



## THE SUPREMACY OF CHRIST IN THE POST MODERN WORLD

### FULLY FORGIVEN

Colossians 1:13-14

November 16, 2008

Dr. Todd Wilson, *Senior Pastor*

“For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness  
and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves,  
in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”

### Introduction – the Concept of Adoption

This morning we have a wonderful passage before us, a passage we can linger in for weeks. Turn your bibles to Colossians 1. It is an adoption passage, serendipitously, or probably better to say, sovereignly worked out, that we would look at verses 13 and 14 this morning on this Adoption Sunday, because while the word adoption is not used, the concept of adoption is everywhere in it. Colossians 13 and 14: “For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves ...” “So we can be children loved by God as well. It is the Son he loves in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

In the last couple of weeks we have been reflecting on the fully pleasing life, and two weeks ago we looked at the one thing you need to know to live the fully pleasing life in this age of information, this age of communication, this age of clutter! The one thing you need to know is found in verse 9; we need to have the knowledge of God’s will—his saving will, what he is up to in the world—which is to exalt Jesus Christ to supreme over all things. It’s the one thing we need to know to live a fully pleasing life. That was two weeks ago. It was looking at this verse 10. And we prayed this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord. Paul is praying that they be filled with the knowledge of this word, that they would live a life worthy of the Lord and pleasing to him in every way. We said that that is not just a pious aspiration for Paul: that is a practical Christian reality. You have given your life to Christ and you are a follower of Jesus Christ; God’s expectation for you and your expectation for yourself should be that you are walking in a manner worthy of the Lord; that you are pleasing him in every way, not by your own resources but by the resources of God in his word, on the cross and through his Spirit. So we looked at the possibility of the pleasing life.

Last week we looked at the profile of the pleasing life; we looked at four aspects of the pleasing life in verses 10, 11 and 12. What were the four aspects? Good works: the leading edge of the Christian life should be a life of good works—the leading edge of the church. We should be bearing fruit in every good work. What is the second aspect? Growth: we should be growing in the knowledge of God. What a high calling and privilege that is. The third, Grace: we should be being strengthened. We do not grow in the knowledge and we do not bear fruit in every good work without being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might. The good works really count, not when the sun is shining on your back and in your face; good works really count when you are up against challenging situations and personalities. You need to be strengthened with all might according to his glorious power that you might have endurance and patience to be able to grow, to bear fruit. The fourth and final aspect of the fully pleasing

life: Gratitude—not a grumpy good works, growing Christian life, but a grateful, glad, joyful, cheerful—not chipper—sober minded but with deep joy kind of Christian living. That is the profile of the fully pleasing life, and it is a real possibility.

Today we are going to look at something that lays the foundation for it all. We cannot even begin to live the fully pleasing life without what we are going to talk about today. We looked at the possibility, the profile, and—since I love alliteration—prerequisite. That is what we have in verses 13 and 14; it is the prerequisite of the fully pleasing life. Here is the deal: you and I cannot even begin to live a life that pleases the Lord unless we have a change of address. You've got to move. You've got to move from where to where? You've got move, our text says, from the dominion of darkness into the kingdom of the Son he loves. You must have a change of address if you are going to live the fully pleasing life! Verses 13 and 14: "For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." So this is the prerequisite for the fully pleasing life.

There are three questions that I want to ask of this passage: 1) What is the dominion of darkness? 2) Where is this place we move into if God does something in our lives and he liberates us from the dominion of darkness and moves us into this kingdom of the Son. Where is that? Have you been there lately? Are there roads? Can I Google it, can I Mapquest it? Where is this kingdom of the Son he loves? 3) How do we get from the dominion of darkness to the kingdom of the Son he loves? Isn't that an all important question to be asking—for us to know, for us to treasure, for us to speak into the lives of other people—to be able to say: this is how you move from the dominion of darkness to the kingdom of the Son he loves? It is the prerequisite, the starting point, the launching off pad for the fully pleasing life.

