

Key idea:

To teach that – because of **who he is**, our redeemer is able to save his people **from** the dominion of darkness and **back to** the holy God.

Application:

So that – those listening would have a renewed confidence in Jesus' ability to completely redeem his people

1. Intro

Friends, we have reached the point in this pandemic where talk of statistics has given way to concern over loved ones who are currently suffering and are in some measure of danger. We believe our hopes for ever returning to what we remember as normal rest in the ability of researchers to develop a “vaccine”. We really have no idea when that might be.

Our race is looking for a saviour from an unseen threat.

Friends, as a race we have two other unseen threats from which we need a saviour. One comes from the terrifying powers of darkness, who seek only to do us evil, the other from the infinitely more terrifying justice of a Holy God who we, as a race, have rebelled against.

We desperately need someone who is able to save us, a King who is able to redeem us from unseen threats on both sides.

Who would send us such a King, who is able to be such a King?

PRAY

Colossians 1:15-23

15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.

16 For everything was created by him, in heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities — all things have been created through him and for him.

17 He is before all things, and by him all things hold together.

18 He is also the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything.

19 For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him,

20 and through him to reconcile everything to himself, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

21 Once you were alienated and hostile in your minds as expressed in your evil actions. 22 But now he has reconciled you by his physical body through his death, to present you holy, faultless, and blameless before him— 23 if indeed you remain grounded and steadfast in the faith and are not shifted away from the hope of the

gospel that you heard. This gospel has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and I, Paul, have become a servant of it.

As usually do, I'll to let you know where we're going today.

- **Because of who he is,**
- **...your King is able to redeem you from darkness**
- **...back to your God**
- **...so continue in Him**

2. Your King is able... because of who he is.

As I approached the passage this week, I was stumped by a question. "Why did Paul suddenly burst into this lofty description of the Son?"

He told us (last week) that through the Son, God's rescued us out of the domain of darkness into His Son's Kingdom. Or, from a different angle, in Jesus we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. So Paul's been talking about our salvation... and with this mention of Jesus he can't help himself, he's off on a hymn of praise!

Is it that Paul's like me? My train of thought is puffing along to some meaningful destination and suddenly it jumps tracks. I'll be saying to Steph, "I was down town today and I ran into Max Pringle and he told me.....mmmmm, have we got any Pringles?"

Has Paul's train jumped tracks?

No, I don't think so. I think he's actually backing up the outrageous claims he just mentioned. The Colossians, and us, have been made citizens of a Kingdom. And in that Kingdom we're safe, safe from the threat of evil (the domain of darkness) and safe from the threat of justice from a holy God (our sins are forgiven).

I believe Paul's launched into this staggering portrayal of the Son as he anticipates our anxious objections to his claims.

"Are you saying Paul, there's someone powerful enough to keep me safe from the powers of darkness?"

Me, reconciled to God? You don't know a a thing about my secret thought life.

Paul's answer? "Let me tell you something about this King.

Right off the bat, quite frankly, Paul says, Jesus Christ is God.

v15 He is the image of the invisible God,

You know the God who (as Paul later tells Timothy) “alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see” you know, that invisible God? A God we might feel is distant?

We’ll this Jesus, He is that God, visible. In Jesus, you can see the unseeable. In Jesus you can touch the untouchable. If we have seen Jesus, we have seen God.

Now this has got to be one the most incredible claims of the Bible, that God became man. But Paul got an agenda here, so he doesn’t really unpack how that can be just here, but rather why it’s so important.

He’s thinking about his readers.

Paul, you’ve told us our King is God, we’ll believe you, but how does that help us? How does that help you?

Well friends, if you’re a weak and mortal sinner (and you are) with the powers and dominions of darkness on the one side, and a holy God on the other, then the identity, the credentials, of your King are critical.

And rest assured, because of who he is, and He’s God, your King is able.

That’s point 2 and pillar for confidence in your King.

3. Your King is able... to redeem you from the darkness

Back at our Bible college, we used to have a session where missionaries would share their experiences. An often asked question was “Is there something that happens in the lives of people who *believe* the gospel that shows they’ve really *understood* it?”

Many of the missionaries were from Asia. Their answer was almost always the same. “Yes, it’s when they realise they’re no longer under the dominion of the evil spirits. That their new King, Jesus, has total authority over the powers they used to fear, and rightly.”

In our culture we don’t know much about what’s going on in the unseen realm around us. And I think the dark powers are probably fine with that. If you don’t believe in the existence of an enemy, it makes their job that much easier doesn’t it. You see, the main goal of the powers of darkness is blind you from seeing who Christ is and what he’s done for you.”

