

Colossians 1

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[0 : 00] Well, if you could have that passage open in front of you, Colossians chapter 1, that would be useful.

Colossians, as we read in that introduction by Paul, had heard the gospel.

They'd come to believe in its truths, and they were going on. But there were issues within the church, and without going into all of the detail, Paul is writing to oppose, in particular, teachings which conflicted with the Christian message.

And in that sense, this passage that we read is very, very up-to-date. It's very much a contemporary issue, isn't it?

Because in this world, you can get men and women, from politicians, to pop stars, to all sorts of other people, saying what they believe, or what they don't believe, or what they choose to believe.

[1 : 17] And so it is a very confusing time, and it was the same for these Colossians. People were bringing all sorts of new ideas, many of which conflicted with the true message.

And so Paul is writing to them, trying to re-establish, if you like, their priorities in this particular age. And therefore, it must be applicable to us for the same reason.

Because we only have to turn on the radio, or the television, or read a book that somebody's written, or a newspaper, and immediately we will find things which are contrary to the gospel.

And even laws of the land going through, which aren't based on biblical principles. So there are some questions, really, for us to answer this morning.

And I'm conscious of the age of the congregation here, so I'm going to start very easily. I am a teacher, so in the past, how far past, that's up to you to decide.

[2 : 29] We were told at school that the most important thing was the three R's. What were the three R's? This is a bit of audience participation. Right.

Reading, writing, arithmetic. Which, if you think about it, was always very confusing. Because writing doesn't start with R. And arithmetic doesn't either. But those are the things, the three R's.

But I suppose you've just given me one of the reasons why those things were mentioned. Because that's a memorable phrase that, if you ever went through school in a certain period, the three R's was something that was indelibly marked on your brain.

Is that right? Okay. So, hopefully this morning, I want to mark some different three R's, indelibly, on your brain, which come up in this passage.

And my three R's, I'm only going to stick to three. They're actually seven or eight, and they'll come in as we go along. But the three major ones are these, in this order.

[3 : 40] Rescued, reconciled, and redeemed. Rescued, reconciled, and redeemed. Paul, having given his introduction, and talked about how he was praying for them, he comes to the first of these in verse 13.

When talking about the Father, and talking about his work through the Lord Jesus Christ, says, For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness, and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves.

And then he goes on. Rescued. Rescued. Well, we see on the news every day, pictures of people being rescued.

The most recent one I can think of was the man in the balloon, who jumped out before it sewed up to a thousand feet, and found himself rescued and alive by the emergency services.

Going back a bit further, we were thinking about one time when we were on the church weekend up in the Lake District, and it was a time where those Chilean miners who were stuck underground, if you remember, were brought up one at a time, and rescued from that, what they thought would be their tomb.

[5 : 08] We've got many examples of people who are rescued. But, here's the point, and here's the point that Paul's making.

That's fine. And people can seek to be rescued. And as we were talking to the children, people can cry out to be rescued, if they understand two things.

First, that they actually have a need to be rescued. And second, that they know who's able to rescue them. And those two things aren't obvious.

I saw a clip once of a man who was on a river, going down the river in a canoe, I think it was, and there was a man on the bank shouting to him, a warning.

And the man in the boat was ignoring him. And then, the film, or the cameraman, panned out slowly, and you realise that this man in the boat was heading towards a huge waterfall, which he was going to go over.

[6 : 21] But he was blissfully unaware of this. And therefore, A, he didn't respond to the warning. And B, even if he had responded to the warning, it would have been no good asking the man on the bank for help, because there was nothing he could do.

He was already so far down the river, that nothing could have been done to help him, other than some other emergency service, if that could have been found in time.

So, the first question that I want to ask you this morning is, do we actually want to be rescued?

Do we actually, this morning, want to be rescued? And if so, from what? What do we want to be rescued from?

See, the people in the world would say, well, look, I know it's a time of recession, but I'm alright, I've got a house, I've got a job, I've got lots of food to eat, I can take nice holidays, I've got a good job, I've got some responsibility, I've got a nice car, you know, what do I need rescuing from?

[7 : 40] I've got a nice life, I've got a family, I've got children, why on earth would I need to be rescued? From what? Well, look what it says in that verse that we read.

It says, to these people who have become Christians, it says, he's rescued us from the dominion of darkness, and brought us into the kingdom of the Sonny Loves.

You can ask anybody, and they might give you a variety of answers, but I don't think there's a single sane person on the planet who, looking around at the things that happen in the world, would say anything other than the world is a very, very dark place.

