

Dead in Sin, Alive with Christ

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- [0 : 0 0] Thanks Luke. There goes a pen. My name's Chris, for those of you who don't know me. I'm the youth minister here and that explains why I'm not wearing any shoes. And also because it's hot. But I'm going to pray. Hopefully something will appear up there. Hopefully that might match up with what I'm saying. And hopefully you don't go to sleep because it's hot. And we'll all have a good time. So let's pray. Father God, I just pray that you would keep us alert. You would help us to hear what you're saying in Colossians. That you would help us to have hearts that are open to being changed by your word. And that tonight you would draw us closer to you. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Well, I'm from Tasmania. At the start of 2006, I began a traineeship at my church in Hobart.
- [1 : 0 1] And the previous year I'd written off a car. And I was a little bit sad about that. But this new family came along to the church. And they heard that I'd written my car off and that I was walking everywhere. And that's a lie. I was actually using my parents' car. But I was using my parents' car and I couldn't use it all the time. And I was getting quite annoyed. Anyway, they gave me a 1986 Alfa Romeo. I've got the... Oh, look at it. What a picture of joy. And they just gave it to me one day. They said, hey, you know what? We've got a car you can have. And I was like, I'm sorry, what? And they're like, yeah, you can have this car for nothing. And I'm like, no way. And I'm like, yeah. Look, here's the keys. Leave. And I was just like, wow, that's pretty awesome. Then the next week, someone else at my church, they'd heard that I had a new car. And I was a youth ministry trainee. So obviously, I didn't really have that much money.
- [2 : 0 5] So they decided, I still don't know who this person was, to leave \$100 in my pigeonhole with a little note saying, heard you got a new car for nothing and thought you might need some petrol money. So there you go. I had a free car. And the next week, I had \$100. And I was like, far out. Working for a church is freaking awesome. And I was fully just excited about God. Because there, he'd given me, like, through these people's generosity, he'd given me this stuff. And these people who gave me the car, you know, they were new to the church. And they had no reason to do it. They were not parents of some youth who'd been in the youth ministry who somehow, through my amazing work, that I'd saved or something, which is completely theological rubbish anyway. But they were people who just saw that I needed a car and they gave it to me. Tonight's passage is a bit like this.

[3 : 08] It talks about a gift that we get with no work on our part, no honour on our part, no right to claim the gift as our own.

And with the car, I found it hard to believe. I found it hard to believe that someone would give me the car. You know, I kept thinking that maybe secretly they were going to say, you know how we gave you that car.

Well, now, clean our windows. Every week, get down here and do something for us. But they weren't like that at all. And neither is God like that without our free gift, which is salvation.

And so we'll look at how that unpacks in tonight's passage in a minute. But before we do that, I want to just quickly look at Colossians up to now so that we can get it in context.

So what we know so far, this is like ridiculously brief. We know that the Colossians have faith in Jesus. We know that they have been rescued from death by the devil through Jesus.

[4 : 12] And we know that this Jesus who has rescued them is a very, very powerful guy. And it goes on to list some of the things in chapter one.

He's the image of God. He holds all creation together. The fullness of God dwelt in him in human form. And the other thing that we know is that Paul, who wrote the letter, has been working very hard for this church.

He didn't set the church up, but he's been working hard for them. And that's where we're up to when we get to tonight's reading, to chapter 2, verse 8, which says, See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the universe, and not according to Christ.

This is the first of three warnings that Paul gives the Colossians. And I'm going to look at the other two a bit later on because they happen a bit later on. But what Paul is saying here is, Don't be deceived.

Don't be fooled. Don't get caught up in things that are not from Jesus. But why is he saying that? What's his reasoning? Why is Jesus a better option than these philosophies, this empty deceit?

[5 : 28] And that's what he goes on to outline in the next few verses, verses 9 to 15. And that's what I want to spend the majority of our time tonight unpacking, is these verses, verses 9 to 15.

And I think if you're like me and you like to make things nice and simple, the main thrust of what Paul says in verses 9 to 15 can be summed up in this little phrase, Jesus is powerful, in fact, he is God.

So let's try and unpack that statement. Jesus is powerful, in fact, he is God. So verses 9 and 10, they say, For in him the whole fullness of deity, that's God, dwells bodily.

And you have come to fullness in him who is the head of every ruler and authority. So Jesus is fully God in human form.

Now, you've got to try and get your head around what that actually means. But that's probably too much for what I can do with tonight. Tonight we just have to live with the fact that Jesus is fully God in human form.

