

Thanks to the Father (pre-communion service)

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Date: 07 April 2012

Preacher: Rev Dr Malcolm Maclean

[0 : 0 0] we'll turn back to the chapter right there in colossians chapter one we can read again verses 12 to 14 giving time to the father which has made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in life who has delivered us from the power of darkness and has translated us into the kingdom of his dear son in whom we have redemption through his blood even the forgiveness of sins i don't know what you feel like when you get a letter from somebody you've never met sometimes that kind of letter can be very formal if we get a letter from the one of the government departments then it's we know it's not going to come to us from someone that feels an emotional bond with us and here's this church in colossi and they're getting a letter here from someone they've never met paul tells us that at the end of chapter two that he has never seen them face to face and yet he sends his letter to them a letter that's full of great warmth and interest in them of course the colossians had heard of paul because everyone in the christian church in the first century had heard of him and they were probably familiar with other letters that he had sent and sometimes these other letters that he had sent were for correction he had written letters to various churches because well they these churches had things in them that were wrong and no doubt these colossians were aware that paul has sent that type of letter so perhaps they were expecting correction especially as they would have known that their church founder, Epaphras there in verse 7 had gone to Rome where paul was and had presumably told him about the colossians and there were problems in the church in colossi they knew that paul was a very important person of the church a leader someone with spiritual authority and therefore they may be apprehensive what's he going to say to us when they were gathered there on that first occasion when this letter was read out by Titicus who had brought it to them from paul and as it started off paul an apostle i wonder what went through their minds what's he going to say to us and of course it also makes a difference if we know where the letter writer is

doesn't it if we know the letter writer is living in a situation of comfort and then we suspect he's liable to be in a more, in a better mood we might say but they knew where paul was they knew he was under arrest he was confined to Rome because he was waiting to go on trial and well when a person is in in that kind of situation well he's got other burdens doesn't he he's got really personal priorities we might say if we were facing a situation where our life might be on the line then i wonder what we would write about and paul later on in this letter does make several requests of the colossians especially in chapter 4 and it's very interesting to read what he wants them to pray about but anyway if i was getting a letter from somebody in prison i would expect them to talk about their circumstances but anyway here's paul he's writing from this rather uncongenial situation and he's writing to a small group of christians now colossi was well it's a small village basically we might say and nobody really bothered about colossi but yet this famous man in Rome there possibly in triumph of his life he takes the time to write a letter to this small church in the middle of nowhere and of course we know that behind paul and sending this letter is christ himself and that gives us real insight into the heart of jesus for his people wherever they are anyway here's paul he's got to deal with the problems that he pastors has highlighted for him and it's very hard for us to work out exactly what the problems were but there seems to have been some ideas that lowered jesus in the estimation of the people there were all kind of religious ideas around that time and just as we today are affected by the ideas around us so are the people in colossi they were affected by the ideas around them and the suggestion that would be made by these false teachers was that somehow or other jesus was not to be as exalted as he should have been read about some of these problems in chapter 2 but how does paul begin to deal with these issues well he responds to the circumstances and we read about it and it's marvellous words aren't they as he exalts the greatness of god's salvation the answer paul tells us to dealing with the problems in the church in colossi was to

magnify the truth in front of us and to fill their minds with the amazing things that God has done now by implication he is telling us that if our minds are so taken up with the details and the splendor of God's

salvation then there will be no place for wrong ideas wrong ideas come in when we take the truth out of our mind and Paul here as he begins to counsel these Christians in Colossians he does it with this marvellous way doesn't he he tells them how marvellous salvation is and any verse in the first two chapters could be taken to highlight that and he tells them just how great Jesus is we read there in verse 15 what a marvellous person Jesus is he's the image of the invisible God the ruler of every creature by him everything was created whatever it is he created he is the one who is eternal before everything he is the one who holds everything together he is the head of the church he is highly exalted he has the preeminent and when we have big thoughts of

