

Sixth Midweek Lenten – We Preach Christ Crucified

April 5, 2017

Colossians 2:13-15

No Longer Dead, But Alive

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Dear friends in Christ Jesus,

Years ago someone pointed out to me what he saw as a clear contradiction in the Bible. God told Adam and Eve that in the day they ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they would die. They disobeyed and ate but did not die. For him that was proof enough the Bible is not trustworthy.

I pointed out that on that day they did die to God because now their sins separated them from God. They had lost the image of God and were spiritually dead.

Physical death came into the world that day and claimed them centuries later.

In the midst of all that death, the gracious LORD God stepped in with the first gospel of the Savior. The Seed of Eve would come and destroy Satan's power, and restore to mankind all that had been lost. The gospel removed the barrier of sin for reconciliation with God. The gospel exchanged eternal life for eternal death for all sinners. It turned physical death into the door to heaven for all who believe the good news of forgiveness and salvation in Christ. So we preach Christ crucified, the fulfillment of Genesis 3:15.

Paul wrote to the Christians in Colossae in Asia Minor "when you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ." The apostle wrote on about the details of that miracle. God forgave our sins because he canceled "the written code with its regulations." That law, the Ten Commandments, stood against us. It opposed us. It was our enemy because it condemned us for breaking it.

Our consciences are the voice that makes these transgressions come to life in our hearts. When I sin, my conscience holds up the law that condemns me. Right? It is no use trying to quiet the conscience by saying, "Everybody's doing it." "Society accepts it now."

There is little comfort in any appearance of innocence I may have in my actions if every inclination of the thoughts of my heart are evil all the time, as God knows. [Genesis 6:5] St. Augustine used a good illustration about that with the wrongly supposed apparent innocence of infants. He said that was "**more a matter of weakness of limb than purity of heart.**" In other words, just because a baby can't make a fist to strike you, or curse you with his mouth does not mean a baby is not totally self-absorbed or spiritually pure in nature.

God took away that law with its condemnation and nailed it to the cross. Jesus took that law onto himself being a true man, born under the law. God the Father

cancelled the requirement to keep the law because Jesus had kept it perfectly. Because the law that kills us went to the cross on Christ who died under its brokenness, God made us alive with Christ in his resurrection.

Paul also used the example of circumcision which was a sign of belonging to God. When we were without Christ our sinful nature was as uncircumcised. We did not belong to God on account of our transgressions of the law. Now, since God has removed the curse of the law. He has circumcised our hearts through faith and now we belong to him.

We are no longer dead, but alive. God exchanged Christ's death for our life. He declares this exchange complete and satisfactory by raising Jesus Christ bodily from the tomb on Easter morning.

Christ crucified, Jesus' cross, is not only the place where God took the law and its condemnation away from us. It is the place where God, "having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross."

Paul used the picture of a Roman victory parade. Garlands of flowers hung down from around the necks of the victors. They prodded with spears the stripped, beaten, and bound losers down Main St. of the victor's city. At the end of the march, the winners put the defeated enemies to death.

Christ by dying on the cross stripped our spiritual enemies of all power and authority over us. He stripped them of any ability to accuse us of sin. They cannot force us to sin against God. Jesus' triumph at the cross, which looked like a defeat, ended any hope the powers of darkness had for what looked like their triumph. Jesus' cross was their total rout.

Jesus' cross, Christ crucified, made a public spectacle of that death we talked about in the introduction. Sin and death entered the world through Adam. Forgiveness and Life came into the world through Jesus Christ. At the moment Jesus died on the cross, an earthquake opened the tombs of many saints in the area. They came alive and left those tombs.

Three days later Jesus' earthly body would experience the same coming to life. Unlike Lazarus whose body stunk with the odor of the decay of death, as Jesus spoke through the psalm writer in Psalm 16, God did not let his body see decay.

On Judgment Day we will witness the final blessing of "captivity being taken captive," when all have crossed from this world to the next and believers in Christ enter the New Jerusalem, the home of righteousness. All of this is certain and ours. We preach Christ crucified. He has taken us from death to life. Amen. <SDG>