[6 : 41] And not only that, but he is the boss of everything and the head of every ruler and authority. He's the head of those elemental spirits and empty philosophies that Paul talked about back in verse 8.

He's the head of the amazing Kevin Rudd, our new prime minister with his 70% approval ratings. He's the head of George W. Bush, the leader of the free world.

Jesus is God, fully God in human form. And he's the boss of everything and everyone. And that makes him a very, very powerful dude.

But we see that not only is Jesus God, we also see that somehow through Jesus, who is the fullness of God, we can come to fullness in him.

What does that actually mean? Well, I think it means that when we trust in Jesus for our complete salvation, that's what we have. We have complete salvation.

[7 : 40] You know, if I was God, and perhaps sometimes I think I should be God and I do a better job, but I'm lying. If I were God, I think I'd make salvation work like this.

You can be saved if you live a good life, if you do the right thing, and if you say enough nice things about me.

That's how I'd make salvation work. But we see that in Jesus, when we trust in him, we have complete and full salvation.

Not partial salvation. Not a salvation that we have to work for. A full salvation that comes when we confess our trust in him.

That's pretty awesome and a pretty easy thing for us to take hold of and something we can have assurance in. So let's keep going.

[8 : 38] Verses 11 and 12, Paul says, Now, I'll be honest with you, this kind of was, I found this really hard to get my head around.

What is kind of what I did for about a day as I read these verses? But after sort of thinking and reading and trying to work out what Paul was on about here, I think there are a couple of things that we need to take notice of.

And the first thing is this idea of circumcision. So if you know anything about the Bible, you will know that in Genesis, around chapter 17, God sort of remakes some promises to Abraham and his descendants.

And as a result of this, they get circumcised, the men, as an outward sign of their faith in those promises. And what Paul is saying here is that now that Jesus has come, when we put our trust in him, we're spiritually circumcised.

which means that instead of being the sinful, filthy, disgusting, selfish, full of pride, lustful, contemptuous kind of person that we are, the people that we are, instead of being like that, when we put our trust in Jesus, all of that is kind of cut away.

[10 : 22] When we're baptised as a sign of our faith in Jesus, these verses are saying that that kind of way of living, the old self, the body, that's put to death, that's cut away, it's gone.

All our guilt, all our shame, all of that is gone when we put our trust in Jesus. And we're raised to new life in him. Not by doing a good thing, not by sinning less, but through our faith in the power of God, and in Jesus.

And what's even more amazing about this, is that it's Jesus, it's God who initiates our salvation. Let's look at verse 13.

And when you were dead in your trespasses, that is sins, and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive together with him, when he forgave us all our trespasses.

Have you ever had something happen to you that you found really surprising? Something that you weren't expecting? For me, trying to get what this is like, it's a bit like when I go to a party, or I go to uni, or I go to church, and a new girl comes in, and you just have that little click of chemistry, or whatever, and you go, yeah, she's pretty cool, and hopefully she thinks the same.

[11 : 58] Hasn't happened as much as I would like, but anyway, if I haven't met you before, and talked to you after the service, trust me, I'm not actually thinking that, when I talk to you.

Anyway, that kind of thing, it just kind of sneaks up on you, unexpected. You've got this kind of amazing, you kind of see something that you hadn't seen before.

Maybe sometimes it happens with people, who you've met once or twice before, but for some reason, you just notice the other person a little bit more. Well, I think that sort of what verse 13 is hinting at, is that when God initiates our salvation, before we believed in Christ, when we were sinners, on our way to hell, God comes along, out of the blue, and he makes us alive.

And, he forgives us, and we're kind of going, oh, that's cool. I wasn't expecting that. Wow. If you remember, if you were here last week, I shared about, how I'd come to know Jesus, and how I'd been, to, probably, a thousand Christian events, youth groups, and church services, and things, over, 16 or 17 years, but for some reason, I had never got it.

I'd never got that, that I needed Jesus, to save me from my sin. And, one day, just on a camp, it just all made sense.

[13 : 35] The lights went on, and I was like, oh, that's amazing. I can't believe, that I've never figured that out before. And so, that's kind of what this is saying, that God initiates it, and when he does the gospel, it comes alive.

You see it in a new way, you see it like, you've never seen it before. So after Paul says this, he moves into, what I think is the climax, of this section.

Verses 14 and 15. I'll read them, I'll read verse 14 now. To make sense, you've got to read a bit of verse 13, into it. So God made you, alive together with him, when he forgave us, all our trespasses.

