having been gripped by the gospel, and honor you in all that we do.

We ask this in the name of your son, Jesus. Amen.

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