## **What is the Dominion of Darkness?**

Let us take up the first question: the dominion of darkness. What is it? It sounds kind of evil, does it not? It sounds like The Lord of the Rings: Sauron and Gandolph—Sauron is going to plunge this Middle Earth into a second darkness, the dominion of darkness. Sounds kind of mythical, doesn't it? Have you been having any chats with anybody lately about the dominion of darkness? Have you read in the Chicago Tribune lately about flash reports about the dominion of darkness? What is the dominion of darkness? The word "dominion" is that sphere or realm where someone has full prerogative and rights and authority to reign and have dominance. The Queen of England has dominion over the United Kingdom. She has dominion over England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

So, is this dominion darkness' power and authority? I do not think so. It is that this dominion is characterized by darkness. What is the dominant theme in this dominion where someone reigns and rules? It is darkness, or, epistemologically speaking, ignorance; that is what darkness is in the Bible. It is often a New Testament metaphor. "Are you in the dark?" We use that expression ourselves. We say, "That dude is in the dark. He doesn't know what we are talking about." We mean he is ignorant of what we are talking about. The dominion of darkness is the realm or sphere where someone sovereignly reigns and rules and it is characterized by darkness, that is, ignorance: a lack of light. Who is it that reigns and rules there?—the Prince of darkness, Satan.

Now you may think this is really getting medieval. C. S. Lewis in The Screwtape letters says there are two equal and opposite errors when it comes to talking and thinking about demons. The first is when act as if they do not exist, and the second is to be too preoccupied with their

existence. Lewis says the demons are happy with whichever one you want to choose. You do not think they exist—you are materialist: is not that a fabulous opportunity for you to be toyed and tinkered with by spiritual forces in the heavenly realms? And you do not even know it! So, you are giving an account or explanation of the way the world works, or your life works, totally oblivious—in the dark—to the spiritual forces in heavenly realms, including Satan; or, to be preoccupied with them. Demons would take you on either front.

The bible refers to Satan as the “god of this age” (2 Corinthians 4:4). That is who Satan is! Have you ever thought about that?—the god of this age, the god of this world, this era, until Jesus Christ returns. That is a biblical worldview. We must program our minds to look out on the world and to see that. Some might say, “That is New Testament mythology, so let us demythologize it.” That is a biblical worldview: Satan is the god of this world, or, as Paul puts it in Ephesians 2:2, he is the ruler of the kingdom of the air. Is that a kingdom up in the air like on a cloud? No, he reigns and rules wherever there is air. Wherever there is air, there is his kingdom. And where is that?—everywhere, the whole earth! He is the god of this age.

How does Satan exercise his control over this dominion of darkness? He does not do it by controlling people; he does it by concealing truth. Who would presume to know exactly how Satan interacts and interfaces with the world? But what the bible certainly is clear on is that, as Paul says in 2 Corinthians 4:4, he conceals the truth; that is, he blinds the minds of unbelievers so they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. How does he exercise his dominion?—by propping up systems, ways of thinking, and ways of living that conceal and obscure the truth. So where is the dominion of darkness? It is everywhere where unbelief is promoted and propped up, and where faith looks foolish. That is the dominion of darkness: intellectual systems, philosophical systems, world views that make the gospel and God’s truth look like idiocy, and unbelief looks sexy. Do you know any of these systems on offer today? There are plenty to choose from, an endless materialistic, secular flow. How about patterns of behavior that suppress and obscure the truth of the gospel—idolatry, lust, envy, covetousness, greed?

The key thing to see about the dominion of darkness is that it does not just show up in back alleys or basements, or behind closed doors. It shows up wherever illicit desire is at work and the truth of the gospel is being suppressed. There we see the dominion of darkness at work. It can show up, for example, in well lit board rooms, and at baseball games, and in cathedrals, if what is being said and spoken and propagated is to suppress and obscure the light of the gospel. There you see the dominion of darkness at work. This is why the bible refers to conversion as a new creation. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 4:4, “the god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see ...” The truth of the gospel has been concealed but Paul goes on to say in verse 6, “For God, who said, ‘Let light shine in darkness’—he is quoting Genesis 1—has caused ‘his light to shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.’” That is conversion—God doing something wholly new in your life, God speaking light into darkness. Otherwise you will stay in the dominion of darkness forever unless God does a sovereign new creation—speaking light into your life. What happens when God speak light into your life? You go from the dominion darkness—you are called out, Jesus speaks the truth and the truth sets you free, and somehow, some transaction, some transference happens—and you are now in the kingdom of the Son he loves.

