

Jesus Paid It All

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[0 : 0 0] Well, folks, turn back with me to Colossians chapter 2 for a short time this morning, and I'm going to begin with a story that's probably familiar to many of you, the story of the wee! boy who builds himself a beautiful boat. He spends time crafting this lovely little vessel. He pours himself into it, his creative energy, and once he completes it, he takes it out down to the loch to sail it, and he ties a tether to the boat, and he puts it out, and it sails beautifully. It's cutting through the waves. A gentle breeze is blowing, but as is often the case, the wind picks up, the string is broken, and the boat is lost, and he's devastated. He's poured so much time and energy into creating this little vessel, and to lose it in such a way after such a short period is devastating for him.

Well, he takes himself home, and he's sad for a number of days, until a few days later, he's walking past a local shop, and he sees in the window his boat. He thinks, hang on a minute, that's mine, and he goes into the shop, and he says to the shopkeeper, the boat that you have in the window, it's mine, and the shopkeeper says, well, it's now mine, and it's for sale. If you want it, you'll have to buy it back. Oh, but I don't have money, the boy said. Well, perhaps you can save up, and so determined as he was, he resolved to go, and he cut grass, and he did chores, and he made money, and he went, and he purchased his boat. Beaming, he left the shop happy, and he says, now you're twice mine. And this is a picture of redemption, isn't it? A picture of us who are created in the image and the likeness of God, dear to Him, but lost to Him through the storm of sin. And he sends Jesus, God the Father, sends His only begotten Son, Jesus, into the world to buy us back, to redeem us, that we might be twice

His in that sense. We belong to God because He created us, He made us, and He has purchased us by the blood of Jesus if we are trusting in Christ this morning. Paul has already stated that in the opening of His letter to the Colossian church, that Jesus is the one who created everything on earth or in heaven, visible or invisible, and we are His, and He has bought us, and He tells us that He has purchased us, He has redeemed us. And that really takes us to the portion of Scripture that we're looking at today, which is really verses 11 to 15 together. We looked at verses 1 to 10 last night, and we looked at believe and behave and beware, how what we believe informs how we behave, and what we believe and behave will allow us to discern that which is good and that which is right. Well, here in the passage that we're looking at this morning, Paul the Apostle employs a number of metaphors. Paul is the king of the metaphor, you might say. He likes figurative language. He likes analogies, and in the passage that we're reading, he stacks them up over and over again. I think it was my English teacher who said, never mix your metaphors, but Paul didn't listen to that. Paul mixes his metaphors a lot, and here he's talking about the greatest event in all of history. He talks about the cross, the cross of Jesus, the one event that alludes to our redemption, our redemption, and he speaks of it in five different ways. He speaks of it using different metaphors. He uses circumcision, he uses resurrection, he uses a financial transaction, he uses a military victory. So, it's circumcision, baptism, baptism, resurrection, financial transaction, military victory. It's like Paul realizes, I'm going to have a mixed audience. I'm writing to people that I don't know. I'm writing to a place that I've never visited, and some people may be bankers, and some people may be Jewish people. They could be this, or they could be that. It's like the Bob Dylan song. You may be an ambassador to England or France. You might like to gamble. You might like to dance. You may be the heavyweight champion of the world. You may be a socialite with a long string of pearls, but you're going to have to serve somebody. So, Paul recognizes that his audience may be mixed, and so he seeks to use language that's going to appeal and be accessible to all those that he's writing to. And to do that, he stacks up these metaphors on top of each other.

And the reason why is that as believers, we have this single reference point that we are always told to return to, to go back to, to remember, to give thanks for. It's like our reset button, if you will.

