



**Colossians 2:11-15**  
**Nailed to the Cross**

**Colossians 2: 11 In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ,**

**12 buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.**

**13 And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses,**

**14 having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.**

**15 Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.**

Last week we went over the meaning of verses 11-12 and the assurance that Paul gave the Colossians that while they may not have received the circumcision of their bodies, because of their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, they had the circumcision not made with hands, that is the heart circumcision, the taking away of their sin and spiritual deadness that only the Holy Spirit could do. They had been spiritually baptized into Christ and because of that their old sin enslaved selves were dead and buried. They were now dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

But now Paul goes on in verses 13 through 15 to flesh that idea of salvation out, to explain what has happened to them, because like so many other Christians throughout history, they were struggling because they just didn't understand how great and *complete* their salvation really was. So today I want to preach simply to you, because it seems to me that while Paul's writing here is beautiful, the message is ultimately very simple. Paul is answering in these verses the critical question What is the *Gospel*? In the Greek the *Euaggelion*, that is the Good News. *What is the Good News?*

I have heard so many answers to that question in my life, one of the most common ways of answering that question starts out with the statement "*God Loves You and Has a wonderful plan for your life!*" A lot of people are going to be happy to hear that especially the ones who figure, "**Really? That's great because I love me and have a wonderful plan for my life as well!**" But that's not how Paul starts to answer that question, in fact neither Christ nor any of His disciples explain the good news by starting

off with that approach. Rather when Paul explains the good news he starts by first telling them the bad news.

He doesn't start off by saying I have this great thing, why don't you try it? He says before I tell you about this great thing, let me explain to you WHY you need it. He's like a doctor, who says to you, "I'm going to prescribe a medicine, but let me first tell you why you need it!"

In this case the medicine is the Gospel, but what was the disease? What was the problem that the Colossians had before the gospel solved it? Because Paul is writing in the past tense, he's telling them about the way they once were before they became Christians. He identifies two problems, in verses 13 and 14

The first from verse 13 is that they were spiritually dead in their sins  
And the second from verse 14 was that they had a debt they couldn't ever repay

Let me address them in reverse order, first their debt. Some times the NKJV is a little tepid in its translations. *Handwriting of the requirements?* The Greek word translated handwriting is *Cheirographon*. It was used of a note that someone wrote and signed acknowledging a debt to the person they owed it to. An IOU. But what was their debt? Who did they owe? That was the requirements, the word there is *dogma* but what it means in this case is the decrees. The decrees of God, God's laws. They were debtors to God, they were supposed to keep his laws, but they hadn't done it. You know the moral law of God, the ten commandments, you shall have no other Gods before me, you shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, or steal or lie or covet.

But they had broken all of those commandments, in fact they came into the world guilty of breaking all of those commandments in their first father Adam, Paul explains in Romans 5 that when Adam committed his original sin in the garden, all men sinned in him and fell with him. All men are born bearing the guilt of Adam's original sin. And they can't do anything to repay it. They don't have the power or the desire.

**Some of you may have seen the new "Bankrupting America" ad on Route 87.** You have kids wearing this massive backpack, and the idea is that our children are inheriting a terrible burden which is our national debt. And I hate to say it but there something they inherited from us that's even worse, and that's Adam's sin debt, and they just keep adding to it themselves, the burden gets bigger and bigger, every day, and as Christian in Pilgrim's progress confesses, the burden that will "sink them lower than the grave and into Hell."

So that's the second problem. What's the first? The first is that they were dead in trespasses. Oh not physically dead, they could still move and think and breathe, but spiritually dead in their sins. When Adam sinned he spiritually died. And all his descendants have been born with that same deadness. And dead men can't do anything for themselves. It's impossible. They cannot give themselves spiritual life, they can't even assist. Sometimes the process of being saved is analogized to a sick man taking medicine, or a drowning man seizing the life preserver. But that's not the way our condition is portrayed in scripture. The picture of the sinner in need of salvation is Lazarus, 4 days dead in the grave. Jesus didn't go to the grave of Lazarus and say "Lazarus, I need you to cooperate, when I say please consider coming out, I would like you to use your own power to get up and come to me." No what did he do: **He cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth!"** And with that call Jesus raised

Lazarus to new life. And he who had died came out!

Matthew Henry writes, “As a man who is dead is unable to help himself by any power of his own, so an habitual sinner is morally impotent: though he has a natural power, or the power of a reasonable creature, he has not a spiritual power, till he has the divine life or a renewed nature.” We were born dead in sins, we need Jesus to raise us from the dead. Or a Jesus told Nicodemus, you must be ‘You must be born again.’

And as for our sin debt? What about that? Jesus paid it all. He took our sin debt upon his shoulders and he paid for it by taking the punishment we would have received in an eternity in hell. He nailed that awful IOU that we could never pay to his cross, and whereas all we had was debt, he credited to us his own perfect righteousness. 2 Cor. 5:21 **For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.**

We could imagine Paul acting like bank manager with the Colossians, He calls them in, and he shows them, this huge positive number, and they say what is that? And he says that is what you needed to get into heaven. And then he shows them his computer screen and on it is this massive negative number that just keeps getting bigger and bigger, and they ask “**what is that number**“ and he says that was your sin debt. And it would have been due at death. And then he says but this is your current account. And in it they see not that huge ever growing negative number, but exactly to the very penny, the amount they needed to get into heaven.

And he says, “you see first Jesus paid the debt you couldn’t and weren’t even willing to, and then he put the amount you needed into your account, credited or imputed it to you.” That is your salvation.

