

# COLOSSIANS

The Rescue  
5.1.2022



THE JOURNEY  
CHURCH

## SCRIPTURE:

Colossians 1:13-14

## RECAP:

In October of 2011, two individuals (one an American) doing humanitarian work in Somalia were kidnapped by Somali pirates. Their goal was to get a large ransom for the two hostages. They asked for \$45M. The initial attempts to get the local elders and leaders to help free them were unsuccessful. As the health of the hostages declined over the months, they eventually decided to launch a rescue operation with Seal Team 6. On January 25th, 2012, two dozen SEALs parachuted into Somalia and made their way to the target. They eliminated all the Somali pirates and rescued both hostages without a single US casualty. By the way, the lead FBI agent involved in the case, and at the helm of all the moving components with the rescue was none other than our Executive Pastor -- Matt Espenshade.

The American hostage was Jessica Buchanan. The other was a Danish humanitarian worker. These two were hostages. They were unable to rescue or free themselves. They were captive to stronger forces. They needed to be rescued from the outside. They needed to be delivered from the hands of their captors in Somalia, and delivered into freedom by American forces.

This story is a phenomenal story and there are other hostage rescue stories that are similar in nature. These stories of individuals rescued from the hands of evil people capture our imaginations. They make for incredible movies and books because we love to see good win over evil. We love to see justice. We love to see successful rescues and I think the reason for that is that at the core of human existence is the need for rescue.

We cannot rescue ourselves. We need a deliverer from the outside to come and save us. And this is what God has done for us in Christ. **Every person born of Adam is in need of spiritual rescue.**

## **Scripture Exegesis: Colossians 1:13-14**

So we looked at Paul's prayer of thanksgiving for the faith of the church in Colossae. He rejoices that God saved them, and qualified them to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.

### **1. The need for rescue.**

Notice the verse "he has delivered us." The word delivered is the Greek word *errysato* and it signifies "rescue." Don't think "delivered a package." Think about delivered the way it's used to speak of deliverance from an evil spirit. The Greek word literally implies dragging someone out of battle or out from the jaws of danger. It means to pull someone from something.

The first thing we must see and understand is our desperate need for rescue. Everyone shares in this need. It has no respect for people. Rich and poor alike need rescue. Black, white, Hispanic, Asian, Indian, and all need rescue. The boardroom executive and the factory line worker both need rescue. The jock and the nerd both need rescue. Male and female both need rescue. Everyone needs rescue.

Why is this? Because everyone born of Adam is born into sin. We inherit a sin nature and a guilt from our father Adam. Adam was the representative for all humanity. His rebellion in the Garden made all of his posterity (offspring) guilty of rebellion, and we are born with a sin nature. And with our sin nature, we sin. All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23).

The result of this is that we are in bondage to sin. We are in captivity to Satan and the dominion of darkness. Much like the Hebrews under the heavy oppression of the Egyptians in the book of Exodus, we are captive and under the yoke of slavery to sin. What is fascinating is that the Hebrews knew they needed rescuing. They cried out for God to save them. But people living in the domain of darkness today don't even see it as dark. They're not searching for light. They are not only unable to leave, they are unwilling to leave. This is why they need to be rescued.

Just like the Hebrews needed a redeemer and rescuer from the outside to come save them (Moses), we have need as well. We are incapable of saving ourselves. The totality of our nature is compromised by sin. Every bit of us is fallen. That doesn't mean we sin as much as we could sin. It means that there isn't an aspect of our being unaffected by the

fall. We can't save ourselves. It's like telling a legless man to jump or asking a newborn to read a book to you. Neither have the ability to perform what you are asking of them. In the same way, sinners cannot save themselves. We are totally incapable. We need to be rescued. We need someone with the ability to rescue, to conduct an operation that snatches us from the hands of our captor.

This confronts us with something our flesh doesn't like to hear: we can't save ourselves. God must act on our behalf. We don't decide to rescue ourselves. Nor do we decide that God is allowed to rescue us. That's not how rescue works. Remember what the verb for delivered implies: to be drug from battle. We see a funny illustration of this in Forrest Gump. Forrest is in Vietnam and they are retreating from an ambush, but when Forrest realizes he's alone, he goes back to rescue men. Forrest starts dragging people out of the battle. But Lt. Dan doesn't want to be pulled out. He wants to be left there to die. Forrest doesn't let him. He drags him out anyway. That's deliverance. And it's also a picture of how we were rescued. Jesus' rescue of our soul wasn't because we allowed him to. He swooped us up, even if we didn't think we wanted it, and delivered us from the dominion of darkness. The rescue of Jessica Buchanan didn't require her to first sign a waiver of consent. No, the SEALS swooped into the compound, took out the enemy, and transferred her safely into freedom. They would have done it even if she started saying "no." Here's why: broken people trapped in bondage aren't entrusted with the decision about what's best for them. I'm so thankful Jesus swooped me up and rescued me.