## Where is the Kingdom of the Son He Loves?

Where is the kingdom of the Son he loves? It is, first of all, in the life and teachings and works of Jesus Christ. Go to the gospels in your bible and you see Jesus in his baptism, starting up his public ministry. You read about him coming up out of the waters, you see the heavens part, and a voice comes down from heaven and says, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:17). That is not a sentimental O-Dad-thanks warm fuzzy. It is a coronation ceremony happening in the waters of the Jordan! Jesus comes up out of the water and God says: This is my messianic Son! It is replete with Old Testament imagery from Psalm 1, Psalm 2, and 2 Samuel 7:14—the Son of God is the King *for* God. Just as Adam was the son of God (Genesis 5), so too Jesus is now *the* Son of God, the King!

You see the kingdom of God coming in his baptism, you see the kingdom of God coming in his life and you see the miracles as he goes around Judea and Galilee. What is he doing?—casting out demons, healing the sick, raising the dead, touching lepers. What is he doing but advancing the kingdom of God in his own person, shining his light into the darkness, radiating out, as it says in Matthew 12:28—if the Holy Spirit should drive out demons “then the kingdom of God has come upon you.” It is the kingdom of God in his acts and his miracles; it is the kingdom of God in his words as well. Jesus’ favorite mode of teaching is, of course, the parables. And what are the parables all about? Well, they are about the kingdom of God. The interesting thing is when you read the parables you understand he is talking about the kingdom of God. But do you know what the punch line of course always is? The kingdom of God is Jesus Christ himself!

So where is the kingdom of God? The kingdom of God is in the person of the Son of God. We would be remiss if we did not comment that where we see the kingdom of God really breaking into the gospel story is in Golgotha, where Pilate asks, “Are you the king of the Jews?” One of the great ironies of history—“Yes, it is as you say” (Matthew 15:2). If you are a good Roman, law-abiding citizen, you have got to have some good accusation if you are going to execute someone. As he is lifted up on that executioner’s stake to be eliminated—that first century like electric chair—one of the great ironies of all human history, pinned above his head as he hung there is: “King of the Jews” ringing in the kingdom. The supremacy of Christ in the postmodern world is not through the triumph but the sufferings of the Prince. So we see the kingdom of God in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

You see the kingdom of God also in the lives of his people as they submit to Jesus’ reign and rule in their lives. You see the kingdom of the Son he loves is not a realm but it is the reign of Jesus Christ; it is not a place, it is a person and the power. So as we read in the gospels, it is something very dynamic. The kingdom of the Son he loves is something that draws near, it is something that comes, it is something that arrives, and it is something that appears; it can be given, it can be taken away; it can be entered into, received, inherited, possessed; it can be reject and refused; it can be sought for and it can be prayed for. This is the kingdom of God advancing through the person and work of Jesus.

How can you tell if the kingdom is present somewhere? You can tell because you see people who are rallying around and giving their allegiance to King Jesus by faith. That is what faith is. Faith is the giving of allegiance to Jesus Christ. So think about that. If you are here and you know you are not a follower of Jesus Christ, you need to know that faith is not just signing a card that says, “I got saved.” Faith is giving allegiance to a sovereign over all things, who demands absolute submission in every dimension of life; you cannot keep a corner to yourself.

So we see the kingdom of God breaking in when we see people rallying around King Jesus by faith.

We see the kingdom of God breaking in when we see the Holy Spirit unleashed in the lives of people. Jesus was raised from the dead and he returned to the Father's right hand. He received the gift of the Holy Spirit that he then poured out on upon his people and sat down at the right hand of the Father. How is he now going to reign and exert his power? He is exerting his power in his sovereign rule and reign by his Holy Spirit. So where we see the Spirit at work in the lives of God's people, there we see the kingdom breaking in.

