

Colossians 1 v 12 - 14

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[0 : 00] Colossians and chapter 1, those 14 verses. We've been there the last two weeks as we start this series, so we're going to be in those verses for the last time this evening before we move on to the next section, verses 15 and following. I'm sure you're well aware that during the past week there have been local council elections and there have been elections for the European Parliament as well. And the results for that European Parliament will be coming out tonight and the results for the council elections were published on Friday. But during the lead up to that and during the very day of those elections, there was one topic which dominated all the discussions, all the debates, all the political parties canvassing. And that one subject was the matter of immigration.

The question of who should be allowed to work and live in the United Kingdom and how many of those who qualify to live in the United Kingdom should be given entrance each year. And I was surprised when I looked at the Gazette last week how every party it seems, outside of the main three parties, were all about that immigration, who should come, who should stay, how long, how many and so on. These were the key questions it seemed. Even again of course later in the year there's going to be a vote for the whole of Scotland to decide whether they wish to remain in the United Kingdom or not. And so who belongs to what Kingdom is a contemporary matter? It always has been a contemporary matter. Who belongs to which Kingdom?

We read here, and these are the verses we're going to be thinking on tonight, from verses 12 breaking into Paul's discourse and prayer.

Giving thanks to the Father who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the Kingdom of Light. 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 and the forgiveness of sins. Paul reminds the Christians there that they too are part of a Kingdom. And though Paul uses two titles for this Kingdom, a Kingdom of Light and the Kingdom of the Son He loves, he's referring just to one Kingdom, one and the same Kingdom. Elsewhere in the New Testament, particularly in the Gospels, Jesus spoke much about the Kingdom, calling it the Kingdom of God or the Kingdom of Heaven. Again, interchangeable titles for that one Kingdom, that Kingdom of the Son. Paul is praying, as we looked last Sunday evening, that his readers should be moved to joyful thanks to God the Father that they are members of this

Kingdom. Joyfully giving thanks to the Father who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the Kingdom of Light. For all of those who qualify to be in the Kingdom of Light is to be in a place of riches untold. Of course, that's why many people seek to come into the United Kingdom from Albania and Romania and other parts of the world. They have this idea that London is paved with gold, that United Kingdom is the place where they will have wealth and happiness and security. But that is only true of the citizens of the Kingdom of the Son. Now, already in this letter, as we've gone through it, we've been reminded by Paul of what God has done for us by the power of the Gospel. We look there at faith, faith, love and hope, those fingerprints of God upon every Christian's life. We saw as well, last week, as I mentioned in the prayer of Paul, how God rightfully supplies us with all that we need to live out this Christian life in the world today. And now we're given this insight of the blessings and of the transformation that God has brought to every single child of His. Now, it's very clear from here and from the rest of the Bible that in this world there have only ever been two kingdoms.

[4 : 49] Two kingdoms. Only two kingdoms which divide the whole of humanity through the whole of time. All humanity dwell in one or the other kingdom. Now, we know there have been many kingdoms, of course, in the earthly sense, but those kingdoms come and go. The kingdoms of the Persians and the Greeks and the Romans. The kingdoms of the British and the Empire. But they've come. They've seemed to be enduring and never-ending, but ultimately they're now but a memory.

Two kingdoms have remained. Two great kingdoms. Two great empires. Two great dominions. And here we have them before us. First of all, the dominion of darkness. And then, as we've already mentioned, the kingdom of the sun. There is only a very brief time at the very beginning of creation when there was but one kingdom. And there will be two kingdoms until the very end of time when once more there shall be but one kingdom of the universe.

When sin entered the world, darkness began to collect subjects for its kingdom. But when sin is conquered forever at Christ's return, then the reign of darkness will forever be at an end.

In Revelation and chapter 11, which speaks much of that coming time of the Lord Jesus, we're told a loud voice in heaven said this, the kingdom of this world has become the kingdom of our Lord and his Christ. And he will reign forever and ever. There was one kingdom at creation. There have been two kingdoms since sin came into this world. But there will be one kingdom that endures at Christ's return.

And because there are two kingdoms, it is obvious that there must be two kings, two lords who govern over and rule over these kingdoms. Over the domain of darkness, the devil has reigned ever since he took Adam and Eve captive. His kingdom has increased from that day so that every single person born of Adam and Eve and descended from them has been born within his dungeon walls. Born into sin. Born a sinner. Born imprisoned. The devil is known by several titles in the Bible. Each one of them referring to the fact that he is indeed a king and a ruler. Jesus in John 12, 31 told his disciples, now is the time for judgment on this world. Now the prince of this world will be driven out. He is a prince. In 2 Corinthians in chapter 4 and verse 4, the apostle Paul is speaking to the believers there and reminding them why it is that people do not understand or receive the gospel. He says this, the God of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers. So we see that Satan has authority. He has a reign and a rule. He has dominion. He is not some character figure or cartoon figure. He is the essence of evil personified and he is the one who rules over the men and women and boys and girls who are in the domain of darkness. But then of course there is the kingdom of the sun and we know who he is. There is only one son, the God, son of God and he rules over his own kingdom. He has been at work throughout history delivering and rescuing those who are ensnared in darkness and bringing them out of that gloomy domain. Beginning with Adam and Eve and their son