Erasing the record, that stood against us, with its legal demands, he set this aside, nailing it, to the cross. If you read the TNIV, which is just another version, of the Bible, opposed to the NRSV, which we have in the pews, it puts it like this, having counselled the charge, of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us, and condemned us, he has taken it away, nailing it, to the cross.

That, is an awesome verse. Just imagine, you're on your way to court, and you're pretty much stuffed, because you actually are guilty, and you've done a terrible job, at trying to cover up your crime.

[15 : 10] In fact, what you've done, is you've stolen the judge's car, and he was watching you steal it. And, now, you're coming to court, and, you've managed to get the judge, whose car, you've stolen.

And, you're just kind of going, far out. Wish I'd stolen a different car. Maybe, if you're a good Christian person, you're thinking, far out, I wish I hadn't been so stupid, and stolen the car, in the first place.

I'd probably be thinking, I wish I'd stolen a different car, maybe I would have got away with it. But, that's just because, I'm stupid and sinful. But, you get to court, you're totally stuffed, your palms are sweating, you go in, you sit down, you're thinking, far out, I really, really don't want to go to jail.

Bad things happen there. And, you're sitting down, and you're waiting for, the judge, to pronounce you guilty. And, he doesn't.

He says, no, you're not, I'm not, I'm counselling the charges, before you. And, you're like, what? I stole your car, man. What, what are you talking about?

[16 : 26] And then, not only does he cancel the charge, but he comes out, and he meets you afterwards, after you're walking out, kind of in utter disbelief, at what's happened. And, he says, Chris, you're a bit of an idiot, still in my car, but, now that I've cancelled the charges, why don't you come over, to dinner?

And, you're like, what? Well, this judge is on drugs. And, so, you come, back, to his house, and his house is awesome.

I, I used to live, in a house, next to a judge's house, in Hobart, and, his house, was awesome. Like, seriously, it's the biggest house I've ever seen.

And, the biggest yard I've ever seen, in the richest part of, town that I've ever been in. And, it was a massive house. So, you're in this massive house, having dinner, and the judge says, well, you know how I counselled your charge?

Actually, what I did was, I sent my son to jail for you. And, you're like, yeah, he really is on drugs. What kind of judge are you? And, the story does sound absurd.

[17 : 36] That a judge would, do that, is absurd. But, this is a bit like, what, Jesus has done for us on the cross. He, has, taken our sin, all the stuff that we're too ashamed, to tell anyone about, all the stuff that we, makes us think, there is no way that God, could love me.

All the stuff, that just weighs us down with guilt, weighs us down with shame. God takes all of that, and he puts it on the cross, and he nails, it on the cross, and then he nailed Jesus to the cross, and then, Jesus died, and our sins are paid for, they're counselled, and we can now approach God, free from guilt, and free, from a guilty conscience.

And that is an awesome thing, and that is a thing, that, I was made more aware of last night, I went to this place, there was this girl, she was weighed down with guilt, she said, you know, I used to be like you, but I just felt so guilty, I felt so guilty about my life, and my sin, and I was so ashamed, and it's no way to live.

And, I couldn't help but feel that, so sorry for her, because, she hadn't understood that, actually, our faith, means that we, don't have any guilt, that we are not condemned, that, we can come before Jesus, and we can say, yes, I'm a sinful person, but God have mercy on me, because, my sins have been nailed to the cross, and I'm forgiven.

And man, if, I tried to explain, but she just, couldn't understand, why, she wanted to feel, like she was a good person, and, that she needed to do, all she could, to get to God.

[19 : 35] But, we've got something better than that, we've got a God, who takes away our shame, and we can be guilt free, in front of Jesus, on judgment day.

The second thing, that Jesus does on the cross, we see in verse 15, verse 15 says, he disarmed the rulers, and authorities, and made a public example of them, triumphing over them, in it, which, can mean either, through Jesus, or, it being the cross.

And I think, in the cross, is a better way of, of saying it. So, through the cross, not only does he take away, our guilt, and our shame, but, he defeats, the rulers, and authorities, and he humiliates them.

And who are the rulers, and authorities? Well, they're the devil, and they're his mates. You see, what he's done, is he's kind of, through dying on the cross, and through taking our punishment, and then through rising again, Jesus has kind of dropped, a nuclear bomb, on the devil's operations.

And, hopefully there's a picture, just in case you don't know, how massive a nuclear bomb is. And, in World War II, the Americans did the same thing, as the Japanese.