Whether you go and look at what's happening in Syria, whether you go and look at what's happening in other parts of the world where there are wars, whether you even see what happens in places like America when children in a primary school are shot down by a gunman.

Can people really look out at this world and think that this is what life is all about?

[9 : 01] Can you? Surely, this wasn't the reason God created our world. We need to be rescued.

We know that if we read in other parts of the Bible, it tells us what from. It tells us that there are only two positions to be in.

You're either going to be controlled by Satan or controlled by God. There's no in-between position.

Those are the only two. It's life or death. It's a matter of life or death. Which is fine if you accept the fact that there is a God and if you accept the fact that there is this person called Satan.

But the world rejects those things and says, it's a fairy story. That's like the man in that canoe going down the river to a waterfall.

[10 : 17] He might have turned round to that man and said, it's pointless shouting out a warning to me because I don't believe there is a waterfall at the end of this river. It's only when he came to it, went over it, and more importantly, it was too late to do anything about it that he would realize he'd made an error.

Because this passage tells us that there's a kingdom of darkness, there's a kingdom that's dominated by Satan, and then there's a kingdom of light.

The kingdom of the Son he loves. The kingdom of heaven. And the one thing which this Bible tells us, that Paul tells us, that Christ tells us, and I just read it out to the children, it's absolutely explicit.

Because Jesus himself said, there is only one way of salvation. And it's through me. So we need to be rescued.

And we need to know from what we've been rescued. But like that man in the river, the first thing he would have needed to do, even before someone could rescue him, was if he responded to the warning.

[11 : 54] And when any preacher is talking about these things and presenting the gospel, he's really presenting a warning to the people, saying, don't go in that direction, because that direction is going to lead to destruction.

And he's saying, turn around, come back. Well, that's another word that we're familiar with, because that's the definition of repentance.

Turning away from the direction you're going, which is going towards destruction, and turning around and going towards God. You've actually got to do something.

You can't just drift through life aimlessly, not knowing why we're here, as some people say, or finding pleasure, temporary pleasure, in other things.

There's a far bigger problem, which we need to understand. So we need to be rescued. But once we're rescued, there's something else.

[13 : 01] It's our second, are there reconciled? If you're an accountant, then you'll know that one of the hardest things to do is at the end of the year to get the books to balance to the nearest penny.

If you're tuppence out, you'll spend hours searching through every single figure to make sure that the two match up exactly at the end. And when it's reconciliation on a personal level, then we're looking to people who, for some reason, their relationship's broken down, and we're trying to bring these two people together and bring them to meet so that neither feels that the other one is the one who was in the right and they were in the wrong all the other way around.

It has to be brought side by side so that the two things come together perfectly. That's fine.

That might work on a personal level, but who do we, as individuals, need to be reconciled to? Who have we got where the relationship is broken?

Well, the Bible tells us that our relationship with God is broken. It was broken virtually from the start of the creation of the world.

[14 : 41] When even in the garden, their people sinned, men and women sinned. And ever since then, the Bible tells us that we're all under the thrall of sin.

We actually have no idea of what's right and wrong. The only idea we can have if we don't accept what the Bible says is whatever we believe ourselves.

So if I believe I'm not hurting somebody, then it's perfectly acceptable to do what I do. If I don't have to be right with anybody, why should I worry about getting right with them?

Because it's got nothing to do with me. But the Bible says we were created by God to worship and adore Him forever.

Forever. That's what we were created for. That's why so many people in life have got no purpose and no hope.

[15 : 53] They don't know why they're here. And I'm convinced that every single person who's in that position because even for those of us who are Christians, we were in that position once where we would be going through our daily lives and you get to some point where you had maybe time to think and you'd be sitting down and thinking, is this it?

Is this what it's really all about? Because if it is, it's pretty poor. And I'm not really looking forward to the next 30, 40, 50 years of just doing the same things over and over again with the same problems.

But this passage and what Paul was telling them is that they needed, having been, as it were, saved, having been rescued, they needed to be reconciled to God.

Look what it says in verse 20 of that passage that we're reading. It says, well, verse 19, for God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him and through him, this is Christ, to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood shed on the cross.

our first verse that was at the back here when we started was talking about having peace with God and letting the peace of God rule in our hearts.

[17 : 24] If you're not a Christian this morning, and you know you're not, you will never, never have peace. Never. You might have peace in the sense that nobody's attacking you, you might have peace in the sense that you might have a few weeks or months or even years when things seem to be going relatively right.

But in here, and in here, you will never have peace. Because the only peace that counts is peace with God.

We need to be reconciled. we need something more than simply someone saying, well, it'll be all alright.