Jesus then we are in the right path and of course that's what we should have this again isn't it we are gathered here at the communion time and what other occasion should there be that should be so straightforward as having big thoughts of Jesus he has said to us with regards the Lord suffered to do it in remembrance of him and hopefully what we think about just now will enable us to have big thoughts about Jesus so anyway I want us to look at these verses just take some ideas from them the verses we read focus on the Father to a certain extent we are giving thanks unto the Father and so on for what he has done but we will see that what the Father has done is intimately connected to exalting the name of

Jesus but of course as we think of that perhaps our minds go to Philippians chapter 2 and these famous verses about how Jesus humbled himself and in response to that humbled by the Saviour the Father the Father has highly exalted him and given him the name as above every name that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow and every tongue confess that he is Lord and sometimes I think sometimes we put that universal confession away to the end of time and to the day of judgment when of course anyone will bow but surely Paul's words as he writes them there are also concerned with the present and that the only fitting response to the exaltation of Jesus is that now we bow and that the Lord this communion season we're confessing that he is Lord and we're confessing how he became to be

[12:33] Lord by the path of the cross we have to have big thoughts about Jesus as for the Father was his will is that all men should honor his son even as he honored the Father what did the Father do to bring this about there's two or three ideas from this these verses that we read the first is this where did the Father find us we're told there in verse 13 that he has delivered us from the power of darkness where did the Father find us and in what state were we we were in a kingdom we were in the kingdom or the authority of darkness the world the empire whatever we're going to use the domain of the powers of darkness that's where the Father found us what is life like in the country of darkness well everyone is sinful we confess that don't we everyone in this kingdom of darkness is sinful what does it mean to be sinful I'm sure we're all aware sin is a falling short of God's standards not merely externally but internally his standards are summarized there in the ten commandments they tell us how to love God and how to love our neighbor and we fall short of that don't we and that's what marks life isn't it we can write it all over our society that's what marks our society the world of darkness failed to love God with all its heart with all its soul with all its mind with all its strength and it failed to love its neighbor as itself sin permeates everything in the kingdom of darkness and what does sin do to us was it like to be sinful well many things to be said about that but there's one thing that always follows sin and that is frustration we know we shouldn't be doing the wrong things that we're doing we know we shouldn't be thinking the wrong things that we're thinking we know we shouldn't be wanting these wrong things and we know there's something wrong with us and in this dark kingdom that's what's written all over it frustration disappointment failure and that's where the Father died we find he finds us disobeyed his word he finds us falling short of his son but it

was worse than that in this kingdom this empire of darkness and was asleep they're all slaves of his king the king is the devil he's a king who sometimes works publicly but more often than not he works behind the scenes and he embraces his subjects by alluring them and attracting them to go down paths that keep them living sinfully and all his purposes are designed to confuse them to blind them and to keep them in a permanent state of slavery and bondage to him they think they're free and all he's doing is tightening the chains they imagine that somehow or other as they proceed through life as they make their way through their frustrating sinful experience they somehow

imagine that somewhere this they'll find what they're looking for and all the time their ruler is keeping them in sleep all he does is strengthen their own sinful tendencies and they become more and more entrant in their sinful desires he keeps them in that state by all the temptations he provides and he provides many of them and that's where the father found us slain and becoming more and more in bondage and incarcerated because in reality this domain of darkness is just one big prison and in this prison all the prisoners walk about imagining that they are free and the ruler is actually a jailer and he's determined that none will escape not for the father of darkness in the domain of darkness but thankfully he didn't leave us there these colossians they were being led astray by their king the devil but the father didn't leave them there what did he do for them that's our second point what did the father do for them well he sent them a man and who was that man that man was

Epaphras Epaphras who was one of their own people well this is only guesswork but I think it's probably true but one day Epaphras went to Ephesus about a hundred miles to the west Epaphras went to Ephesus and there in Ephesus he heard this man Paul and he heard this marvelous message that this man Paul was declaring and Epaphras as he heard this message about someone called Jesus that message so gripped his heart that he went back to Colossae with the message and the people in Colossae as they saw the man they knew so well and after all Colossae was such a small place that every knew one other and back into the community comes