Abel, he has constantly and unstoppably pillaged the devil's prison to bring into life captive souls. [9 : 13] This was his mission. This was his purpose. Isaiah reminds us of this wonderful truth when speaking of Christ. The spirit of the sovereign Lord is on me because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted and listen, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners. This is the great work of Christ.

This is his great ministry. And of course in his coming into the world and taking on our human nature, it was for that very purpose to accomplish all that was necessary to rescue and deliver and set free those within the devil's kingdom. John in his first letter declares this truth concerning the Lord Jesus. The reason the Son of God appeared, that means in his life, in his birth, in his coming into this world, in his death and his resurrection, the reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work.

And that promise goes all the way back, as you know, to Genesis 3.15. Speaking the promise to Eve concerning the seed, her seed, the Lord Jesus, who would crush the head of the seed of Satan by his death. And so we see again these two kingdoms and Jesus Christ, the Son, the King. And so if we are Christians this evening, if we have known the Lord Jesus as our Savior, then we are rescued souls. That's what Paul is telling them, reminding them, for he rescued us.

Rescued us. There's been many times, haven't there, through the ages where people have been taken captive and kidnapped. The great prayer, of course, and longing for many of us is for those many hundreds of girls taken captive in North Nigeria, that they should be set free. There's complaints, isn't there, amongst the population. Why haven't the government done enough? Why haven't they sent in a rescue mission to set those girls free? We pray that they would. We pray that they might be not harmed and delivered.

But we have been delivered. We have been rescued. We were captive. We were captive in the domain and the dominion of darkness. So why is it called that? Why does Paul call it the dominion of darkness, the kingdom of darkness? There's many reasons, three very simple reasons which we can see.

[11 : 54] It's because all those who live there are blinded towards the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. We read that, didn't we, in 2 Corinthians 4 and verse 4. The God of this age, what has he done?

He has blinded the minds of unbelievers so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ. That's obvious, isn't it? When we speak to people and talk to them about the Lord Jesus, there's a veil over their eyes. They're in darkness. They just can't see who Jesus really is and what he has done for them in his life and death. But also, it's called a dominion of darkness because those who live there walk around in permanent darkness, permanent darkness concerning their standing before God and their judgment before God. Here's Jesus in John 12. He says this concerning himself as being the light. He says, walk while you have the light before darkness overtakes you.

The man who walks in the dark does not know where he's going. And he makes it clear this is spiritual. He says this in verse 46, I've come into the world as a light so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness. Isn't it tragic? Tragic that the world and the people around about us are those who are in darkness to their own sin and their standing. They're in darkness towards the judgment which is coming. That's why it's imperative, dear friends, that if we love the world, if we love those who are without Christ, that we warn them in the most loving and but clear way of the day of judgment and of hell. We can't remove hell from our gospel. We can't remove judgment from it.

Somebody just said to me, I think it was the other day, might have been Ken even, he said, we've got to be like people who see people on the cliff top walking towards the edge. Blind people walking towards the edge. What would you do? Would you just wave at them and smile at them and say, have a nice day?

Of course you wouldn't. You'd shout at them. You'd call them. If necessary, you'd take hold of them to pull them back. Though they are in a dominion of darkness because they are blinded to Christ, but they're blinded to themselves, to the darkness of what is coming upon them in the future.

[14 : 22] But also as well, it's a kingdom of darkness because if they are not rescued from this dominion of darkness, then the Bible makes it clear that they should be thrown into everlasting darkness on the day of Christ's coming. Jesus himself was the one who said this.

Let nobody say that Jesus never spoke about the reality of hell. Let nobody say that hell is some invention of Paul or invention of Christians or invention of the church. Let us be very clear that hell itself and how Jesus explains it is exactly as God explains it. It's God's words. It's Christ's words. It's Christ's declaration. Matthew 8 verse 12. The subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside into the darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

We don't need to elaborate upon the horror and the reality of hell. It is worse than anything that we can imagine, but it is darkness. It is the gnashing and weeping. It is a place of utter sadness. Those who are in darkness are in the dominion of darkness. But we're told here that this kingdom of the sun is called the kingdom of light. There's the comparison. There's the opposite.