[20 : 57] They dropped a nuclear bomb on them, and they won the war, because they were just, unable, to mount any effective, counter attack, or whatever. I'm probably being, very unfair to history, here.

But, essentially, they dropped a nuclear bomb, and they were stuffed, and we won the war. But, that's kind of like, what Jesus has done, by his death on the cross. He's dropped a big nuclear bomb, on the devil, and they've now got no power.

So, those of us, who, who put our trust in Jesus, sure, we might have the little skirmish, here and there, with the devil, and we have to stand strong in that. But, he's lost.

His, operation field, is in tatters. His base, is stuffed. It's, no one's going to be able to live there, for years, because there's radiation, poisoning them all.

They're all, totally stuffed. The devil, and his mates, Jesus has beaten them, on the cross. So, that's, that's, Jesus is powerful.

[22 : 01] In fact, he is God, and he's done, so much for us, on the cross. What does this all mean? How do we translate this, into normal, kind of everyday living? I think this is what, Paul does next, in the next few verses, he tries to say, a bit of a, so what?

So, if you remember back to verse 8, way back at the start, Paul warned the Colossians, that they shouldn't be taken captive, to empty philosophies, that weren't from Jesus. And I, and here, in these last sort of verses, verses 16, through to 23, we get, another two warnings, warnings, for the Colossian church, and warnings that I think, remain true, for us today, as well.

Verses 16 and 17, is warning number one. Therefore, do not let anyone, condemn you in matters of food, and drink, or of observing festivals, new moons, or Sabbaths.

These are only a shadow, of what is to come, but the substance, belongs to Christ. Now, we can't know, exactly, what's happening, in the Colossian church, or why, it is that Paul, has chosen them, chosen to warn them, about, this particular thing.

But, we can be sure, of one thing. And that is, that they are followers of Jesus, and that they've been saved, through their faith, in him, and what he did on the cross, not, through their actions, not through observing, festivals, or Sabbaths, or things like that.

[23 : 35] God didn't require, them to have done anything, for their salvation. God requires nothing, yet. While we're still sinners, God, dies for us. You pick that up, in verse 13.

God initiates, our salvation. And, if you, sort of think about, other places in the Bible, Romans 8, says that, there's no condemnation, for those who, follow Jesus.

And, perhaps, also, Paul is saying, you know, your salvation, is in Jesus, and what he's done, and, don't let other people, condemn you, because, when you, when you die, I'm not going to condemn you, you're not going to be condemned, so why let other people, condemn you?

You, your guilt, and your shame, were taken away, on the cross. The second warning, comes in, verse 18, and 19. Do not let anyone disqualify you, insisting on self-abasement, and worship of angels, dwelling on visions, puffed up without cause, by a human way of thinking, and not holding fast, to the head, from whom the whole body, nourished and held together, by its ligaments, and sinews, grows with a growth, that is from God.

Again, if we think back to, those earlier verses, we've seen, that, God is the only judge, God is the only one, who's capable, of disqualifying someone, based on their faith, in Jesus.

[25 : 09] And so, Paul is saying here, that if you trust in Jesus, if you follow him, other people can't disqualify you, with their ideas, of what you should, or shouldn't be doing, God is the only one, with the power to save, and he's already done it, for people who trust in Jesus.

And so I think, the warning for us today, is that we ought to be careful, about who we're so, willing to disqualify, from faith, from salvation, based on, perhaps our own ideas, of what a Christian should be like, or things like that, and not on, their faith in Jesus.

And this kind of leads into, the last few verses, from verse 20, which deals with the problem, of legalism. Where Paul says, why do you submit to regulations?

And I think, here, this is kind of, the warning, for us as Christians today, I don't really know, many of you that well, but, it's definitely a warning for me.

You know, often, we, set up a little fence, and we say, if you behave, within, our fence, and if you don't go outside, that fence, then, you must be okay.

[26 : 34] Your faith must be in Jesus. And we spend all our time, trying to, make people stay inside, the fence, not, to put their faith, more in Jesus.

Although, this is what I, I can be guilty of doing sometimes. You know, we make a rule, I remember, Jono, in one of his first weeks here, was talking about, when he went to America, and these people, were trying to get him to, sign something about alcohol, and he said, no, I think I can drink, and be a Christian.

And they said, well, we don't, go away. I may have done, massive injustice to your story, I'm sorry, Jono. But, you know, if it's alcohol, you know, he drinks alcohol, he's out, out of the kingdom.