Epaphras but he's not the old Epaphras there's something different about him he has been transformed whoever Epaphras was we don't know too much about him but the gospel had changed him this message that he heard from Paul there in Ephesus it had so turned Epaphras round that when he went back to Colossae his neighbours and his acquaintances well they couldn't help but notice that something remarkable had happened to him the message that he heard had changed him and they sensed although they probably couldn't have put it into words but they sensed that Epaphras was no longer a slave that he had been set free and

I'm sure they listened with amazement as Epaphras told them what happened and as he explained the gospel to them as verse seven says well their minds began to think differently this message of the gospel and we'll think about that in a minute but this message of the gospel it changed their thinking it gave them a new framework on life and it held out them prospects that their current king had never offered them and their minds were intrigued and the strange thing is as they listened to the gospel that he passed and was conveyed to them they found their affections in turn and they wanted to hear more and more and more about this amazing message that the pastors had picked up in

[23 : 31] Ephesus and what was happening in their hearts and their lives they thought they were listening to Ipatris and of course they were but at the same time inside them as they listened to Ipatris words from outside them inside them the Holy Spirit was at work and he was renewing them and he was enlightening them what they thought what they would have described as being intrigued by Ipatris message was actually the Holy Spirit enlightening them and although some of them were dark and pagans and others often were religious Jews together they found themselves being attracted intelligently in their minds to this amazing message that the

Apostle was speaking to them and they found that affection they started to love different things just through this message they were hearing but inside them this Holy Spirit the Spirit of love was at work and they had new longings longings that had never come into their hearts before and then in Colossae miracles were happening internal miracles as they heard Epaphras speak this message that they had never heard before the gospel had come to them and the spirit and power inward power was changing them and they began to long for another kingdom a kingdom that Epaphras was speaking about and the contents of this message that he heard well Paul summarizes at the end of verse 6 it's the grace of God there were plenty of gods with small g's and Colossae that was one way by which the king of that empire the king of the dark domain one way he kept them in submission and in blindness was by giving them all the gods that could be imagined and they had gods for this and gods for that and gods for the next thing but they had never heard about a god of grace and here's Epaphras and he comes with this marvelous message of the grace of god god divine favor god super abounding kindness and in their dark dreary world light began to shine as the message of the true god came into their existence love it was a wonderful day for them when they discovered that the heavenly father had been seeking for them and he had found them and he had delivered them through this message the message of the gospel rescued them from the

kingdom of dark of course that's what

Paul himself has said about the gospel wasn't it when he has said there in the letter to the Romans that he's not ashamed of the gospel of Christ why he's not ashamed of it because it's the power of God the power of God unto salvation this message the message of Jesus the Jesus who's now highly exalted this message of Jesus liberated people liberates them internally as well as externally this message sets people free free from the chains that the evil ruler of the dark kingdom puts around his subjects worth asking yourself are you free or are you in chains are you being and quiet even just now and more chains than ever as the king of the dark kingdom whispers in your ear don't listen to the message of

Jesus by ignoring the gospel you deny yourself freedom that's for the heavenly father so kindly so wonderfully and so simply rested sent a man in spirit power with a straightforward message so it was simple for the colossians but the message itself well it showed that it wasn't simple for the father to provide the means of deliverance and we're told there in verses 12 and 14 how he did it there in verse 14 in particular but also in the second half of verse 13 in whom we have redemption through his blood even the forgiveness of sins and also being translated out of the dark kingdom into the kingdom of his dear son in these verses in verse 12 as well

[30 : 44] Paul is thinking about the concept of redemption and the concept of redemption is something that both Jews and Gentiles would have been very familiar these Jews and Gentiles in Colossae they would have been very familiar with it I have no idea if there was a slave market in Colossae but there would certainly be one in Laodicea just along the road from it and there would be a way of slaves being bought and sold in the slave market and of course if a slave was purchased it was redeemed if it was sold by one owner to another owner the slave was redeemed and the Jews and the congregation would they be familiar with the concept of the kinsman redeemer found there in the old testament and