Everything which is opposite is of the Lord in this sense. He is called the sun who is over the kingdom of light. But why is it a kingdom of light? Well, all those who are within this kingdom have been given the light that they might see the gospel that is in the Lord Jesus Christ. As Paul says as he goes on from 2 Corinthians 4, he talks about the God of this age who has blinded the eyes of those who don't believe. But then he says this, for God who said let light shine out of darkness made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

What a wonderful gift of sight it is that God has given to us that we might see the gospel. We didn't see it because suddenly we, because we worked it all out for ourselves by our intellect, by our study, by our brain. We saw because God in his grace turned on the light.

[16 : 42] I mentioned even this morning about the hymn of Wesley where he speaks about being in sin and nature's night. Thine eye diffused a quickening ray. I woke the dungeon flamed with light. My chains fell off. My heart was free.

I rose, went forth and followed thee. The light is the light that God gives. It's the light that we see Christ, see the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus. We see Jesus for who he is. Not perfectly, of course we don't, do we?

What a day it will be when we will see him as he truly is. We see even now, by faith, just dimly, the beauty of Christ and that beauty draws us like moths to the flame.

But think what it's going to be like when all the veil of our sin and our frailty is removed and we shall see in perfect light and beauty in glory. Won't we be dazzled? Won't we be captivated for all eternity with the beauty of Christ and his light?

Yes, it's the kingdom of light because we see Christ. It's the kingdom of light because even now we walk in light daily with the Lord Jesus. When he spoke of himself as the light of the world in John 8, 12, he said, I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but have the light of life.

[18:03] Isn't that marvellous too? That even today we are walking in the light of life. There are times, aren't there, when as Christians we can be a little, well, rightly, we can be concerned about the future.

We can say, Lord, I'm not sure where you're leading me. I'm not sure where I'm going. I'm not sure what's around the corner. No, none of us are. You see, when we follow Christ, we're not in the darkness.

We're walking in the light. It doesn't mean that we have to see everything, but it means that we need not fear. I've got a confession to make. I'm afraid of the dark.

I mean it. I am. I always have been afraid of the dark. I remember my dad saying to me, he used to be afraid of the dark as well, and he said, the way I overcame the dark when I used to walk, I used to whistle to myself, so I wouldn't be afraid.

I still do the same, I think, probably. I talk to myself. But we can be afraid of the dark, because it's the unknown, isn't it? We can be afraid of the dark when it comes to the future, but we needn't be, because Jesus assures us that we are in the kingdom of light.

[19:09] In the kingdom of light, there's no need for us to fear, because he will make our paths straight. What does Psalmist say in Psalm 119? Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

We live in the kingdom of light. And because we live in the kingdom of light, you know, something incredible has happened. We have been transformed so that we now are people of light, children of light.

We are light bearers. Here's what Paul says to the Thessalonians in chapter 5. He says this, We do not belong to the night or to the darkness, rather you are sons of the light and sons of the day.

Didn't Jesus say to his disciples, you are the light of the world? Yes, he was the light of the world, but what happens when we become Christians and we enter into the kingdom of light? We become mini lights.

That's why the Lord Jesus Christ has left us in this world at this time. Sometimes you say, Why, Lord, won't you take me home to glory? I want to see you as you are.

[20:12] I don't want to stay here. Well, who would? But he's left us to be lights in the darkness.

Paul says in Philippians, that you're like stars shining in the night sky. So that those who are in darkness, with God's grace and wonderful goodness, may see in us the reality of Christ Jesus, that they might come to him for themselves.

We are light bearers in the dark world. That's so heavy, isn't it? That your neighbours and mine, the people that we see at the school gate, the people that we talk to, will not see anything of the light of Christ, except if they see it in us.

Now, God is sovereign, and he saves sovereignly. But he uses us to be light bearers in a dark world. So we are children of the light. We are of the lights.

And we are in the kingdom of the lights. But here, says Paul, we've been rescued, yes, from this dominion of darkness and brought into the kingdom of the Son he loves. But to do that, to rescue us, to save us, we find that it was necessary for the Lord Jesus Christ to go to the cross and die.

For he tells us in verse 4, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. You see, we cannot automatically qualify to be members of the kingdom of the Son.

[21:47] We do not qualify to enter into that kingdom, the kingdom that God has promised for his saints from all ages past.

You can't be born into the kingdom. Yes, it's a wonderful privilege to be born into a Christian family, those who have been, to be those who are partakers of the wonderful covenant of God towards us and our children.

It's an incredible privilege, but we must still come to a point ourselves where we come to faith in Christ and enter into the kingdom because we have come and received redemption and

forgiveness.

And to do that, to make that possible for us, to qualify us, Christ had to go to the cross in our place. He had to make us fit for the kingdom.

He had to make us ready for the kingdom. You see, by nature, terrible as it may be, by nature, we too were darkness. Here's Paul as he writes, verse 8 of chapter 5 of Ephesians, for you, he's writing to Christians, you were once darkness.