[4 : 56] That's why Jesus at the Last Supper said, do this often in remembrance of me. I never want you to let go of this fact, I'm going to the cross, but I want you to take these elements. I want you to take this bread. I want you to take this wine. And when you take it, I want you to remember. I want you to give thanks. I want you to think about these things. We're always told to return to the cross. It's the heart of our faith. It's the very basis upon which we believe and that we are ushered into God's family as sons and daughters, which I believe you heard about on Friday evening. The cross is the major theme of all the Gospels. The cross is what the rest of the New Testament looks back to. Jesus is what the whole of the Old Testament looks forward to, and we're still looking back to Him because Jesus, as John reminds us in Revelation 13, was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

Although the Old Testament points forward to that, the New Testament looks at that and points back to it. Jesus paid it all. That's the title of our sermon for today. It comes from a song written 175 years ago by a 47-year-old widow who was sitting in church one morning, and after hearing a message, we don't know what it was, perhaps it was Colossians, she wrote down these words in her book, I hear the Savior say, Thy strength indeed is small. Child of weakness, watch and pray, find in me thine all in all. Jesus paid it all. All to Him I owe. Sin had left a crimson stain, He washed it white as snow. And the fourth verse is probably one of my favorites. And now in Him complete, complete, and now complete in Him, my robe His righteousness. Close sheltered neath His side, I am divinely blessed. Jesus paid it all. All to Him I owe. Sin had left a crimson stain, He washed it white as snow. So, Paul is continuing here, talking about the sufficiency of Jesus. Jesus. Elvina Hall, as she wrote that hymn, was writing about the sufficiency of Jesus. All to Him we owe. He paid it all. In Him we are complete. If we look at verse 10, it talks about that completeness here that Paul is writing to the Colossians, and you have been filled in Him. You have been made complete in Him. Remember that word pleroma, that fullness of God in Christ Jesus, has been given to us who believe. That's a great thought this morning, isn't it? That we are full, complete in Jesus. Now, last night we had three B's. We had believe and behave and beware, so we're just working our way through the alphabet. And this morning we have three C's. So, we have cleansing, and we have cancelling, and we have crushing. He cleansed our past. He cancelled our debt. He crushed our foes. And really that's what we have in the verses here before us. So, let's see the first one then, cleansing. That's in verse 11. In Him also you were 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, and so on. So, he's talking about two rituals here, first of all. He's talking about circumcision, baptism, and he's talking about baptism. Now, both of these things were Jewish rituals, but they're both mentioned. But why? Why is Paul drawing on these things as he writes to the Colossian church? Well, remember from last night, the Colossians were facing the Colossian heresy. There were those who were coming in and who were adding to the gospel saying, well, Jesus is a good start, but you'll have to do this, and you'll have to do that, and you'll have to engage with this, and you'll have to fulfill that in order to truly be redeemed. They take this mix of stuff.

[9 : 15] It's an amalgamation. It's this sort of syncretism of a number of different belief systems, so some pagan philosophy, some Jewish legalism, kind of this smorgasbord of religious ideas, a little bit of this, a little bit of that, a bit of sort of spiritual pick and mix, and that's always expensive, isn't it?

Pick and mix is always expensive, and even more so spiritually. They were insisting that you had to do these outward ceremonial things in order to be right. If you want to be right with God, then you have to go through the ritual, if you're a male, of circumcision. An outward sign, a ceremony of an inward spiritual truth. Cutting away the flesh life, it symbolized a covenant with God, a promise toward God. But here is the problem. It's also the problem with baptism, actually, is that people start to look at these ceremonies as kind of a magic charm. If I do the circumcision, if I do the baptism, then I'm okay.

If I fulfill these religious rites, if I engage in these religious ceremonies, I'll be okay. The problem is that these things have no place in salvation, and that's the point that Paul is trying to get across. They begin looking back to ritual and relying on ritual rather than relying on Jesus, rather than looking to the Lord. In Acts 15, there was a group of people called the Judaizers who came into the church and said, unless you're circumcised and keep the law of Moses, you cannot be saved.