## **2. The source of rescue.**

Notice that it says "He" delivered us. Who is the "He" from this passage? It seems from the flow of the verses before this that it is the Father who qualified us. It also appears by the passage that "he delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." So catch it...the "He" in "he has delivered us" is the Father, because it says he delivered us into the kingdom of His beloved Son (which is Jesus. But then it says "in whom," referring to Jesus, "we have redemption." So who is the source of our rescue? In this text, the Father and the Son are listed. But we also know from other Scriptures that the Holy Spirit has a role. As Jesus tells Nicodemus, "you must be born again of the Spirit." God tells us through Ezekiel that in the new covenant "God will replace hearts of stone with a heart of flesh, so that we can obey the Lord." We need new hearts. We need a work of the Spirit. We call this **REGENERATION** in theology.

So the source of our rescue is the whole Godhead: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Father rescues and delivers us to the Son's Kingdom. That Son is the one in whom we have redemption and the forgiveness of our sins.

Let's talk about a few things:

**\*\*Triune rescue** -- All three persons of the Trinity are involved in our rescue from the domain of darkness. The Father designs the plan of rescue. The Son executes the plan of rescue. The Spirit applies the work of rescue. All three persons of the Trinity are working in harmony and unity in our salvation. They can't do anything other than work together. They have harmony of will because they have the same divine plan, and they have the same divine will. But each plays a different role.

**The Father** designs the plan. He chooses a people that He gives to the Son. This is why Jesus says, "All that the Father gives to me will come to me, and all who come to me I will never cast away." (John 6:37).

**The Son** comes into the world to atone for the sins of those people. This is why the angel declares in **Matthew 1:21** "You shall call his name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." Jesus prays in **John 17:9-10** "I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours. All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them. But notice the language Paul uses here about Jesus, "in whom we have redemption." So it is through faith in Jesus' finished work that we have redemption and forgiveness. Jesus supplies payment for his people's sins and redeems us. His sacrifice on the cross pays the full price for our ransom and rescue. He is the outsider who comes to rescue. Everyone born of Adam needs a rescue. But Jesus wasn't born of Adam. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. So he alone is qualified to be our Rescuer.

**The Holy Spirit** applies this salvific work by regenerating dead hearts to life to believe the gospel. Spiritually blinded eyes are opened to see the beauty of Christ's death for them, and they believe. This is why Paul writes in **Ephesians 2** that we were dead, but God made us alive. This is why he says "by grace through faith you have been saved, and this is not your own doing, it is a gift of God, not a result of works, so that no can boast." We can't boast of what we did because we didn't do anything. It is all the work of God from beginning to end. Faith is not a work. It is a gift.

Now ask yourself this question: why would the work of each person in the Trinity differ? Would the Father plan to save every person, the Son die to save every person, but the Spirit fail to bring new life to every person? That doesn't seem right. The only way around that problem is you have to say that God allows people to reject what He did for Him. In other words, He can't rescue them. You have to say He gets some and loses others because He elevates the free will of man up above His own divine free will. And I'm sorry, you just can't read the Bible and walk away drawing that conclusion from the Scriptures. You can reason your way philosophically to that conclusion because you don't like the idea of God's will usurping man's will, but you won't naturally conclude that by reading the Bible.

I'm going to return to this issue again in a moment.

**\*\*The Son's Kingdom --** Through this rescue, we have been delivered out of the domain of darkness, where Satan's power and reign is exercised over us, and we have been transferred (categorically moved) into the Kingdom of Christ. Jesus has a kingdom. The Kingdom of God is here and present. It is growing and expanding. One day it will exist as the only Kingdom. But we are citizens of that kingdom now. We are citizens of this kingdom. And this is why we should live as citizens of this Kingdom and under the rule of the reign of our king. Because he rescued us out of the domain of darkness. So we walk in the light. But make no mistake: The Kingdom of God is at hand, and it belongs to King Jesus. We've been delivered out of darkness and into the inheritance we share with the saints in light.