This is what the world says. The world says, it doesn't matter whether you're Christian. You could be a Muslim, you could be a Buddhist, you could be anything you like. Everyone gets to heaven.

That's clearly not true. Look what it says here when it goes on and it talks about these things.

[18 : 40] Having talked about the Lord Jesus Christ, it talks later on about being rooted in Him. Rooted in Christ.

Christ. I want to spend some time thinking about what that means. For those of you who are gardeners of which I'm not, that anybody could testify to, but if you've had one of those plants in a pot and you're going to replant it so in the garden and you pull it out, you've got all these roots tangled up with the soil.

So much so that when you pull it out of the pot, you pull all the soil out as well. And if you've ever tried to get rid of weeds, the roots of weeds you can never get rid of because they're so fine and so intricately woven into the fabric of the soil and gripping onto them that you might pull out the bigger bits but the little bits are always left, aren't they?

Paul says here to these people that to be reconciled to God, to be in that relationship with God which is the correct relationship, our walk with God should be so closely interwoven with Him that it's impossible to separate us from Him.

All of those roots, those brain cells, those things within our heart that are reaching down to the core of our being, the bit that we don't show to everybody else, Paul says they got to be rooted in Christ, rooted in Him.

[20 : 30] We've recently had preachers who come and talked about the parable of the seed and the sower. What was the seed that grew and produced fruit?

It was the seed that fell in good soil. soil. What better soil, what better medium for growing could there be than Christ?

God is to grow in Him and grow spiritually. What about the third one?

This comes in verse 14 of our passage. So having talked about being rescued from the dominion of darkness and brought into the kingdom of the Son He Loves, it says, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Here's how it goes. Here is a man or a woman who's at enmity with God because they don't accept God. They don't accept that God can have any control over their lives.

[21 : 41] They don't realize that there's a devil. They don't realize that there's a destruction to come, which is everlasting. They don't accept those things. And yet, when they're given the warning, some of them might realize, this is the hope of the gospel, that they might be rescued, that they'll be pulled away from the abyss, as it were.

And they will realize, having been rescued, that they're being rescued by a God who is at enmity with them, or at least they're at enmity with Him. And it's only because His love towards them that they can be reconciled and brought together.

And that's all very well, they've been rescued, they've had their relationship with God put right, but there's still a big problem because Satan is saying, but they're mine, mine, I own them, I've paid for them as it were, they're now mine.

And to redeem them, the payment has to be made. But fortunately, it tells us how that payment actually was made.

For He's rescued us from the dominion of darkness, and brought us into the king of the Son He loves, in whom we have redemption. When Jesus Christ died on the cross, He paid the penalty.

[23 : 16] He redeemed the sinner from the clutches of the devil, from hell, because He paid the penalty.

It had to be paid. It's fine to be rescued, but it would have only been temporary. It's fine to be reconciled to God, but there were still the penalty for sin.

And God is righteous, and God knew that that penalty needed to be paid, and so He sent His Son, the one who would pay that penalty.

And when we have that redemption, redemption, then we come to another thing which it mentions.

It comes a little bit later, when He talks about the Lord Jesus Christ. Because when He begins to talk about the Lord Jesus Christ, and He talks about all that God has done, it says that this is the reality.

[24 : 24] reality. So out of this redemption comes reality. See, the world, in some ways, when people make these films that they show you that become very popular, that are based often on science fiction or things that can't happen, it's surprising, isn't it?

Today you can't go to the cinema without it being about vampires or ghosts or transformers, none of which exist, and yet when we come to reality, people can't see it.

And Paul says, but Christ is the reality. Christ is the reality. When you take all of these things and put them together, this is the reality.

This is the reality of living. So here's another question. Who owns you today? Are you owned by the things of this world?

The things that appeal just to our feelings, our senses? Or are we owned by Christ? If we're not owned by Christ, then we're living in an unreal world.

[25 : 41] It's like the matrix. What you see isn't real at all. Today, we're in a room. We go around, seeing how many people there are, what they're doing, and what the lives are like.

What does it matter? It doesn't care for anything. Because ultimately, it doesn't matter what the person next to you is doing. It doesn't matter what sort of things you're doing in your life, and how it affects other people in this room, or in this town, or in this country.

The important thing is what things that we're doing day by day, what effect are they having on the one who owns us?

Because if we're owned by Christ, then we are serving him. If we're not owned by him, then at the very least, we would say we're serving ourselves, but in reality, we serve another master that we don't accept either.

we just hope vaguely that things will work out okay in the end. So suppose the question this morning, the things to think about in terms of applying these truths, why did Paul speak in these ways?

