

# The Life of Faith and Our Freedom in Christ

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[0:00] Let's turn again now to pause now to Colossians and chapter 2 and we can read at verse 11. Colossians 2 at verse 11.

In him also you are circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of flesh by the circumcision of Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you are also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead.

And so on down to verse number 15. The last time we were together, or I was with you on the Lord's Day, we looked at chapter one of this letter and we noticed, as we notice again today and remind ourselves that in these first two chapters, Paul wants to highlight the supremacy of Jesus Christ in salvation as well as in creation.

And he is writing with that theme because of the great need that they had and the great need that we have ourselves to recognize that our salvation is all about what God has done in Jesus and not so much about what we are doing ourselves.

And we saw in chapter one and verse 12 the way in which God speaks about qualifying us to share in the inheritance of God's people. And we highlighted the way in which our salvation is about what God does in our own lives.

[1:39] Today we want to look at the other side of that and to consider in these verses, to consider what God has done for us outside of ourselves in the person of Christ.

Christ. And we are doing so because when you read the letters of Paul, we notice a significant development. When Jesus speaks of disciples, his emphasis is on people leaving everything and following him.

When Paul speaks about disciples and about Christians, he speaks about those who are in Christ and who are with Christ. There's a development. There is a change in focus.

And the message is not going to be a lesson on grammar, but I do want to draw attention to the fact that the key to understanding what Paul says here and elsewhere is his use of prepositions.

When I went to school and I heard prepositions mentioned, I was not remotely interested. But prepositions are important because they show us the relationship between a noun and what has been said in the previous clause.

[2:57] And there are two prepositions that are central to the message of the gospel that capture for us so much of what salvation is. The first of these is the preposition in.

It's through this chapter in Christ. The second preposition is with Christ. And all of your salvation and mine today is summed up by Paul in the use of these two prepositions.

And we hear so often with documentation that the devil is in the detail. Well, in the case of salvation, the great blessing is in the detail.

When we notice the detail, we notice the marvel of what God has done. And bearing that in mind, I want us to think of these verses before us here and to think of the life of faith and our freedom in Christ.

I want to think, first of all, that we have before us a transition. I come from being in one place to being in another place.

[4:08] And we see that transition from verse 11 onwards, where Paul speaks about being circumcised with a circumcision made without hands. And the very mention of circumcision presents us perhaps with great difficulties.

But I want us to think of circumcision in the light of God's relationship with his people in the Old Testament as an oath pledge of their loyalty.

Their loyalty to God. And if they were not loyal to God, they would be cut off from the people of God and sent away from God. Circumcision is about being cut off.

And here Paul wants them to understand their salvation in the light of that sense of cutting off and cutting off with a circumcision made without hands.

God is working for our salvation by engaging in this cutting off activity to take us from where we are, the place to which we are so attached, the place in which we live our lives.

[5:25] He comes to us in his grace and he comes to cut us off from being there. And today, if I'm a Christian, if I'm a child of God, the evidence of this happening is that I am following Jesus.

But my following of Jesus is the result of God the Father cutting me off from the life of sin that I lived and the life that I lived in the service of this world and setting myself at the exclusion of Jesus Christ.

And he shows us how that actually takes place. A circumcision made without hands, putting off of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ.

Circumcision, the cutting off of people. Circumcision, the cutting off of Jesus Christ. Circumcision, the cutting off of Jesus Christ. We read in Isaiah chapter 53 that on the cross, Jesus was cut off from the land of the living.

The cutting off in the life of Jesus is all about the cross of Jesus where Jesus died for our sins and where, when he was cut off from God, he cried out, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

[6:48] And we hear that he was cut off because they came and saw that Jesus was already dead. And Paul wants the Christians in Colossae to understand that they were cut off from the life of service to sin because of the way in which God took them from where they were and placed them in Christ, in that new relationship with Christ, in their union with Christ.

And so today in my lostness, I'm out here. I'm outside of the kingdom of God. I'm outside of Christ. I'm lost.

I'm serving myself. I'm under the influence of the God of this world, the devil and Satan, and all that this world offers me. I'm there outside of Christ. And the moment that takes place in the day of my salvation is not so much me coming to follow the Lord Jesus.

It's God taking me from there, cutting me off from the root of that kind of life and uniting me in my relationship with Jesus Christ so that his death and his life become meaningful in my life.

That's why Paul says in writing to Galatians, I am crucified with Christ. When I become a child of God, I'm united to Jesus and his death, says Paul.