[23 : 01] So we were just the same. That's why we needed to be rescued. We were darkness as well. We had nothing that could make us acceptable to God, nothing that could make us right, or as it were, give us the visa to get into the kingdom of light.

Jesus had to come and he accomplished for us what was necessary and he did it with two parts, as it were. Two parts, redemption and forgiveness. And redemption was accomplished and forgiveness was accomplished at the cross.

We see that clearly when we compare what he says here to what he compares in Ephesians 1, where he uses very much the same words. In him, verse 7 of Ephesians 1, we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.

Do you see that? Redemption through his blood, through the cross. There's clear connotations when the word redemption is used, clear connection with Exodus, with the rescuing and bringing out of God's people from Egypt, where they were in slavery, where they were enchained, where they were imprisoned under the Egyptian tyranny and domain.

And even when they were brought out and redeemed, sacrifices had to be made so that those who were brought out may continue in that liberty. In Exodus chapter 6 and verse 6, this is what God said to his people.

[24 : 33] I am the Lord and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm.

And later in chapter 13, God gives instructions about what they're to say to their children about these things. He said this, when Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, the Lord killed every firstborn in Egypt, both man and animal.

This is why I sacrifice to the Lord the first male offspring of every womb and redeem each of my firstborn sons. There's a redemption price that had to be paid.

When Jesus went to the cross, he was paying the price for our deliverance from sin and the law. And the price that the law demanded was death.

Paul, as he writes to the Galatians, reminds them of that truth, that they were under the law and that that law imprisoned them and made them bound.

[25 : 40] Galatians 3, verses 10 and following. For it is written, cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the book of the law. Clearly, no one is justified before God by the law.

The righteous will live by faith, it says. The law is not based on faith. On the contrary, the man who does these things will live by them.

You see, the law is good and perfect and just and right. But because of the law, Satan legally had the right to imprison those who broke the law, to keep them in that darkness.

But Christ fulfilled all of the law's requirements and demands on our behalf, took the curse that was ours because we broke the law, so he was unable to legally set us free.

This is what Paul goes on to say. Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written, cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.

[26 : 45] He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus. So here is the law. We broke the law.

We sinned against God. Therefore, that put us in a place where we were trapped and enslaved by our own actions and the devil, in one sense, acted as our jailkeeper.

But Jesus Christ came and he broke the law's power by becoming a curse for us on the cross, by fulfilling all of the law's requirements. He redeemed us and rescued us out of that domain and set us free.

That was necessary redemption, but there was something else as well, wasn't there? Forgiveness. You see, when we broke God's law, we rebelled against God himself.

The law, in that sense, is not something impersonal, for it is a reflection of the very character of God. And so when we sin, we make ourselves God's enemies.

[27 : 48] Paul even says it here. We'll look at it later on in the coming weeks. Verse 21 of chapter 1 in Colossians. Once you are alienated from God and we're enemies. Therefore, we placed ourselves under the wrath of God and the anger of God, says Paul elsewhere.

But at the cross, Christ obtained full forgiveness for us for those sins that we committed against God. Thus, he reconciled us to God, changed our status from enemies to friends. He took the wrath of God. He suffered what we deserved.

He appeased a holy and righteous God. Now can we see why Paul says to the believers and prays for the believers that they might joyfully give thanks to God who's qualified them to be sharers in that kingdom?

Can you see why we are to rejoice in the fact that we are now part of the kingdom of light and kingdom of the sun? Now can we see why it's so imperative that if we are to be a Christian, we must have Christ as our king.

[29 : 06] He must be the Lord of our lives because if you are to live in his kingdom, then you must acknowledge him as your king. Otherwise, you are guilty of treason and revolution.

Can we see what it is to joyfully bow the knee to him, to thankfully humble ourselves and acknowledge his authority of our lives? Can we now see what he's done for us and how much he desires that we should live for him?

Let's sing together our final hymn reminding us again of the rule and reign of our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus shall reign where'er the sun doth its successive journeys run.

Three hundred and ten. Amen. Jesus shall reign where'er the sun doth its successive journeys run. His kingdom spread from shore to shore till moon shall burst and reign no more.

[30 : 44] To him shall endless prayer be made, and praises strong to crown his hand.

His name thy sweet and you shall rise with every morning sacrifice.

people and crowds of every tongue dwell on his love with sweetest song.

and in that voice shall proclaim their early blessings their early blessings on his name.

blessings of all blessings of all where'er he raised the prince believes to lose his chains the weary blind eternal rest and all the sounds of want are blessed where'er he displays his healing power death and the curse are no no more in him the trine of Adam close all blessings and their father close let every creature rise and bring their highest fullness name to our king angels they say with songs to our king and earth repeat the

[33 : 29] Lord Amen God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father Amen one to the to the e Lord to that and