That is what happens to us, when we are united by faith to Jesus Christ, a faith HE gives to you as a gift. And even better when the final judgment comes, we won’t have to worry about the devil and his demons bringing their accusations against us in the courtroom, Christ has triumphed over all of them, the battle is won. None shall bring an accusation!

***Romans 8:33 Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.***

***34 Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.***

This is there salvation, this is why they don’t need all the garbage being peddled by false teachers, why they couldn’t add anything to their salvation, why they need to rejoice in their salvation, instead of doubting it.

Application 1: Their problem continues, doubt, doubt, doubt. Paul might say, Romans 8:1 *There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, but we say, oh but how can there not be? I’ve done such terrible things. I feel lost, not saved! Perhaps if I did some legalistic work, I’d feel saved. The answer is to look to Christ, not yourself.*

***Psalm 42:11 Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; For I shall yet praise Him, The help of my countenance and my God.***

Application 3: To be saved from sin does not mean to be saved from trial!

“Red Sea Experience” I do not know whether your experience will back up mine, but I can say this: the worst difficulty I ever met with, or I think I can ever meet with, happened a little time after my conversion to God. And you must generally expect, very soon after you have been brought to know and love Him, that you will have some great, broad, deep Red Sea straight before your path, which you will scarcely know how to pass. Sometimes it will occur in the family. For instance, if he is an ungodly man, the husband may say, “You shall not attend that place of worship. I positively forbid you to be baptized, or to join that church.” There is a Red Sea before you. You have done nothing wrong. It is God Himself who places that Red Sea before your path. Or perhaps before that time, you were carrying on a business which now you cannot conscientiously continue. There is a Red Sea which you have to cross in renouncing your means of livelihood. You don’t see how it is to be done, or how you will maintain yourself and provide things honestly in the sight of all men. Perhaps your employment calls you among men with whom you lived before on amicable terms, but now suddenly they say, “Come! Won’t you do as you used to do?” The Red Sea before you is a hard struggle. You do not like to come out and say, “I cannot, I shall not, for I am a Christian.” You stand still, half afraid to go forward.

Application 2 - We always hear the stories of the conversion of the really bad boys, the blatant sinners, the men like Paul who were breathing curses at the people of God, people who were murderers, or who were sunk deep in terrible sins, who drank, and cursed, and gambled, and chased after every form of immorality they could. And those inspiring because in the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, or David Berkowitz aka the Son of Sam, or John Newton we have vivid testimony to the amazing grace of God, and the fact that there is no sin or sins so great that God’s grace is not greater still, no stain of sin so terrible that the blood of Christ cannot wash it away. And no one so lost and far from God, that the effectual calling of the Holy Spirit cannot bring him, like the prodigal son, back to the house of His father.

But I fear that there’s a subtle danger if the only conversion stories we ever hear are those of great sinners. I fear that we begin to think that the only people who need to be saved are the really terrible sinners and that well behaved, outwardly moral boys and girls, or women and men, don’t also have sins that would drag them down to hell, and that therefore they don’t need to flee to Christ for salvation. So let me share with you the conversion story of a “good boy”, an excellent student, who got good grades, he wasn’t rude, he came from a Christian family, he was kind, respectful, diligent, he even read his bible. People looking at him would have said, “oh yes he’s a good Christian boy.”

But in youth religion had no root within him deeper than mere sentiment. It was an admirable and beautiful ornament of his spirit; but, as he himself in his beautiful hymn, 'Jehovah Tsidkenu,' has most touchingly shown, it was not as yet Divine grace; there was no heart sense of sin, no gospel faith in Jesus yet.

**I once was a stranger to grace and to God,  
I knew not my danger, and felt not my load;  
Though friends spoke in rapture of Christ on the tree,  
Jehovah Tsidkenu was nothing to me.**

**I oft read with pleasure, to sooth or engage,  
Isaiah's wild measure and John's simple page;  
But e'en when they pictured the blood sprinkled tree  
Jehovah Tsidkenu seemed nothing to me.**

**Like tears from the daughters of Zion that roll,  
I wept when the waters went over His soul;  
Yet thought not that my sins had nailed to the tree  
Jehovah Tsidkenu—'twas nothing to me.**

**When free grace awoke me, by light from on high,  
Then legal fears shook me, I trembled to die;  
No refuge, no safety in self could I see—  
Jehovah Tsidkenu my Saviour must be.**

From his recollection of himself, he was always in after days most careful to distinguish between a heart religion and one of mere sentiment. With him, however, the reality was not long of appearing; he got to the root of the matter at an early age—when he was about eighteen years old—and, as so often happens, it was sorrow which by God was blessed to the opening of the avenues of his soul. The death of his dear brother David was the means of the new birth to him. As his biographer, Dr Andrew Bonar, beautifully says, 'By that providence the Lord was calling one soul to enjoy the treasures of grace, while he took the other into the possession of glory.' He was accustomed to date the great change within him from the year of his brother's death. Not that there was any sudden rupture, any great upheaval in his soul, any prostrating, intolerable sense of misery; every soul does not need to experience that; and we must ever beware of making conversion a stereotyped thing. But there can be no doubt that in connection with the removal of his brother he got that view of sin and of the grace of God which bringeth salvation. He used to keep sacred the anniversary of David's death, saying of it one year, 'On this morning last year came the first overwhelming blow to my worldliness ;' and again, a good many years later, 'This day eleven years ago I lost my loved and loving brother, and began to seek the Brother who cannot die.'

I have seen this change occur in children myself. I received a very moving letter a little while ago from a young man who had a profession of faith, but had never really believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. It took him getting in big trouble he said to “wake him up” to his true condition and the danger that he was in. At that point he laid his sins on Christ and ran to him