[8:23] And because of that, my life up until then has come to an end. I go on a train journey. And I may be going from Edinburgh to London.

And I'm going on the express train. It stops at so many different places. And then I hear the announcement that this train, the next stop on this train is London. And then I'm told, this train terminates at London, Euston.

And I want us to think today about our lives. We are on that journey outside of Christ. And in the day in which God comes to save us, our journey on that railway, on that track, comes to an end.

It terminates the moment my relationship with Jesus begins. And so, for you and for me today, am I a Christian or am I not?

Am I a child of God or am I not? Then the first part of the answer comes in looking at yourself and asking yourself, has the life that I lived, setting myself, happy in my sinful life, has that life come to an end?

[9:35] Has that part of my journey has determined, is it now over? And those of us, as we struggle and come into faith, there is that kind of process where there is that kind of struggle and confusion with the life that I am leading and the life that God wants me to live.

And that struggle comes to be over when I'm united to Christ and the one who died for my sins, who broke the power of sin, that through him and in him, that life has come to an end.

Has your life today changed? That's the first way in which faith is evident in the life of God's children.

That is confined to the past. It's done with. I don't want it anymore. God has taken it away and I don't want to see it anymore appearing in life.

And the transition is complete because not only do I share what Jesus achieved in his death, but I also achieve what, I also take part in what Jesus achieved in his resurrection.

[11:00] And that's what we read of in verse number 13. You are dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh. God made alive together with him.

Here is the preposition, the with him. When I hear about Jesus being raised from the dead on the third day, making himself known to his disciples, when I read and hear that, that's the new life of Jesus after the cross and that's the new life that the child of God lives in the moment of our union with Christ and of being united to Christ by the invisible hand of God.

the newness of life. That comes, says Paul, having had our sins forgiven, we walk now in this newness of life.

A life that is like the life that Jesus lived. A life that shows the work of the Spirit of God in our hearts and our lives. A life that is in the service of God and no longer in the service of sin.

There is that transition. There is that movement in this momentary activity of God when I'm taken from there and taken to be in Christ.

[12 : 21] And so, today, for you, there will be no physical movement. The way God works, you can sit where you are sitting.

And at the same time, the greatest movement ever takes place in your heart and life. You don't change your position, you don't change your body movement, and in that silence, motionless picture of where you're at, God works.

And He creates this new thing in your heart. And the new thing is creating this union with the Lord Jesus, and that changes you forever. physically, there's no change, but before God, there is the world of a difference.

That's what Paul wanted them to see. And that's today what God wants you and I to see. A life that has changed because God has brought us into a living relationship with Jesus.

And in that relationship, we are a new people. And the same Paul says that everyone who is in Christ is a new creation.

[13 : 36] And he goes on to say, all things have passed away. That train has terminated at the cross of Jesus. All things have become new.

The old and the new. The movement created by God's work in our hearts. Are we old or new? Are we serving sin or serving the Lord?

The transition that is the first part of our freedom. Secondly, we want to see that there is a transaction.

And the transaction is based on two images or word pictures that Paul gives to us in these verses.

And in the first word picture that we have, there is this idea of debt cancellation.

We have it in version number 14. By cancelling the record of debt that stood against us. There is a handwriting.

[14 : 41] It's a handwriting that speaks of debts that, of things that a person is obliged to fulfill. And all of these things are written down.

And the document is signed as proof of the obligation to keep and to observe what is written in the document. And for the Old Testament people of God, we can think of them at Mount Sinai where God brought them to be his own people.

And the people of God, they said to Moses and to the Lord, all that the Lord has said we will do, they were signing the document, placing themselves under obligation to give obedience to God and his commands and to live with him forever.

It was an I owe you to God. And it was signed by them in that moment willing to bind themselves to God and committed to live to him.

but we know that the Old Testament people of God were just like yourselves. We say the right things, we promise to do so much but we fail.

[15 : 57] And they failed to fulfill the obligation. What they had signed up to do, they simply did not do. And because of that, the law that God gave them, that placed them under obligation to whom that law now changed to be a law that spoke against them.

It stood in their judgment. They had broken the law of God. They were condemned by the penalty of God's law. It stood firmly against them. And what was true of the children of Israel as they left Mount Sinai is true of humankind as we leave the Garden of Eden.

And for all of us here today, there is our debt. There is our obligation to keep the law of God perfectly. There is a promise that if we do so, we will have eternal life.