Thirdly, we see the kingdom of God and we know it is there when we see a life of love in people's hearts and in communities, centered on Jesus Christ, brought about by the Holy Spirit. Paul knew the kingdom had broken into Colossi, verse 8, because he heard from Epaphras "of your love in the Spirit." You know the kingdom of the Son he loves has dawned when you see love characterizing the life of his people. It is everywhere the Holy Spirit is holding sway.

### **How do I get from Dominion to Kingdom?**

The third question: How do I get from the dominion of darkness into the kingdom of the Son he loves? This is the simple and straight forward answer: you get from one place to the other by being redeemed. You see that in verse 14: "For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves,<sup>14</sup> in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." How did Israel get from Egypt to Canaan? They had to be redeemed by God's outstretched arms, as the prophets say, "carried on eagle's wings" through the wilderness into the Land of Promise. They had to be redeemed. This is what Paul is referring to here. We have to experience a second exodus, and exodus-like redemption from what?—earthly overlords? No, from the principalities and powers of this present evil age that dominate our lives by obscuring the truth of the gospel. We need to be redeemed from that. And that is what God does. He redeems us—that is how we move. You cannot just go down to the license branch and try to get a new license and new address. What is your new address?—the kingdom of the Son he loves. Where did you use to live?—dominion of darkness. It is not like that. God has to redeem you. He has to utilize and pour his power to do something in your life. What is it that he must do, what is the hinge? It is right here: the forgiveness of sins. Why is that? You will never be liberated from the dominion of darkness unless God speaks the gospel grace of forgiveness into your life.

It is interesting in Romans 1 where Paul lists all these vices, he says those who do such things know the decree of God, and that God's just punishment and condemnation awaits them. It is a universal statement, as though the whole world knows there is a God, he has expectations and my life does not quite measure up. It is the moral law, as it has sometimes been referred to. But what do I do if I know that my life does not measure up. Yet I know there is this authority out there that requires and expects something of me. My own conscience bears witness to me. But what do I do? And then you look out into the world and all you see is darkness because you live in the dominion of darkness and the god of this age is concealing the truth from you. What is the truth he is concealing? He is concealing that there is forgiveness in the grace of the cross. And so you cannot see any forgiveness out there!

What do you do if you've got a burden of sin, and a just God, and no forgiveness? You cannot see through the grey, you cannot see to the cross. What do you do? You do what Paul says in Romans 1—you suppress the truth in unrighteousness, the truth about judgment, or, you do

what Jesus says in John 3. This is the very provocative. Turn to John 3:19. Jesus says, "This is the verdict: light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light..."

Why do people love the dominion of darkness? Why do they love thought systems, or behavior patterns, or ways of constructing a society, or ways of thinking about the world? Why do people read certain books or revel in them or think certain patterns of thoughts are a balm when they are actually damning? Why? They like darkness "...because their deeds were evil." And everyone who does evil, Jesus says, hates the light and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. So what if your deeds get exposed? If your deeds get exposed your deeds will then be judged. That is the fear. That is why darkness is a balm to those who have not seen the forgiveness of the cross. They do not know how God can forgive their sins and they do not want their sins to be exposed.

Perhaps that is your situation this morning. Perhaps you are here, you just popped in, you have been visiting, and you know you are not a follower of Christ; you have been wrestling, you have been listening to what I've been saying and there is a grain of truth to it that is rubbing you the wrong way. Hear Jesus Christ! Hear what Jesus says. Everyone who does evil fears the light and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed, but whoever lives by the truth comes into the light so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God.

### **Conclusion – There is Forgiveness for You**

There is forgiveness for you on the cross of Jesus Christ if you will embrace it by faith, if you will give over the sovereignty of your life to Jesus Christ, your rightful King and Lord. If you will ask God to open your eyes to see the forgiveness he extends; he has triumphed over the powers and authorities, forgiving us of all of our sins. We can embrace that by faith this morning. If you do that you will find that your address will not change, you will drive home to the same place this afternoon, and you will find that you will have a marvelous change of address in your life. You will have been liberated from the dominion of darkness and transferred into the kingdom of the Son he loves. You will have been adopted, rescued. A loving Father will have gone to a far away land, and laid hold of you and brought you into his family. And when love brings you in, *everything* changes!

Amen.