Paul is alluding to this marvelous picture of a redeemer to show what God the father had done and who was his redeemer who is the father's chosen redeemer and he tells it at the end of verse 13 his dear son his beloved son the son of his love the one whom his affections were fully placed and the one who responded completely and complimently to his affection the heavenly father loved his son we have no concept of the greatness of the father's love for his son nor do we have any way of estimating the satisfaction that the father received from his son there is no calculator or computer that can ever be formed that can give us insight into the depth of delight that the father had of his son and yet the amazing thing is that the

Lord suffered all about isn't it that the heavenly father gave us the redeemer his own son he mentioned the concept of kinsman redeemer the kinsman was obviously related to the family that had to be redeemed how how could the son of God become related to us well we know the answer to that question he became one of us he who was in the form of God he humbled himself and became one of us through his incarnation through his conception in the womb of Mary subsequent birth he became one of us a real man he became one of us in his circumstances he became so low didn't he born in a low condition how much lower could he have gone as far as his birth was concerned he couldn't have gone lower probably born in the open air mangers for sheep in Palestine are not in nice stables he became so low he lived in Nazareth worked an everyday job lived in a normal family he understands what it's like to be human he became one of us our kinsman redeemer he's our elder brother and the elder brother task according to the concept of the kinsman redeemer the elder brother task was to defeat the enemy and pay the debts to pay the debt for the family and to defeat the one who was oppressing the family that was the role of the kinsman redeemer parent for that's what Jesus did wasn't he and amazingly

Jesus did them both simultaneously because there on the cross he defeated our enemy our cruel king the despot that was keeping us in chained in darkness there on the cross as Paul tells us there in Colossians chapter 2 and verse 15 there the cross Jesus took on the principalities and powers and defeated them annihilated them and in his weakness his moment of weakness on the cross he defeated the cruel opponent of our souls and at the same time he paid our debts we couldn't pay the penalty of our debts but there on the cross he paid the penalty our redeemer he set us free we are redemption through his blood the debts that we owed well who can possibly start to list them but the amazing thing is because the kinsman redeemer paid the penalty according to verse 14 we can be forgiven all our sins are forgiven the debt we owe to God forgiven and sure you the

[37 : 43] Lord suffered that's what we are we're forgiven people forgiven by the father based on the work of Jesus the kinsman redeemer also had to restore the inheritance the family inheritance that they had lost because of their debts and then in verse 12 we're told that we have the inheritance he has made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in life the heavenly father because he is so delighted and pleased with the redeeming work of his chosen kinsman redeemer he has restored to us the inheritance and it's very important to read the tense of that verse it doesn't say we're going to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in life it says we already are he has made us already he has made us meet to be in the inheritance of the saints in light he has taken us out of the dark kingdom kingdom and we're now in the light the bright kingdom we lost the inheritance when Adam fell what was the inheritance well it was the endless future of God providing out of his riches all the blessings that he can possibly give us and that inheritance has been restored to us Jesus our liberator came into the world and suffered on the cross and was raised again and is now highly exalted and because that is the case it's now possible for us to experience forever in all the increasing fullness all the blessings that God possibly has for us and that starts in this life we are heirs of God now and while it's not possible for us at this stage in our exploration of his inheritance to experience all of it it is important to remember that what we are experiencing now is some of it and already in this life we get foretaste of the fullness that is going to be ours forever so

I ask you how big is Jesus in your estimation he has done all this for us in fact it is impossible for Jesus to have done more for us in this amazing sub father salvation the heavenly father used the fullness of his wisdom and in the gospel he reveals the fullness of his grace and he shows it to people so unworthy to prisoners enslaved in the dark kingdom he shows his marvelous grace to them and he sets them free and they are now set free by him to discover all that he can do for him and it's all connected to Jesus as we close what does the heavenly father want us to do we thought about what he has done but what does he want us to do well

Paul gives an example there in verse 12 we're to give thanks and the Lord suffers I'm sure we know that one of the names for it the Eucharist is the thanksgiving we gather to give thanks to the father who sent his son to die in our place to set us free to give to us all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places he asks us to show gratitude gratitude and the best way to show gratitude this weekend is to sit at the Lord's table with all the others whom he has redeemed and together to give that so may the Lord enable us to do that shall we pray go the peac
God h do do