### **3. The result of the rescue.**

The result of this deliverance and transfer is not only are we now in the Kingdom of Christ, but we are able to be citizens (qualified) because our sins are forgiven and we have redemption. The outcome of this transfer is that we are new creatures in Christ (**2 Corinthians 5:17**). The old is gone and the new has come. We can be forgiven of everything that the law of Moses could not free us from.

**Act 13:38-39 -- *Let it be known to you therefore, brothers, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and by him everyone who believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses.***

The law could not save us. It had no power to save us. But Jesus does. And the result is that our sins are forgiven through this man, and him alone.

I want you to notice the definitive language used here in Paul's letter. He is writing to believers. This is not a generic writing being dispersed to the population. He is writing to Christians. And he tells them that the Father delivered them out of the domain of darkness through the Son. The Father planned the operation, with the Son and Spirit, and the Son came into the world on the mission to save and rescue the people given to Him by the Father. This is such a beautiful picture.

Now here is a question worth exploring: Is every single human being rescued from the domain of darkness and transferred to Christ's kingdom? The obvious answer is "no." No, there are still countless people living in darkness. So did the rescue plan fail? Has Jesus' death on the cross and payment for sin to rescue people been an abysmal failure?

I do not think so at all, and here's why: I believe that Jesus atoned for the sins of all His people on the cross, and those people WILL come to faith. And the reason I believe this is because I believe the work of each person of the Trinity is not only unified, but effectual. Each accomplishes their role. None of them swing and miss.

***Acts 13:48 -- And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed.***

When the Gentiles heard the gospel, and heard Paul rebuke the Jews for their unbelief, and told them that God was giving the gospel to the Gentiles as the Scriptures foretold, they rejoiced. This is the continuation of the previous passage I cited a moment ago about forgiveness of sins through this man that the law of Moses could never give. The Gentiles glorified the word of the Lord. Now watch again what it says...**"and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed."** Catch that: from the crowds present listening, the number of them who had been appointed to eternal life (from the foundation of the world, from the Father), they believed. Their belief was dependent upon their being appointed to eternal life. In other words, their being appointed to eternal life assured their belief.

Romans 8:30 captures the same point: ***"And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified."*** Notice the connection and sequential order of each step: **predestined > called > justified > glorified.**

Why do I bring this up? Because the rescuing work of the Triune God ALWAYS ACCOMPLISHES ITS PURPOSES. Our God will have His people. The Son's work is 100%

effective. There is no blood spilled in vain. There is no power lacking in that blood to atone for all the sins it is poured over.

Now you may be asking internally...but didn't Jesus pay for every single sin from every single person ever committed on the cross? My conviction from the Scriptures is no. Let me explain. There are only two positions you can take on this. **1.** You have to say that Jesus paid for every single sin, but not every person is forgiven. That means they have to also pay for their sins...again...in Hell. So Jesus paid for sins that weren't forgiven. That would imply that His sacrifice wasn't effectual. It didn't actually accomplish what we say it accomplished. The only way you can hold this position and get around that problem is you have to say Jesus died for all sins hypothetically, and the only way it is applied is when someone believes. Are you following? In this position, you would say Jesus died for all sins, but in order to escape the charge that God punishes twice for the same sins (once on Jesus and once on the unrepentant) is you have to say Jesus died hypothetically for everyone, but only actually for people who respond to the gospel. Here's my problem with that: Jesus isn't still hanging there on a cross today. If your sins were present there as he made atonement and cried "it is finished," then you should be forgiven. You can't retroactively throw those sins back onto him now. They are either present or not.

Here's my position, your second option: **2.** You believe that every sin from God's chosen covenant people are present at the cross, and their sins ARE forgiven. This includes every true person of God before the cross (Old Testament saints), and it includes as John 17 says, "all you have given me." Listen, because their sins are present at the cross, they WILL BELIEVE. That is why they will come to faith. They were appointed to eternal life, and the Son paid for their sins, and so they will believe upon hearing the gospel. That doesn't mean the first time they hear it, but eventually. The blood purchases a people from God. The rescue operation definitively pulls them from the battle and transfers them to the kingdom. Jesus' death is simultaneously purchasing their faith.

