

# What We Have Been Waiting For

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[0:00] Colossians chapter 2, have you ever been highly anticipating something that you've been waiting on? Maybe you ordered something, you're waiting for a package to come in the mail, and they told you it'd be on two days, and then sometimes it don't come in two days like it's supposed to, and sometimes it takes longer.

We had a, Abby ordered a science project for her students this week, and it had a life in it, so you had to be careful with it.

And so I got warnings beforehand, because she shipped it to us. I got warnings, and it's coming between 10-15 and 12-15. And so I was looking for it, and when it showed up, I met him at the road, and I got it, and it said open immediately.

And I thought, if I kill the science project, the kids won't ever learn anything, and these poor little insects will die. I mean, sometimes we just anticipate stuff that comes.

Of course, she wasn't home to get it. She just ordered it. That's the way that kind of works sometimes. It's March Madness, a lot going on. And if you watch basketball, I'm telling you, last weekend when Duke and Connecticut played each other, it was one for the history books.

[1:11] Last-minute shot, won the thing, game changer. It was something you highly anticipate when you watch those things instead of the blowouts, some of which I saw yesterday.

We anticipate things. Sometimes they're not fun to anticipate. Sometimes it's a test. We're waiting on a test result. We're looking for an email. We're waiting for a phone call.

We anticipate things. When moments, there are moments in our life when everything hinges on what happens next. And when that's the case, it seems like nothing else matters.

My friend, that's why we celebrate Easter. The reason we celebrate Easter is this is what we've been waiting for.

Colossians chapter 2, beginning in verse 13, says this, And you who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh.

[2:14] And what Paul is doing there is he's using a very drastic physical illustration to point out before you had been touched by God.

He says, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all of our trespasses by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands.

And this he set aside, nailing it to the cross. George Gallup tells us that 84 of 100 folks that do not attend church believe that Jesus rose from the dead.

It is a factual matter. It was not done in secret. The whole city of Jerusalem knew it was taking place. The whole Roman Empire knew about it. It was news that happened.

There are at least 15 historical references to Jesus meeting people, touching people, talking with people after he had been crucified and rose from the grave.

[3:18] One time he cooked breakfast for some people. One time he talked to about 500 people after he had risen from the dead. A lot of people saw him. So the question is, why does the resurrection matter?

It really happened, but what difference does it make? Well, it matters. It matters for three reasons. And my friend, this is what we've been waiting on.

It matters because our past can be forgiven. Have you ever been halfway through a project and wished you could start over?

Years ago when my oldest daughter was in probably middle school, we attempted to make a volcano out of a Coke bottle and some chicken wire and some foam insulation.

And I've always been one to believe that you should never let your kids get in the way of them having a good project. And so it'll come about lunchtime for some of you.

[4:28] But anyway, so I got out foam insulation, which I had never messed with before. And I started spraying around that chicken wire, around that Coke bottle, and it started expanding.

And I expected it to expand to a certain degree, but I didn't expect it to expand like that. And before I got done, it looked more like an ice cream sundae than it did a mountain. But she made the grade. I wish I could have done it over, but the clock was ticking. Investments had been made. As they tell me, it is what it is. A lot of times people feel like that about life.

We get to a point in our lives and we wish we could start over. I mean, we've done things we wish we hadn't done. We've said things that we wish we hadn't said. We've thought things we wish we hadn't thought.

We all have regrets. I want you to hear me this morning. We all have regrets. And the reality is we all have guilt. And the good news is that the second part of what I just read says that he cancels the record of debt that stood against us with all the legality that goes with it, and he set it aside and nailed it to the cross.

[5:46] In other words, God will pardon us of those wicked things that we've thought, that we've said, that we've done. And when we admit our need for him and turn our lives over to him, that sin is canceled.

As the scripture says, Jesus nailed it all to the cross. He paid for our debt. We don't have to pay for it.

And it's a good thing because we can't. There's no way we could make up that debt. He was hung for our hang-ups. Jesus Christ was nailed to the cross so we can quit beating ourselves up. He forgives our past. He cancels every debt that we owe. You ever had a debt? You ever had something that you owed? You paid on it monthly?

Maybe a medical bill that you paid on monthly, and when that thing, you just continue to pay on it, and finally when you got to the last one? I'll tell you what I do when I get to the final one. I write across it, P-I-F.

[6:52] You know what that means? Paid in full. It's gone. It's gone. And I file it away, and you know what? I forget it. I forget it.

Why remember those things that belabored you in the past? Let it go once it's gone. And I got news for you. If you'll surrender your life to the Lord Jesus Christ, and you'll say from this day forward, I want to live for you, O God.

I want to give you my life. Once God's forgiven it, we can forget it. That's good news, my friend. Listen, even if there wasn't a heaven and hell, and there is, it would be worth becoming a Christian just to have a clear conscience, just to know that we're free from all those things that we've done wrong, because Jesus is who he said he is, and our past can be forgiven.