They really held fastidiously to this ritual. It got so bad that the rabbis had sayings about circumcision, basically saying, if you're not circumcised, then you'll be lost. But if you're circumcised, you'll avoid hell, basically is what they were saying. So, Paul is challenging this as he's writing to the Colossian church, and he's seeking to encourage them. And he's saying, listen, circumcision spiritually happens in and through Jesus. Jesus does the work. Jesus has fulfilled the necessity. Now, Paul is speaking spiritually. He's using a spiritual metaphor. Even Moses himself knew that the ritual only pointed to a spiritual reality. Deuteronomy chapter 10, what did Moses say? Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart and be stiff-necked no longer. Yeah, you can go through the ritual of circumcision, but you can have a stiff-necked heart. You can have a hard heart, a calloused heart. It doesn't matter that you've gone through some outward religious ritual. It's the heart that's the issue. It's your heart that needs to be circumcised, nothing else. You cannot be right with God. You cannot be declared righteous in His sight through some external religious structure. It's just not possible. Paul is saying, listen, it's Jesus that cleanses you, not a ritual. It's Jesus' blood that cleanses you. It's what Jesus has accomplished on the cross of Calvary. That's what cleanses you, not some religious act. He cleanses you of your past, and it's symbolized in circumcision and baptism.

[12:58] It's symbolized in what we do today, taking the bread and the wine. These are reminders. They are symbols of something much greater, something that Jesus has done. In Philippians chapter 3, Paul is speaking again about circumcision. Such was a stumbling block to so many people, and he says, further, my brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord. And that's what we're here to do today, to rejoice in the Lord. Philippians was the happy letter, right? Philippians is the letter of joy.

And he said, there's no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you. Watch out for those dogs, those evildoers, those mutilators of the flesh.

Really harsh and direct words that Paul is using here. Beware of the dogs. Now, he's not talking about the family pet because in these days, they didn't have family pets. They didn't have Fido sitting at the fireside. People didn't bring dogs into their houses. Dogs were scavengers. They were wild. They were feral. They hunted in packs. They would carry diseases. And the Jewish people often referred to non-Jews, the Gentiles, as Gentile dogs. And so, Paul picks up on that term, but he doesn't call the Gentiles dogs, but people who are pushing religious ceremony, religious rite, religious ritual over and above or over and against Jesus and His sufficiency. Watch out for those dogs, those evildoers, those mutilators of the flesh. Really harsh and arresting words that he is using. For it is we, he says in verse 3, for it is we who are the circumcision, we who serve God by His Spirit, who boast in Christ Jesus and who put no confidence in the flesh. We put no confidence in the flesh.

Paul is challenging those who distort the gospel, challenging those who add to the sufficiency of Christ for salvation. And he's saying these things are an anathema. These things are not good. Salvation is a free gift, for it is by grace you have been saved through faith in Christ alone, so that no one can boast it as the gift of God. He reminds us of that in Ephesians 2, doesn't he?

[15:31] But naturally, the proud human heart wants to add to that. It can't be that simple. Surely, there must be something I have to do. There must be something I have to offer. There must be a religious duty that I must perform. There must be some place that I have to go, some rule that I have to keep, some ritualistic homage that I've got to fulfill. Paul would say dogs.

There must be some moral responsibility. You know, I can't be saved until I do this, or I can't be saved until I do that, or until I'm good, or until I'm great, or until... Paul says, dogs, scavengers, scam artists, come to Jesus for salvation. Hope is found in Him alone.

The humanist will say, now, you've got to pull yourself up by your own bootstraps. The legalist will say, well, you've got to work your way to heaven and keep the rituals and do the ceremony and be religious and be fastidious. The Christian says, Jesus paid it all.

All to Him I owe. Sin had left a crimson stain. He washed it white as snow. He has cleansed us. He is willing to cleanse us. And it's all credit to Him. The moment we start adding to that, we merely take away from it. Jesus and Jesus alone will cleanse or can cleanse our sin. We who were dead in our transgressions and sins, He has made alive through the shedding of His blood, through the breaking of His body. And people who are dead, they don't need a ritual, and they don't need a ceremony.