The only passage you can try to dispute this with is 1 John 2:3 "not only our sins, but for the sins of the whole world." But this is not really a difficult objection to overcome. This term world is just like John 3:16, it is a term explaining the "every nation, tribe, and tongue" scope of the gospel. It in no way implies every single human. And this is really the only passage that implies that every single sin of humanity ever committed was on Jesus. That has been something we've picked up along the way just like "God will never put more on you than you can handle" or "this too shall pass" or "Heaven got another angel," none of which are in the Bible. Again, John 3:16 doesn't dispute this. "Whosoever

will believe" doesn't tell us who will actually believe. It only tells us whosoever DOES will be saved. I love John 3:16. It's not in conflict with what I believe AT ALL.

You ask, "Then how do you know whose sins are paid for?" Have they believed the gospel and put their faith in Jesus? That's the evidence! But you say, "How can preach to everyone to believe and be saved if you don't know who the Father has chosen?" Because I don't have to know who He has chosen. I preach the gospel to all, and plead for all to come, knowing those whom He has appointed to eternal life WILL believe. I don't feel like a failure when people don't respond. I'm encouraged to usher the call of faith, because I know that God WILL RESCUE HIS PEOPLE. They WILL RESPOND. But He is the One doing the delivering. And He is One doing the transferring. He is the One that did the saving. He is the One that does the drawing to Himself. And all that I do is throw seeds on the ground (like the parable of the sower), and I know it will hit some difficult soils, but I also know for some it will take root and bear much fruit. All to the glory of God!! Soli Deo Gloria!

Notice how Jesus talks about this in John 10. **John 10:11 — “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.”** Jesus is the good shepherd. And the good shepherd lays down his life for...who...the sheep. But watch: **John 10:14-15 — “I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.”** He knows his own sheep, and his sheep know him. This also implies that not everyone is his sheep. But again, notice he lays down his life for...the sheep. **John 10:27-30 — “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one.”** Jesus again differentiates between those who are his sheep and those who aren't. Those who are HEAR HIS VOICE. They hear his voice, respond to the gospel, and believe. While for many this may be news to you, if you think about it, you've always seen it, but didn't understand. When you read the Old Testament and only one group of people on all the earth were chosen to be God's people, and give the sacrificial system for their sins to be forgiven...you probably didn't raise much fuss about it, did you?

I know for some people hearing this, today will be your last Sunday with us, and I invite you to a Bible study on the subject with some of our pastors and leaders before taking off. I also invite you to recognize that while me and others in the church hold this view, and hold because we think it's biblical, others in the church do not. And I may think they

are wrong on this issue, but I don't think they are in grave error, and denying the essential truths of the Christian faith, as recited in the Apostle's Creed. So this is an issue we can disagree on and have loving, charitable debate. But if this is your last time with us, I challenge you to do some studying on the subject instead of being scared and running away. You may just find that the people who believe these things are not crazy, and believe them because they take the Bible really seriously. And you may discover that there are beliefs you can differ on with other Christians that don't require you to jump ship over. For those who struggle with the things I've laid out, I get it. I once did too, because I had only grown up hearing John 3:16 and nothing else. So you are welcome to be here while wrestling through these things. I sincerely mean that. My experience has been that most people who get upset about these things and leave are not because they sat down and worked through Scripture, but because it disrupted things they already believed and were taught...and they didn't like that. Most people, in my experience, are unable to defend their position biblically, and instead, react emotionally. So hear me when I say, please don't react emotionally to this if it goes against what you believe...be a Bible person who takes time to explore the Scripture's teaching. Scripture alone should drive what we believe.

**"He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of our sins."**

Have you experienced this deliverance? Have you been transferred? Did He drag you from the bonds and chains of your guilt to freedom? Then rejoice in the God of your salvation. Give praise to the God who saves today!

Is He prodding your heart today? Seek the Lord while He may be found! Call upon Him while He is near! Today is the Day of salvation. May it come to many listening and may the redeemed of the Lord say "Amen."

#### **QUESTIONS:**

1. Have you ever been in a situation where you were completely helpless and needed someone to rescue you?
2. Why do we need to be rescued from our sin? (Romans 3:34, 6:23, 7:18-20)
3. Can we save ourselves from sin? (Ephesians 2:1-3)
4. What was the role of the Father in our rescue? (John 6:27, 1 Peter 2:9, Ephesians 1:3-4, John 6:44)
5. What was the role of the Son in our rescue? (John 14:6, 1 John 2:2, Romans 5:1-2)

6. What was the role of the Spirit in our rescue? (Romans 8:2, 8:9, 8:11)
7. Discuss the work of the Triune God in our rescue.
8. Has this teaching challenged some things you believe? Contact one of the pastors to discuss any questions you may have.