You don’t have to be involved in witchcraft or live in Asia to be under the dominion of darkness. All it takes is for you to have placed your hope in life somewhere other than Jesus. That’s pretty scary isn’t it. The powers of darkness are just as happy if you’re caught up in a with a nice bbq deck and backyard as they would be if you were into the occult. Both can help them achieve their goal of blinding you.

But we've been given a King to redeem us from those dark powers, so let's look at his credentials.

We've already said, it's who he *is* that makes the King able. And we've just been told he's God, and so he's the *creator*.

Jesus is...
Continuing on in v15

*"the firstborn over all creation.
16 For everything was created by him,
in heaven and on earth,
the visible and the invisible,*

He's the firstborn, which means he's the heir. Everything that exists belongs to him (like it belongs to the firstborn son), because everything has been created by him. So that includes things in heaven, yes, things in heaven, which we can't see, such as angels, are all part of the creation. And of course, things on earth which we can see.

But have a look at what Paul singles out in the creation?

V16
*whether thrones or dominions
or rulers or authorities—*

This includes the rulers of the dominion of darkness. Jesus is sovereign over the dominion of darkness. Of course, those rulers are in rebellion against him. They hate that he's sovereign. But look at how Jesus is described in relation to those powers, and all of the creation.

*all things have been created through him and **for** him.
17 He is before all things, and by him all things hold together.*

All things exist **by** of Jesus (which we've seen) but also for Him. It's **for** him, because the creation exists to display. Display His worth, His significance, His glory. And so He's is before all things because all things exist for the purpose of pointing back to Him saying "You are the most important being that is". Some do it willingly with joy, others will do it unwillingly with hatred. But that friends, is the unifying theory of everything. The meaning of all creation. That creation owes it's beginning to him, and it continuing existence to Him and that includes the dominion of darkness.

So with such a King, can you see how the dominion of darkness could never hold sway over those who He came to redeem? Your King is able to redeem you from the rule of the dark powers, because he remains their ruler whether they like it or not. As powerful as they are, and as rebellious as they have become, the dark powers are still subject to their infinitely more powerful creator.

Great! So, the King can now storm the dungeons of darkness and take back what belongs to Him. Right? That's how Hollywood generally tells. It. Two opposing powers, the greatest power wins. There's a struggle of course, and it might look like

the hero is done for at some point, but in the end he, or she, wins. A great story, fairly straight forward.

But that's not how it works in the *greatest* story ever told, God's story. You see, the King can't just bust open the dungeons. There's a problem.

And that problem is that every one of God's people *belong* in the darkness. It's fair, just, and right that they remain there. Each one of us has rebelled against the light, the holy God. Every life lived says "No" to God's good to rule and authority. So, God's own character, His own justice, demands that His rebellious people be sentenced to the rule of the darkness.

Of course, there is good news. God *has* sent us a King who has complete authority to redeem us out of the darkness. That's our 3rd point and another pillar for your confidence.

But we're still left with a question, aren't we?

If it's just and right that we should remain in the darkness, *how* can the King redeem us?

Your King is able to redeem you from the darkness, but how?

4. Your King is able... to redeem you back to God.

Well, we've seen Jesus, God in the flesh, is the creator, the sustainer, the owner, the ruler, of everything. You might wonder what else you could say that could add to that description. What could be more than "He's God"?

But there is something. There's a title, something about who he is, that holds a *special* place in his heart.

Have a look at V18

*18 He is **also** the head of the body, the church;*

"head of the body, the church"

Friends, to be the head of the motley crew we call "the church", *that* honour is the jewel in the crown of Jesus Christ. *We* are the jewel in His crown. He's proud to be the head of the church.

v18 he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead,

He joyfully brings it into being. As the firstborn raised from the dead, he gathers all of God's people from across history, blazing a trail of resurrection for those he's redeemed. Rescuing them from the dominion of evil we deserve to remain under.

Again in v 18 - *so that he might come to have first place in everything.*

...first place in everything as his Father gives him the name that is before all names. Why, because he was willing to go to his own death out of love for his Father and his people.

But remember our question from the previous point?

How could he redeem us from the darkness if by rights we should still be there?

Well, we've already seen Jesus is God so he has the power to do it. Paul tells puts it in a different way now.

V19 – *For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him,*

I'm not sure if you could put it any more strongly. Paul is telling us that God the Son (King Jesus) is not God the Father, and yet God the Son is the *full complement* of attributes of what it means to be God.