Or, you know, maybe, maybe we do other things like, well, that person only reads the Bible, twice a day, not ten times a day, he can't really know Jesus.

Or, the other way legalism can work is, we do it to ourselves. So we say, if I just did this holy thing more, and this unholy thing less, then, I'm going to, be, be closer to salvation, or something.

[28 : 03] You know, it's a classic one for, young, teenage, and older boys. You know, if I read my Bible more, if I look at pornography less, then, I'm going to, be, closer, to heaven.

You see, what Paul is saying is that, it doesn't matter what you do. I mean, it does. Don't hear me say, you can do whatever you want. Obviously, that is a load of rubbish as well.

But ultimately, you know, the person who doesn't, who meets our expectations, the person who is perfect, the person who's reading their Bible ten times a day, who prays all the time, who loves their neighbours, who does everything you could possibly expect of a Christian, even that person, cannot please God through their actions.

They're just as bad, and just as worse off before God, as the murderer, the porn obsessed person, all of them, without Jesus, without putting their trust solely in him, all of them, are going to go to hell.

Good, bad, whatever. But, if they put their trust in Jesus, then, all of what they've done, because even the good person, even the perfect person, isn't as perfect as God.

[29 : 28] And all of the wrong things that they've done, all of the things that make them less perfect than God, they're all put on the cross, they're nailed there with Jesus, and that person, can approach God, free from guilt, by putting their trust, more fully, in Jesus, and what he's done.

See, Paul's saying that, human commands, and teachings, they're all, they look wise, and that's very true, they do. But, they're not helpful.

They're unable to lead us to God. And the only way, is to put our hope fully in Jesus. And we've seen that Jesus, is powerful, a Jesus who, makes us spiritually alive, through his death, on the cross, and his resurrection.

And a Jesus who's cancelled our debt, and who allows us to live for him. See, Jesus, friends, is powerful. In fact, he is God.

And, he's offering all of us a free gift, and one that he can only offer, because, of how powerful he is. the gift, of salvation, the gift of, of life, instead of death.

[30 : 38] And every one of us, here tonight, can have, this free gift. And let me tell you, I was excited, to get a free car, but, I'm a lot more excited, to have a free gift, of salvation.

salvation. And that is something, that I give thanks for, not enough. I should give thanks for it, every day. But I don't. I should repent of that.

But, if you have the gift of salvation, if you're going well, if you're putting your trust, fully in Jesus, then, that's awesome. I want to say, good on you. give thanks to God, in a moment, for the fact that, he's called you to him, and he's holding you, close to him.

Perhaps, maybe you have received, the gift of salvation, but you're guilty of, trying to rely on, human rules, and regulations, to get you, into heaven. Because you just, really don't believe, that, it could be for nothing.

That, that, that, that salvation, has absolutely, nothing to do, with what we do, but simply, by putting our trust, in Jesus. Well then, tonight, perhaps, is a good time, for you to say, look God, I'm sorry, that I was relying, on my own strength, and not in your power.

[31 : 54] Well maybe, you've never, had the gift of salvation. You've never, put your trust, in Jesus at all. And, perhaps tonight, if you've been thinking, about it for a while, tonight might be, a good time, to do that.

And, if you haven't been, thinking about it for a while, but you'd like to find out more, tonight might be a good time, to start finding out, more about Jesus. So, if that's you, if you've never, received salvation, the gift of salvation, maybe you want to talk, to your friend, about how, to go about that, who you came along with tonight.

If you didn't come with a friend, if you're just kind of, randomly sitting here, that's awesome, how you going? I'll be a friend, and I'll talk to you, after the service, if you want to, put your faith in Jesus.

Jesus is powerful, in fact, he is God, and through the cross, we are freed from guilt, freed from shame, and we can approach God, and that is an awesome thing.

Let's pray. Father God, we just thank you, that you sent Jesus, into this world, that you, allowed him to die for us, and that you raised him to life, that you dropped that nuclear bomb, on the devil's, operation center, that he's got no power, over us anymore.

[33 : 18] Lord, I pray that, each one of us, would, turn away from, trying in our own strength, to be good enough for you, but that we put our trust, fully in Jesus, and that we rely on him, and him alone, for our salvation.

And we thank you, that you are a God, who loved us enough, to initiate that salvation, while we were still dead, in our sins. And we pray, that you might be, continuing to draw, each one of us, closer to you, each day of our lives, for the rest, of our lifetime.

In Jesus name. Amen. Beneath the cross of Jesus, I find a place to stand.