But there is the threat that if we don't, there is the penalty of death that stands against us. And here we are in our lostness and God is taking us from the place of lostness and uniting us to the passion of his Son and the day of our salvation.

And he's forgiving our sins and he does that because of this wonderful transaction of cancelling the record of death.

[17:24] He puts his pen through it and he puts his pen through it because of all that Jesus has done. And not only does he put his pen through the record of death that you and I have, he also takes the document and he destroys it so that the evidence is completely gone.

It's cancelled. I can delete a document on my computer or laptop and it will be in the recycle bin and if I want to recover it I can go to my recycle bin and restore it to where it belongs so that I've got the written document.

But if I go to my recycle bin and if I empty my recycle bin I'm asked the question, are you sure you want to empty your recycle bin? because once the bin is emptied then these documents are gone forever.

And God does not have a recycle bin. When he deletes, he deletes it once and for all. And he deletes the record of our sin and the guilt that comes with that record.

He wipes the slate clean. He erases every entry. Then he destroys the document so that there is no condemnation to those who are in Jesus Christ.

[19:00] And today as a child of God you may be troubled because of your sin. You may be troubled because of the failures in your life and the way in which you are not able to reach up to the standard that God has given to you.

And it robs you of the sense of the peace of the salvation that God has given to you. And instead of that peace there is turmoil. There is a sense of letting God down.

There is a sense of failing to find the satisfaction that God promises to give you. And here is what the gospel wants to say to you, what God wants to say to you.

The record of your debt is cancelled. The slate is wiped clean. The document is destroyed. God is saying, I will forgive their sin.

I will remember their iniquity no more. The forgiveness of God. And our recent book on forgiveness speaks about the importance of forgiving others.

[20:14] But speaks about a psychological challenge of not being able to forgive ourselves. And when God forgives us, that forgiveness should reach us so far as to enable us to forgive ourselves so that we have that perfect peace.

And perhaps as the children of God, that's one of our great problems. That we don't allow God's total forgiveness forgiveness, to fill our own lives totally and to take away the sense of failure and guilt and to enjoy the peace of God.

There is the cancellation of debt. the second word picture is the way in which the cross comes to be at the very center of that.

This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He takes it up. He nails it to the cross. He wipes it clean.

The penalty is thoroughly executed. The penalty is severed in the passion of the son. The son who had before him on the cross, that that that superscription, this is the king of the Jews.

[21:32] That was his condemnation under Pilate. But the nails and the hands and the feet of Jesus on the cross, they were the superscription of God that here in the oppression of his son, he was bearing the penalty.

He was made a curse for us. All other sins deserved. He severed in our room and in our place. He set it aside. He lifts it up from us.

He places it on his son. His son suffers for it and takes it all away. And it's deleted. It's removed forever.

the supremacy of Jesus in God's transaction in making us the children of God and the way in which everything comes back to what Jesus achieved on the cross.

He was made a curse for us, says Paul. Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Lord by becoming a curse for us.

[22:48] He took our place. He died for our sin. And the cross of Jesus cancels all of the dead and removes it forever out of sight.

there is then the transaction. And finally there is the triumph. As we come into verse 15 that's where we see the triumph.

He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame by triumphing over them in him. The rulers and the authorities.

The parish that are working in Colossae. The parish that were generating the philosophies in Colossae that was so harmful to the church. The parish that are working in the church in Ephesus where Paul speaks to the church and reminds them of their need to be on the whole armor of God because they are not wrestling with people but they are wrestling with powers, with principalities, wrestling with the devil himself, the rulers and the authorities.

Paul goes as far as to describe Satan as the God of this world. The challenges, the powers that are too great for you and I to conquer.

[24:20] And that's so often our failing that we try and conquer them ourselves. That we see the giants and we think we can manage the giants ourselves.

That we will confront them thinking that we can conquer them. But we discover time after time that they are too great for us. They are too strong for us and they are ready to conquer us.

And all of these ways in which the power of darkness and the power of Satan works against the church in Colossae and works against the church wherever it is including here today all that power we read in verse 15 he disarmed rulers and authorities.

It's the picture of stripping them of their armor stripping them of all of their indications of power of leaving them helpless and not able to do anything.

that's what Jesus achieved on the cross. He stripped the power from Satan himself. He cast him out.

[25:37] By the power of God Jesus has the victory. We refer to that in the children's others. The way in which Jesus is the champion because he triumphed in the cross.

He disarmed all of the rulers. In the letter to the Hebrews we read that Jesus destroyed him who has the power of death, the devil.