You could get lost in this couldn't you. But I'm going to stop there. Because Paul has a specific reason for again affirming that Jesus is fully God.

So come on back with me to our question. How could our King redeem us from the darkness if by rights we should still be there?

Jesus can redeem us from the darkness because he confronts the problem at the source. Being under the darkness is a symptom of our problem, but the source of the problem is that we've rebelled against our God so we're cut off from Him.

You can see what that looks like in v21.

21 *Once you were alienated and hostile in your minds as expressed in your evil actions.*

We hated God so were we estranged from him and it showed. We've committed the worst offences against Him. And yet what does he do?

From v19 again – *For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and **through him to reconcile** everything to himself, whether things on earth or things in heaven,*

God the Father, sends God the Son to reconcile mankind back to God.

To redeem us from the darkness, back to God. We're under the darkness because we're unreconciled to God.

To *be* cut off from God is to *be* under the darkness.

Either you're under the darkness or you're reconciled to God. There is no third state for mankind.

Now, you might know all this, and that's good. But can you see *why* Paul takes such pains show us that Jesus is *God*.

Friends, Paul want us to give us another pillar of confidence so we can know for sure that we *are* reconciled.

Paul wants to show that us Jesus is God because only God *can* reconcile. How can anyone but the offended party take the steps needed to heal such a broken relationship.

How can anyone but God deal with and forgive an offence *against* God.

Only the offended party is able to offer reconciliation.

It's why Jesus is able to reconcile us. Because He himself is God

And that reconciliation, that peace comes at a high price. Jesus knew exactly what offences he would have to bear in his own body to see justice done and so to heal that broken relationship.

It cost the life of the God-man who shed his blood on the cross.

In this reconciliation, there is no meeting in the middle, no compromise, no arbitration. God himself must absorb the *full* consequences of our treason against Him. At the cross He takes *our* blame, He endures *our* shame, he bears in *His* body the full righteous wrath that each of one of His people deserved.

V 20 by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

Or again in v22

22 But now he has reconciled you by his physical body through his death,

And now we can see what that reconciliation looks like. It's not a ceasefire. No, its infinitely better than that. Rather than guilt before God, feelings of guilt, guilt in a legal sense, there's true peace. All those who are joined to Jesus in faith He brings into the presence of His Father as

v22 holy, faultless, and blameless before him

Pure, forgiven, innocent. Now you don't think that's possible so you? But friends, it shouldn't surprise you, if you've caught a glimpse of the Jesus we've been told about here. Why shouldn't it surprise you? Friends, look at what it cost. Your pure status before God cost the life of God himself. God the Father gives his most precious treasure to give *you* this gift. And God the Son goes willingly. An infinitely high cost for your infinitely high status before God.

Friends because of who he is, you King is able to reconcile you back to God.

Now just a note before our last point. Paul says in v20 that God reconciles "everything" to himself through Christ Jesus. We know, even from just this letter this doesn't include those who won't put their faith in Christ, or the dark spiritual powers. It's a tricky phrase, but I think Paul means Jesus' death and resurrection brings about the new heavens and the new earth which will be in complete harmony with their creator for the first time since the fall.

5. Your King is able... so remain in Him.

So friends, because of who he is, your King is able to redeem you *from* darkness to God.

It's an incredible truth isn't it, and we haven't done a thing to contribute. God alone reconciles his enemies back to himself. We're passive in this. It's the Father's initiation and the Son's willingness to go to the cross.

So do we play a part then? Absolutely.

Remember those believers who had so understood who Christ to them was they no longer feared the powers of darkness?

I wonder if you asked a pastor in Australia the same question.

"Is there something that happens in the lives of those who believe the gospel that shows they've really *understood* it?"

Perhaps he might answer like this. "Yes, it's when they finally stop trying to earn God's favour by being good and simply put their trust in the King God sent to save them."

That's faith isn't it. Taking God at His word (that the King is able to redeem you) and so living like it (by running to the King for safety).

And that just what Paul says.

In V22 were "blameless" before him –

v23 if indeed you remain grounded and steadfast in the faith and are not shifted away from the hope of the gospel that you heard. This gospel has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and I, Paul, have become a servant of it.

Because of all you've heard about the King, stay close to him. Why would you do anything else?

Joined to Jesus you're safe from the powers of darkness because you're reconciled to God. Outside of Jesus you're under those dark powers and will share in their fate, because outside of Christ God is rightly your worst enemy.

God gives us this warning to *keep* us from wandering away from only safe place: the place of shelter behind your King who is able.

Because of **who** he is, Your King is able to redeem you **from** the darkness back **to** your God.

Let's pray.