They need salvation. They need the salvation of Jesus. That's what we all need. You can put a person in school and you'll get an educated sinner, one writer put it. You can put a person in therapy and you'll get a well-adjusted sinner. You can put a person in church and you'll get a religious sinner. You have to take a person to Jesus to find a saved sinner. Jesus, He paid it all. He has done everything for us. It is Him. It is He who cleanses our past. Secondly, He cancels our debt. Verse 13, He made us alive. And you who are dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our trespasses. He made us alive, having forgiven us all of our sins, all of our trespasses. When Jesus was nailed to the cross in

[18 : 26] Calvary, He made a number of statements. I think perhaps you're working through some of those statements at the moment. The first statement that Jesus made from the cross was, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. Why was that His first statement from the cross?

Because that's our greatest need, forgiveness. That is our greatest need. For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. There is none righteous, no, not even one, no one who seeks God, says Paul elsewhere. Isaiah says, come now let us reason together. Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, they shall be like wool. Psalm 32, how blessed the one whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed. That's who the people of Christ are, blessed people. Blessed in the Lord we have had our sins, our trespasses forgiven. He has canceled the charge against us by canceling, verse 14, the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This He set aside, nailing it to the cross. So having painted a picture of forgiveness, He now employs a different analogy. He talks about this charge, the record of debt, the handwritten charge against us, this IOU that was in our life, the list of debt that we have accrued. He cancels that record of that debt.

The King James Version has it blotting out the handwriting, which is actually a really helpful way of talking about this. Somebody blotting something out, rubbing it out, erasing it, so it is seen no more. In ancient times, before they had the printing press, before they had paper, they would use either papyrus or they would use vellum, which was a really thin animal hide, and that's what they would use. And the ink back then didn't have an acidic content, so it wouldn't permeate the surface of that which they were writing on. So they could come along and they could wipe the slate clean, as it were. The text would be visible no more. Imagine getting a speeding ticket from Gordon McLeod and just being able to wipe it, and it's gone. You can't even see it anymore.

[21 : 07] That's what, this is what Paul is talking about here, wipes the record clean. The slate is absolutely blotted clean. That's what Jesus done. He cancels the charge. He takes the debt that we have accrued and he wipes out. He nails it to the cross. In ancient times, when people were crucified, as you probably know, the Romans insisted that the crime that they were convicted of that had led them to be crucified would be posted on the cross above them. Jesus had a sign above his head. Jesus was King of the Jews. That was the charge against him. But typically, the signs would say things like murder, theft, adultery, whatever it may have been. But the charge would be written above them.

J.B. Phillips said this, Christ has utterly wiped out the damning evidence of broken laws and commandments which always hung over our heads and has completely annulled it by nailing it over his own head on the cross. This is what Paul is saying here. This is the truth of the gospel. That guilt that we know, that shame that burdens us in Christ is lifted from us, is taken away from us and cast into the depths of the sea. It is canceled because he's willing to put it over his own head and bear it on his own shoulders and deal with it through his own broken body. Hallelujah.

What a Savior. Jesus paid it all. All to him I owe. Sin had left a crimson stain. He made it white as snow. Martin Luther, the reformer, said he had a dream one night where Satan appeared to him and Satan, the accuser, as he's known, came with a long list of scrolls of Luther's life, a record of Luther's sins written in Luther's own handwriting. And in the dream, Satan's looking at all these things and he's accusing Martin Luther. Is this true? Yeah. Is that true? Yeah. Did you do this? I did. Did you think that? I did. Have you done all of these things? Yes, I've done this.

Scroll after scroll, page after page. Did you write this? Did you do this? Martin Luther is more and more more humiliated by Satan. To the end of it, he's so humiliated because it's all true. And Satan's feeling good about this and he's about to leave Martin Luther totally humiliated. And Luther says, Luther says, wait a minute. Hang on. True. Every word of it true. But now write this across the