There's no carrying a load of guilt around. It's unnecessary. Romans 8.1 says, There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.

Do you remember this toy from years ago? It's an Etch-a-Sketch. And I used to love this thing and play on it. I actually got good at it, and I was messing with it a little while ago during worship.

[8:19] And I want you to see it. But what happens when it's not that good, and I mess it up?

What happens when it's not that good, and I mess it up? You want to remember what you do? You flip it over, and you shake it.

You got to shake it pretty hard, too. I don't think they make them like they used to. And it's gone. It's clean. Folks, God has an Etch-a-Sketch verse in the Bible.

Romans 8.1 says, There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Amen. Amen. He wipes the slate clean. We can walk out of here today knowing that every single thing that we've ever done wrong is completely forgiven.

[9:33] My friend, that's good news. That's news I can use no condemnation. Jesus didn't come to rub it in. He came to rub it out. He said in John chapter 3, verse 17, He said, I didn't come to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be safe.

He wants to change us. He wants to help us. He wants to give us a new beginning to clear out our conscience. He died and rose again for that cause.

But not only can your past be forgiven, I'll tell you, it's what we've been waiting on. Our present can be empowered. We can't control everything in our lives, but God can.

What we need with the hard stuff is help from on high. We were never meant to live this life in our own power, and when we try to do that, life's experiences will slow us down.

Charlie Shedd is an author, and I read where he wrote this. He said, before we had kids, I used to travel across the country teaching a lecture called The Ten Commandments for Raising Perfect Kids.

[10:54] He said, then we had our first child, and I changed the title to Ten Hints for Parents. Then we had our second child.

I relabeled the lecture, A Few Tentative Suggestions for Fellow Strugglers. He said, after the third child, I stopped touring altogether and stopped speaking about it.

Listen, folks, we need help. And in this crowded room, I want you to know something. We all need help.

And Christ has come to give us help. He's come for us to have a relationship with him. And as Paul prayed for the church to realize all that, he prayed that we would understand everything that we have, that somehow we could be enlightened and see everything that we have when we have Christ.

He said this, the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might, that he worked in Christ Jesus when he raised him from the dead.

[12:09] The same power that enabled Jesus to rise from death will help us to rise above our hangups. It helps us to rise above our habits.

It helps us to rise against our issues and our doubts and our distractions. Whatever we feel like is out of control. Maybe out of our control, but I think God today, it's not out of God's control.

And he'll give us the power that we need. Philippians chapter 4 verse 13 is one of the most quoted, and hear me today, misapplied verses of Scripture in all the Bible.

It's not really about winning ball games or boxing matches. It's not really what Paul's talking about. What Paul says is, I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

It's not really about achieving goals. It's not really about accomplishing dreams. He is saying, I can endure. I've been given the strength.

[13:13] And it's not in my self-sufficiency. It's in Christ's sufficiency. Why? Because verse 19 of that same chapter says this, and my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches and glory in Christ Jesus.

Why does the death and resurrection of Christ matter? It matters because it's everything we've been waiting on. Our present, our past can be forgiven. Our present can be empowered.

But it don't stop there. Our future can be secure. Now, I don't want you to misunderstand me today. The numbers haven't changed.

Death has a 100% success rate. And it often comes when we don't expect it. Folks, if the Lord does not return first, we're all going to die.

It's going to happen. And only a fool would go through life unprepared for something that he or she knows is inevitable. It don't make any sense to do that.

[14:17] But sometimes we get so busy with life in the here and now that we don't stop to think about what is going to come. And people don't like talking about it. The countenance on your face has changed since I brought it up, quite honestly.

People don't like talking about death. If you don't believe me, invite your friends over, sit down with them, make them a cup of coffee, give them a piece of pie and say, let's talk death. See how many friends you get next time.

Nobody wants that. A group of children was asked about their beliefs about death. Gilda's age eight. And she said, when you die, they put you in a box and bury you in the ground because you don't look so good.

Stephanie, age nine, said, doctors help you so you won't die until you pay their bill. Marsha's age nine. And she said, when you die, you don't have to do homework in heaven unless your teacher's

there too.

And Raymond was age 10 when he said, a good doctor can help you so you won't die. A bad doctor sends you to heaven. My friend, the fact is everybody wonders what's going to happen after I die.

[15:26] And it's obvious that we're going to spend more time on that side of eternity than we do on this side of eternity. I got good news for you and I got bad news for you.

Our future in eternity can be made secure. The bad news is we can't do that ourselves.

We can't do it ourselves. As I spoke of earlier, all of us have sinned. We have all said things that we wish we hadn't said. We've all thought things that we didn't need to think. We've all done things that were wrong.