And he did so to deliver those who through the fear of death are all of their lifetime subject to bondage. We need fear no one as the children of God.

And the devil wants us to fear everyone and to fear every kind of situation and to say to us we can't do this and we can't do that. We can't go here, we can't go there.

Looking back to my own conversion, there were these struggles for so long that there were so many things that the devil would tell me I could not and I cannot do as much as my desire was to follow the Lord Jesus and all of that not overcome these kept me paralyzed where I was for so long.

[26:58] It can do that for you today if you're deciding to follow the Lord Jesus there will be all of these arguments presented by the devil himself to persuade you that you can't do this and you can't go there and you can't follow because you will fail.

It's the typical strategy of the devil to stop you from believing that strategy will perhaps be altered once you come to believe but don't be afraid of the devil or of Satan because here we see that Jesus has disarmed him and once we believe in Jesus the victory that Jesus has over the devil becomes our personal victory we are more than conquerors through him who loved us and there is in that triumphal procession we hear about it in sport in so many different ways once a victory is won once a competition has won once a cup has been won there must be a victory parade we must go through the streets of London or Manchester or Glasgow or Edinburgh wherever it is we must have our victory parade we must show off the trophy that we have won it's something like that that we have here but it is something different he put them to an open shame by triumphing over them in him and it's different because the

Romans had a particular practice and it was a practice that they had with regard to victorious generals and when a general was victorious there was a parade along the city streets and the general would be followed not by his own army who helped him achieve the victory but by those whom he had captured chained together exposed as the defeated enemy and the general walking through as the one who was the victorious one they were defeated they were powerless they were chained but he was the victorious one and that's the image that Paul wants to leave with the people in Colossae it's the image that God wants to leave with ourselves today that the

Jesus whom we trust in who died on the cross the Jesus whom we trust in who was raised from the dead behind this is the Jesus who enters into the presence of God as the great general and captain of his people and behind him are all the powers including Satan himself chained so that they cannot operate as they did anymore and doing so putting them to an open shame and what was the shame the shame of their defeat the shame of their powerlessness in the face of the power of this great general and there is that sense of open shame and the triumph of Jesus for you and for me God has done this openly in the gospel and today we should not fear what anyone should do to us we

should not fear what the devil himself threatens to do to us because Jesus has triumphed over him because he is chained by him and he will operate nowhere beyond the control of the Lord Jesus all authority is given to Jesus and Satan has lost all of his power and so today because of this great procession and because of this triumph of the Lord Jesus we can follow the Lord Jesus as those who in God's power and in his invisible way has united us to the Lord Jesus we can follow the Lord Jesus with a sense of triumph because his victory is ours because the defeat of Satan becomes the defeat of Satan in our lives and we go forward in the strength of God in a sense not becoming weary although the life of faith will challenge us but going forward going from strength to strength because our strength is not in ourselves it is in what God has achieved in the life and the death and resurrection of his son and may God help us to reflect on the direction that God gives to us to think of the great freedom that we have in

[32:10] Christ and to understand that the freedom is secured by Jesus it is unchangeable it cannot be lost and the triumph is the same we will conquer because he has conquered may God bless his word let us bow our heads in prayer most gracious God we do rejoice in you God Father Son and Holy Spirit working for our salvation doing so even here today under the ministry of the gospel we pray you Lord as a father to touch the hearts of your children we pray you Lord as the Son of God to show to us more and more of your great love for us and we pray you Holy Spirit to bless your word and to breathe that new life in our hearts that indeed we may be the children of God who have that spirit of adoption and to know you as Abba Father and to put our trust in you as the one who has secured our eternal salvation for us so bless your word we do pray and hear as we ask for Jesus sake

Amen so the closing psalm is psalm 118 in the Scottish Psalter sorry sing psalms psalm 118 and sing psalms it's on page 156 and we're singing at verse number 19 to verse 26 psalm 118 page 156 at verse number 19 throw wide the gates of righteousness and enter and give thanks to God this is the gate of God through which the righteous come before the Lord we'll sing from verse 19 to verse 26 to God's praise!

O wide the gates of righteousness I lend with thanks salvation comes from you alone the stone the builder hath refused has now become the corner stone the Lord himself has done all it is a marvel in our sight this is the day the Lord has made in it let us take great delight save us oh

Lord we hum we pray oh Lord we pray grant us success he blessed who comes in cross we gave you from the Lord house we will bless after the benediction I'll go to the main door the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ the love of God the Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all now and forever more Amen Thank you.

Thank you.