[27 : 02] Why did he talk to these people? Because he starts out by saying the faith and love that spring up from the hope that stood up for you in heaven, that you've already heard about.

He goes on to talk about them bearing fruit and them understanding this word. What is the point? He's saying in that phrase which a lot of young people in the world use, it's been said to me, get real.

Get real. In other words, whatever you're talking about there, you're fooling yourself. Get real. And Paul is saying to these Colossians, look, get real.

all these things you see around you, all these false teachers, all these people who tell you all these different things. He said, get real. The reality is Christ.

Let's just go back through them, those points, and let's see what the second bit of each of those sections that we read says, and many others in here.

[28 : 11] Let me start where we began just now. Verse 13, for he's rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the son he loves.

That's Christ. In whom? That's Christ as well. We have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. He then goes on to describe Christ and how he died.

And then he tells him how he's rejoicing in Christ's afflictions and how he became a servant. He says, but now it's been disclosed to the saints.

To them God has chosen to make known amongst the Gentiles a glorious rich of this mystery which is Christ in you. The hope of glory. We proclaim him, Christ, teaching them.

And then he says, I want you to know how much I'm struggling in my heart and talking about these things. He said, to know the mystery of God, namely Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

[29 : 21] And every single time he talks about Christ. And at least in three places here, and more if you go through the other parts of the Bible, he puts it in a nutshell, and that's in verse 19.

Because when he's talking about Christ, this is what he's telling to the people. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood shed on the cross.

All of these things can only be true in Christ. If we're not in Christ this morning, if we haven't believed in him as our saviour, then we are nowhere.

We're just a cast adrift, and we're going to somewhere that we've got no idea of the horrendous possibility of what might happen. going back to these films that you often see of people who have been rescued.

There was one that I caught part of the other day, where Simon Weston, the man who was disfigured in the Falklands conflict, had gone back to the helicopter station to meet the man who'd rescued him from the boat.

[30 : 53] and it was evident that he was moved in meeting him, and still thankful for all he'd done, because he himself had risked his life to save him.

He'd taken his helicopter, showed you the footage of him taking his helicopter through the smoke and flames on the ship that kept having explosions, and the helicopter was literally feet from the ground, just so they could rescue Simon Weston.

Do you think Simon Weston will ever forget that man, and what he did? No. But we forget Christ every day.

To be rooted in Christ is more than turning up at church on a Sunday. It's more than singing a few hymns.

he's been with him every single moment of every day, of every waking thought, because he needs to be in control.

[32 : 08] Going back to what we said to the children, the Lord Jesus Christ is the only one who can navigate our path to heaven. heaven. And if it's just coming into church, that's the building, it means nothing.

But we come here to worship Christ. We don't come here, somebody said, to be entertained. Some churches, you might have a rock group, you might have drama, you might have a comedian, you might think I am.

But we don't come here for that. We come here to engage with the Lord Jesus Christ, the only one who can save us.

And the only question I can leave with you and with me is, are we doing that every day? Coming to Christ, because he's the only one who can change these things.

do you want to be rescued? If so, then we need to repent. Do we want to be reconciled to God?

[33 : 21] If so, then we need that reconciliation to be carried out by Christ. Do we want, ultimately, to have that redemption and live in a world of reality, rather than a world of our own imagination?

nation? Because the reality is, one day, for good or ill, we will stand before that Christ, and he is the only one who will be able to say, this one is mine, save him, save her.

What a hope if you believe in that. if you are rooted in Christ, what a hope, but without that, what hopelessness.

Let's pray for the final R, because it says here that if all of these things are true of us, if we've been rescued from the direction that we were going in, if we've been reconciled to God, and if we've actually found this redemption, then it says this, we'll be raised with him.

This actually comes up in chapter 2, which says we'll be raised with Christ. Christ, our Savior, who the Bible says was raised from death after he died on the cross, and he was raised to life, and he's now in heaven with us, we'll be raised with him one day.

[35 : 08] What a glorious prospect. Let's trust that the Lord will put in our hearts that desire to be so closely bound with him that we can claim all of those promises of those who believe.

Let me just finish by reading again that section, because this focuses on Christ, and this tells us, if you like, the whole story, the supremacy of Christ.

It's headed in my version. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation, for by him all things were created, things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities, all things were created by him and for him.

He is before all things, and in him all things hold together, and he is the head of the body, the church. That's us. That's us.

He is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy, in everything.

[36 : 29] For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood shed on the cross.

once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior, but now he's reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish, and free from accusation, if you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel.

This is the gospel that you've heard, and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.

Let's just remember each day the one who rescues us, and let's praise him and worship him. Amen.

Amen. Amen.