And that sin separates us from God. And we can't fix that. Scripture says that we are spiritually dead and unable to fix ourselves.

I want you to imagine, if you will, in Cooperstown, New York, there's the Baseball Hall of Fame. It's filled with superior athletes that have done wonderful things in the game of baseball.

[16:32] It's an amazing place. What if they changed the rules to it? What if they said the only way you can make it to the Baseball Hall of Fame is if you bat 1,000, you get a hit every time you get up, and you play error-free in the field your entire career.

The best career batting average was the legendary Ty Cobb. He batted .366, which means he got a hit 36.6% of the time he got up to bat.

That means he missed it almost two-thirds of the time. And no one since he's played, especially those in the modern era, have even come close.

The best defensive third baseman in the game was Brooks Robinson. Brooks Robinson misplayed the ball 263 times.

But he won 16 gold gloves, which means he was the best third baseman in the field that year. The most any infielder has ever won.

[17:47] My point is this. We're sinners. And we can't fix ourselves. I'm so glad you're here.

No amount of church attendance can fix your problem. No amount of good efforts can fix your problem.

We passed a plate a little while ago. Thank you if you gave. You can't pay back what Christ has done for you.

There's not a remedy to it that we can come up with. We don't have the resources to pay back the debt we owe. I want you to hear me.

We are lost without Christ. We are aimless. We are drifting. We are hopeless.

[18:56] However, Christ came and lived a sinless life and died in our place to take on our penalty, pay the cost for our sin.

2 Corinthians 5 verse 21 says, For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

That's what happened on the cross. And today, we celebrate the resurrection, which is proof that he is who he says he is, and that he's done what he'll say he'll do, and he did for us what we couldn't do for ourselves.

And our future can be made secure by simply turning from our sin and trusting Christ as our personal Lord and Savior. We cannot achieve it or live up to it.

We must submit ourselves and receive it. Or as the Apostle Paul said, And you who were dead in your trespasses and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him.

[20:13] That's the empty tomb. Having forgiven us all our trespasses by canceling the record of death that stood against us with its legal demands. And this he set aside, nailing it to the cross.

If you've never surrendered your life to the Lord Jesus Christ, the greatest thing that can happen to you on an Easter Sunday is to give your life to Christ.

Christ came and lived a sinless life and died a sinner's death and rose again so that you and I could have life. If you've never surrendered your life to Christ, I want you to know all you have to do is admit that you're a sinner.

Admit you've done wrong. Scripture says all of us have. Confess that before the Lord. Tell him in his power. You want to turn from all those sins.

You want to live for him from this day forward. Will he allow his Holy Spirit to empower you and change your life? Romans 10:13 says, All who call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

[21:28] It's a guarantee that if we'll surrender our life to Christ, he'll meet us where we are and he'll change us for all eternity. Has that ever happened to you?

If it hadn't, I encourage you. We're going to stand in just a moment and we're going to sing. And as we do, I encourage you to come and say, Pastor, I need to give my life to Christ. Maybe you're here this morning and you have done that, but it's been a private thing for you.

You've never let anybody know about it. Jesus said that if you're ashamed of me before men, I'll be ashamed of you before my Father, which means it wasn't really real to start with. Faith in Christ is not a private faith.

It's a public faith. And Jesus, by his example and by his commission, tells us to follow that up, not only with a resounding testimony for him, but also through baptism. If you've never been baptized as a believer, I encourage you to come and say, Pastor, I know I've given my life to Christ, but I've never publicly acknowledged it biblically through baptism.

You come and we'll guide you in it. We're not doing it this morning. And we'll guide you in a day in the future for that. Maybe God's drawing you to Pickens First Baptist Church. God's doing a wonderful work here, and I'm thankful for that.

[22:43] If he's leading you to come, you come, and I'll be happy to guide you in that process. But what if there's just, and this speaks to most of us, what if there's just stuff in our lives, things we think, things we say, things we do, that we just need to lay at the feet of Jesus and say, Lord, I recommit my life today.

You rose from the grave to give me power to rise above the hindrances the devil loves to throw in my life. And from this day forward, Lord, I want to live in your power. I want to live in your strength. I want to live in your victory. I don't want any hindrance to come in my life. Recommit your life today, Christian, to walk out of here faithful.

You can do that at this altar. You can do it with a pastor praying for you. You can do it where you'll stand in just a moment. I just will always ask you to always trust God and do what he tells you to do. Don't do anything more and don't do anything less. Lord Jesus, I love you and I thank you for a beautiful day, for a beautiful message, dear God, from your word, Father, that tells us that our past can be gone, our present can be changed and empowered, and Lord, our future can be secure in Christ.

[24:14] Help us, help that to be the testimony of every person in this room, oh God, I pray. In Jesus' precious name, amen.