top of all of these things. The blood of Jesus, God's Son, cleanses me from all sin. Blotted out, canceled, annulled, declared righteous, acquitted, not because we're innocent, but because Jesus has borne our sin. He cancels our debt through taking it upon himself in being nailed to the cross. And that's what we celebrate this morning. That's why we come to him in worship. That's why we take the bread and wine, to remind ourselves. There is no tyrant worse than guilt. When you know that you've failed, and you live with that failure, and you carry around that guilt, and you rehash the things that you've done, and the shame is palpable, perhaps not known to anyone other than yourself. When you're finally liberated of that, it is a freeing and liberating reality. Well, I hope you know that freedom of spiritual salvation this morning, that you know the joy of Jesus who cleanses your past, and who cancels your debt, and who thoroughly and finally crushes your foe. Verse 15, He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame by triumphing over them in him. Powers and authorities, it's something that's referred to so often in the New Testament. And so often when Paul refers to these things, he's alluding to the angelic world. He's principally talking about the evil realm, malevolent, angelic beings who hassle, who tempt. But having disarmed these, he puts them to shame. He triumphs over them. He's speaking here of another metaphor, a military victory he's talking about. That's what he has in mind. Two thousand years ago, when Roman generals conquered a place, an army, a people, they would have what was called a triumphus, and it would be this sort of fanfare, this series of triumphant parades and victories showing the spoils of war, filling the people's minds with joy that they had overcome and subdued another nation, another army. Sort of the icing on the cake, as it were, marching through the streets, this public spectacle. And that's the metaphor that Paul is employing here, because that's what happened on the cross. When Jesus dies on the cross, another statement that he utters is, it is finished.

[26 : 42] Not I am finished. It is finished. Satan is done. Checkmate, says Jesus. I am the one who has the authority to lay my life down and the authority to take it up again. I am the one who has all dominion and all power and all authority. I am the one who will overcome the grave. I am the one who will be raised again. I am the one who will ascend. I am the one who will live and live evermore. I am.

That's who he is, and he can forgive us. He can cleanse us. He can cancel our debt. He can crush our foes. It is in him that we rejoice. It's in him that we have the triumph this morning, because he has triumphed over those who oppress us. Throughout his life, the evil one tried to stop the life of Jesus, the mission of Jesus, the will of Jesus. When he was a baby in Bethlehem, by having Herod coming up with the idea to kill all the babies in town, that didn't work.

Later on, he wants to have Jesus thrown off a cliff in his hometown. That didn't work. When Jesus is in the wilderness with Satan, he tempts him with a deal. You know, you came for the world. You came for the nations of the world. You came for them. Look, just bow down and worship me, and I'll give you the kingdoms of the world.

1 Corinthians 2, none of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. They're thinking, that's it. We'll get rid of him, put him to the cross, job done. That's just the beginning. That's the fulfillment of God's will.

That's the culmination of the redemptive effort of Jesus, that he might die giving his life as an atoning sacrifice for you and for me, taking upon himself my guilt and my shame, taking upon himself your guilt and your shame in order that you might be the redeemed of God, that you may be adopted into his family as sons and daughters, that you may be forgiven your sin, that your sin may be canceled, that your debt may be cleared. He did all of these things. It is finished.

[29 : 10] Now, in all these things, we are more than conquerors through him who loved us, says Paul in Romans 8. For I'm convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor powers, height, depth, anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus.

Jesus is the one who comes to cleanse and to clear and to cancel. He is the only one who can do it, and he is the one who willingly did it for us.

And if that's true, the question is, why are we looking anywhere else for completion? Why are we looking to anyone or anything else for fulfillment or for contentment or for satisfaction?

Jesus paid it all, all to him I owe. Sin had left a crimson stain. He washed it white as snow.

Jesus has done all that is necessary. He has cleansed our past. He has canceled our debt. He has crushed our foes. The question is, can you add my to that? Can you say this morning, Jesus has

canceled, has cleansed my past. Jesus has canceled my debt. Jesus has crushed my foes.
[30 : 45] If you can. Your place is at his table with his people, recognizing his sufficiency, not because you're worthy, but because he made you so. Jesus paid it all, all to him I owe.
Sin had left a crimson stain. He washed it white as snow. Let's pray. Sin had left a crimson stain.
And you're holy.